

2002-10-31: Facing the Demons

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SPEAKERS

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In the preface to the story, the preface to the sitting is you know what are the demons that are lurking in you, as you come here sitting here Halloween night milarepa was the one of the great saints, spirit spiritual practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. And he lived for many years in a set as an ascetic practicing in the mountains in caves. And their story of milarepa coming back to his cave after being gone for some time during the day, and finding five demons in his cave, and sorry, so but perturbed at first when he realizes that probably these are local deities that are angry with him because he's never made any offerings to them. He's ignored them and never, you know, done anything for them. And so they're angry. And so he starts singing them songs of praise and offers and food Two of them go away. And the other three begin advancing on him. gruesome, terrible demons dripping with blood. And then he takes a really wrathful pose. These kind of filled with the wrath and anger and fiercely kind of growls at them. And two of them now run away but the fifth one The last one is hugely terrifying. Big fangs and long, long fingernails that underneath the fingernails are all the kind of dried up the skin of all previous victims. Blood is oozing out of the teeth and dry but caked on its beard and one eyes gouged it's coming to get that Miller rapper and Sorry, what do you do now he's tried these two things. And then he realizes that the demons are just products of his own mind and that their essential nature is empty. So then he has the big last demon who comes approaching with big wide open mouth. milarepa lays himself in the mouth of the demon. At that moment the demon vanishes. So what are your demons? And what are your strategies with your demons and other some demons that just won't go away? In the Japanese tradition, Zen tradition, there's a not just then but I learned a bit through this introduction. There's a ceremony called sakaki which is the ceremony. we're feeding the hungry ghosts, and part of the ceremonies to do this following invocation. So as we begin this evening, and we invite your demons to come. This is what's in a Zen ritual. Around time Halloween, this is what they say. We invite all diseased ancestors, the spirits of mountains, rivers and earth, and all the demons of untamed lands to come and assemble here. Now with compassion and empathy, we each we offer each of you food. We sincerely hope that each and every one of you will receive our offering, turn it over and pass it on to all sentient beings throughout the realm of vast emptiness. May you and all

sentient beings together be fully satisfied. Again, we hope your bodies will be conveyed by these offerings and mantras so that you may let go of all suffering. attain liberation, be born in heaven receive joy, and pray and play freely in the pure lands of the 10 directions. We invite all the demons of the untamed lands to come and assemble here. So that's what we're doing tonight. And now, may you all invite your demons for this sitting and learn how to be with them.

So when I was in practicing the past now the first time in Thailand I was at a school All inside Meditation Center, the outskirts of Bangkok It was built kind of on the edges of the rice paddies. And the abbot gave me a little cootie little hut on stilts the edge of the monastery to practice in order to stay there day and night sit me asleep their practice there. And the thing was that the way that we were sitting on stilts because it was kind of like a swamp in the beach long planks Lockman plank laid out across the top of this swampy area. So I could walk and get to my cabin, my whole hut. And right next to my hut, was just a couple of feet away literally, was a grave and it was built up Out of that kind of swampy area, so it's kind of elevated. And I think two people were buried there and there was a kind of like it was big kind of me six foot, eight foot, long slab of cement. And then the other end, there was these, like little stupas that came up these little kind of pillars, and has a picture, a photograph of each of the deceased guests, I think was a husband and wife. And so I would do all my meditation in little cabin, and do all my walking meditation on that cement slab because that was the only hard surface there was any length of any you know, I could have just walked on the planks but they weren't so stable. So even walking meditation there. I don't have any ghost stories from there. Practicing on the on these people's gravestones, but at one point during that retreat, I was invited by these I had to leave my little cabin for a little while for some days and stay at a slight little house across the street from the monastery, dilapidated house, banded house, two storey house and I stayed upstairs with these two others a monk and a Westerner. And in order to get upstairs, we have to walk through kind of the bottom floor which is kind of like a basement actually. So you have to go into the basement and then up the steps for the basement up into this deck area above and then rooms upstairs. And one evening. The door to the basement was open. And this dog came in and scrawny little dog like you if you've been to Asia sees like scrawny dogs can be and I think once he was going through his death pangs I've never seen an animal go through death pegs before but that's where it couldn't be anything else was weathering there on the floor and awful state. And wasn't clear what we could do for it wasn't so obvious that you take dogs to bat and kind of that part of the world. Exactly. And it was pretty dramatic watching it withering away there. And one of the people I was with standing next to me and the steps of setting the steps stairwells kind of looking down at this dog in the basement floor. And he took a really deep breath and then he blew like that. And the dog got up and walked away. I saw it and So, I didn't comment on it. I just I was kind of like, what's that? And so I went back to my meditation because it was it's kind of it's always doing this meditating. But the next morning, the guy who had done the blowing next one we found the dog dead. He just died outside someplace. I don't know what the blowing was about and what happened but what I saw was the dog you know, looked like he was about to die just got up peacefully and walked out of the room out of the basement. But the guy who did the blowing explained to me that the dog had been poisoned by local farmers

who

found these dogs are kind of like the pests, I guess in their fields and their crops. And so they put up poison for the local scrawny dogs and then they eat to eat the poison and they die. And, and so it's kidneys, which I guess processes the poison was an awful, awful shape and so He took his breath and he blew life back into the dog. But in order to build a life in and out into the dog, he said he had to take on the kidney failure that the dog was going through. And now he was in terrible pain his kidneys. And in order to cure himself of this, this is what he told me. He said he had to have a meeting with his ally. It's kind of like the vocabulary of Carlos Castaneda. And, and he invited me to come and join him as part of it. So that evening, okay, we were staying in the same house together. So, you know, so Okay. I was curious, what is this meeting with the ally? I mean, this time I've been on retreat with intensive retreats for probably seven eight weeks. And so The three of us sat in this little room and there's no furnitures and wooden room at night in the dark, pretty dark, maybe a candle or something. And this guy, he went to the meeting, the airline brought out the biggest tie stick of marijuana kind of tie stick. You know, the biggest one I've almost ever seen. And we proceeded to kind of pass this thing around this big, big fat. And, and I got so stoned. It's probably the last time I left I've gotten stoned. And I got so stoned and my heart rate was spinning and I couldn't get up and leave. to go to the bathroom. I had to go pee which means that many going down those steps and outside and I couldn't stand, I had to kind of crawl up like the dog right crawl as a crawl down the steps to go outside. And, and I felt like the whole world was going to collapse, like everything was gonna fall apart because I was so bidding. And the only thing I could rely on was my mindfulness practice. And I just kind of noted one breath One moment, just very carefully, one thing at a time, one thing at a time, and I got through that part of the evening. And the next morning, the fellow was cured. So that was my, you know, unusual. So that's one story. I don't know if I think that can be appreciated as a Halloween story, but then, I was asked to watch Swan Moke which is a famous jungle monastery in Thailand. And I was also given a little cabin a little hot cootie Often the jungle, middle piece of clearing in the jungle knew we were told to a lot of poisonous snakes and that part, be careful. And there was a little path that went kind of up to my cabin, my hut and I was also open to the stilts little steps going up the middle porch, like three or four steps. And so there's so that path kind of came along in front of my steps, and then curved around one side of the cabin and continue a little bit further 50 feet or so further into the jungle, where there was another cabin. And that further cabin, there was a Singaporean monk, who spoke very good English, who had been a monk for many, many years. And he was somewhat famous for having been kind of a hermit and having lived in a cave for 12 years or some very long time just living kind of as an ascetic living, practicing alone living in a cave. And he was considered to be kind of very highly attained monk. So when day I was, I guess on my porch and he walked, he was walking by to his cabin further back. And so I kind of came down a couple of steps. I think it was in the bottom step. And I was talking to him he was in the ground that was in the bottom step. And we were talking about so I don't know what little, little conversation and it was time to say goodbye. We said goodbyes to each other. And I turned around, I started to walk up the steps. But what I did was I ended up turning around 360 degrees on that step. So it doesn't take that long for me to turn around 360 degrees right.

And when I turn 360 degrees around, and was looking back at the exact spot where he was standing, he was no longer be nowhere to be seen. But there was a huge snake

We think of that. I don't know think of it. I don't have a clue what Think about that. I could try to rationalize it. He just walked away quickly and coincidentally snakes slithered up right there that moment. And other day in that monastery. It was dusk and there has wide dirt road. I don't know how long it boys but at least six foot wide, maybe longer. Maybe it's I say six feet. I don't know how it was wide enough for a car to drive on. dirt road in the jungle. And it was dusk, I was carrying my camera over my shoulder. And so I could it wasn't what couldn't see very well. And there was this Long Branch across the road kind of spread across the road and knew just a branch right so I stepped on it. And it moved. And it was this huge snake. And, and I jumped I jumped and spun in the air at the same time and threw my camera down into whatever was there to kind of have something between me and it because maybe that's what human beings do when they step on big snakes. You know, I wasn't doing it, it's just instinct. When I was in Asia I encountered there's a very strong belief in ghosts. I remember when monastery in Japan, where I stayed there, the Zen monks gave me advice of what to do if I encountered a ghost, and one of them had encountered a ghost. And he said, and what he had done was he chanted the Heart Sutra and chanting the Heart Sutra, then the ghost went away. So if you go to practice in Asia, chances are unless you go to some very modernized kind of rationalist kind of place, chances are you'll encounter People at least, who still very much live in kind of a traditional worldview, where ghosts are common spirits, demons are common to say occurrences you know common perceptions that people have. So milarepa in the story I told you at the beginning, when the fifth demon was coming to attack him, he realized that the demon was empty of any essential nature and was a product of his own mind and thereby, found how to be free of it. He put he put himself in the mouth of the demon fed himself to the demon and the demon vanished

and Very common stories in Thailand is of some monk iden charge and Moon A lot of people will would go off in 10 someone intentionally to places that would arouse the greatest fear and they would sit there meditate through the night. A common place was a city in cemeteries, because cemeteries are in Thailand and Thai culture, much of Asian culture are considered kind of Haunted Places, I guess in the west to right kind of haunted places. And when I was in Hawaii, we wanted to rent the cheapest apartments are cheaper houses, you rent, the places that are next to the cemeteries because no one people, Hawaiian people, Hawaiians, or wines of Asian descent wouldn't want to live there. And anyway, so these Thai monks suppose nuns would go off and spend nights in cemeteries and Arjun Shah tells a story of Still stories of sitting there in the cemetery and being petrified by something who was visiting him, he would be sitting there a cemetery and maybe like the evening or the afternoon, the villagers would come to burn a body, someone or some someone had died, a child had died or some adults had died. And they'd have the cremation, the smoldering body would be left there. And he'd be left there kind of, you know, I don't know, 100 feet away or something of the smoldering body. And they kind of had charnel grounds back then. So they kind of just leave they left. You know, they didn't sometimes they wouldn't bury people who aren't aware at all just leave. In traditional Thailand leave the bodies they're going to cemetery wasn't just simply sitting on a

gravestone, but was sitting there with these kind of bodies, you know, bones and stuff around. And he talks about sitting there, meditating, the eyes closed and middle of the night hearing them leaves in the ground crunchy. And something coming closer to him and closer to him. closer to me convinced that this was it, it was like a demon or ghost or something. And it convinced that he was going to die, there was no hope for him. And anything else wasn't going to die. I'm gonna die in the Dharma. And I'm going to die you know practicing because if you die practicing, that's the best possible way to possibly die and die sooner or later anyway and we're going to die or die practicing. Practicing is filled with fear and petrified knees broke out in sweat. And it gets thinking closer and closer. closer to him. He felt that standing right there in front of him right there. This is it. And then it went away. And but before it went away, he practiced so intensely following his breath, being attentive to his breath. It can't be so concentrated that at some point he Growth broke through his fear and attain a deep state of peace and calm. He was going to sit through his fear faces fear. So you get a lot of these kind of stories in Thailand

in charge and Moe in the old days would go into the jungle and sit with places they still had Tigers back then the wild elephants and big snakes and whatever. The monks would go off into the into the jungles. You think maybe stories of often often very dramatic, you know, they encountered a tiger or tiger and kind of walking down the path and they'd be sitting there meditating and the tiger walk right by or sniff them and walk away. And I've been told that it was very rare for a monk to ever get killed. But they had these encounters and they would test their concentration test their equanimity test their inner strength. Go to places of fear. I guess for us we would go to the inner city perhaps. Where would we go? We want to go places sit with our greatest fear. Some people, the place of greatest fear is in calculon retreats in meditation, and it's really an amazing thing to go sit and meditate in a place that's very safe. Everyone's kind or leastly leave you alone because no one's talking. People are feeding you and taking care of you. And you know, so many retreat centers are beautiful retreat centers, state of the art retreat centers, and everything is fine in the universe. And then people get terrified and they're not terrified by the Tigers or the ghosts, but the terrify by their own minds what's going on inside of them by their own demons. And it's really amazing to be to discover the demons that are inside of us inside of people, and how difficult it is to grapple with how difficult it is to sit still and open up and be mindful and be present for some of these deep dark things that we'd rather not face. And the way kind of seemingly the self human This is constructed is where we kind of get a sense of self or a sense of security in life is often constructed around a lot of arbitrary artificial unhealthy attitudes about who we are and what our needs are and who other people are. And as we sit on retreat, meditating, sometimes it becomes necessary to let go of those. Often the whole process of meditation of retreats can be understood as a process of letting go of letting go of all the extra cleaning all the extra extra effort and remaking from simply being present in a very the simplest possible way just instance of pure being adding anything to our sense of being and so as this process of letting go is going on some of the things we caught were called upon to let go or to face in the process of letting go we don't want to let go of because it seems like let go of those is we're going to die. We're not going to exist. Who are we going to be? Who would recognize us you're not gonna record we don't even recognize ourselves you could let go of this. And I've people have come to me when I talk to retreats. They've come

searched me out panting, terrified, pale in panic attacks because nothing's happening except they don't have a tendency to panic attacks outside isn't like a habit they have for you know, 10 tendency but there's no facing some really deep fears inside demons. So Halloween, I'm sure you all know the word hollow is a, I guess an old English word me or think meeting gay we mean sacred hallowed ground is a sacred ground. And so Halloween means the evening, the sacred evening what it means what it means is the evening before All Saints Day. November 1 is All Saints Day, which is a very sacred day. And this is the evening before and this is polarity this duality that becomes quite strong, at least traditionally, I suppose when you saw this was made up between this very sacred day of November 1, which now mostly forgotten about, maybe Catholic students still a little bit they might Catholic here. Yeah, all saints days that are like a day that you do. So holy day that's how significant still for Catholics

still you know and then the night before then is the night for the opposite of that of the polarity of the duality of the demons and the ghosts, the dark forces. And what's happened as we know is that Halloween has been commercialized and has become tamed. And we have obviously no control over here you saw this little cute little angels and demons and devils, which is kind of you know, roaming around the neighborhood. All very cute, most of the most part it's all been tamed and

You know, angels in the vault in the, in the Old Testament were ferocious beings you wouldn't we didn't want to have an encounter with an angel and then you have devils and demons, ghosts, all these different forces and I think it's necessary to be a little bit careful of domesticating these powerful forces anger and fear and aggression that might be within us are pretty it over or to deny that it's there see all calls off cultures is my my theory my understanding is that all cultures including Buddhist cultures, family, culture, social cultures, religion, religious cultures, there's going to culture when people get together they tend to act in certain ways. Probably with some friends you talk with you some friends you talk certain ways with other friends you talk different way with there's a kind of a little culture of two people depending who you're with. And sometimes it can be a little bit odd to have you know, bring together friends from different parts of your life. For him you kind of relate to different ways and suddenly you don't you can't you know, how do you relate now because how do you be now because you're tend to be a little bit different for different people. If you speak different languages, it can be really something to feel who you are, you know in different language. You know, I I'm different speaking Italian than I am an English I'm different speaking Norwegian than I am in English. I'm different. speaking Japanese and In English, it's kind of like a different, you know, who am I, which one's the real Gil, you get the English one. And so in different people, but so there's still cultures that could created big culture, small cultures. And cultures tend to have things that they desired behavior, kind of certain kinds of ways of being that are considered optimal or the right or appropriate ways of being. And so, like Buddhist culture, Buddhism puts a big emphasis on being kind and generous. And so it's part of the culture, you know, you come here and people kind of think that he's supposed to be kind and generous and wise and, you know, and so they kind of tend to be kind of some people I know put on their best behavior, when they come to a meditation center, or when it comes to sleep meditation teacher, you know, I get you know, you know, they show the often I get, you know,

sometimes they say the best around me and then later They have an interview and they tell me what's really going on. But the, but you know, we kind of show certain sides of ourselves and in showing certain sides of ourselves, we then kind of hide a little bit the size that we did, you know, not so good. So, Buddhist and come into a Buddhist culture and they tend not to show their anger very much. Because, you know, after all, anger is kind of a defilement, you're not supposed to kind of suppose become free of what's behind. So you don't, you know, easily express your anger in a Buddhist culture usually. Whereas you might in some other, I don't know where and you know, you do that, but I noticed that bar culture in America in Japan is very different. America and American bars, people get drunk. I've been bar in America for 30 years or something, but I've noticed that they people get tend to get generalization. There's kind of anger for angry feeling in Japan. The tenant See, there's four people become very childish when they're drunk. So I don't know why different people in different cultures, you know, have different ways of being when they're angry. But maybe bars are kind of safe place to be angry, I don't know, there's probably places where that comes out more but Buddhist centers, they tend to come out so much. So it becomes what's sometimes called the shadow, what's hidden. So all cultures have with a shadow that we're just kind of pushed aside or denied or not what people are willing to look at or express. And it's the function of practice of spiritual practice or Buddhist practice, to reveal the shadow to show it and its health you can't do you can't have not have some kind of culture.

With I believe the culture becomes a lot healthier when people are practicing and finding through practice allowing what's deep, dark Hidden, denied, not accepted, to come bubbling up and to be shown and to learn how in some wise way to hold it, at least in the meditation time, with some acceptance or some wisdom or some clarity, with some allowing it to be there, and to express itself to really see it clearly for where it is. And I think it's very, very important that we have a place in their life, we allow these things to surface. People are afraid of the depression. And so they're always running away from being depressed. And maybe meditation is not the place to feel joy and calm for some people, but rather to look at the demon of depression, honestly, directly, or angry anger or fear, you know, aggression, fantasies, lust, whatever it might be, that we'd rather not have to deal with looking at. So and part of the advantage of doing It is spiritual context. Maybe in a culture of other people who are practicing meditation centers or spiritual teachers, whatever is that it's sometimes a lot safer to allow these forces to show themselves when there's a wonderful container around you, to hold them, to be with them, to support them. And so there's there's the polarity of Halloween, evening and then All Saints Day The next day of having those two really close together. If we're living in the in the polarity of great demonic forces, then it can be very helpful to associate ourselves with times with sacred forces or angelic forces or whatever the whatever the opposite is not to deny the demons, but it becomes easier to balance them to hold them To be inspired by them. The in Mahayana Buddhism, there's these Bodhisattvas, which kind of some very roughly the equivalent of the saints and maybe Catholicism, if a whole bunch of them these bodhisatta, purchases, celestial beings who were enlightened or almost enlightened, and thinking about these Bodhisattvas is that most of them are. lay people, often often with lots of jewels and clothes and all that. And but there's one of the Pantheon Bodhisattvas, who is a

monk,

and that monk is a bodhisattva for people who are down and out people really Having a horrible time in life people have kind of descended into the nether world, the hell's of the human mind. And the idea being that somehow the purity of the monk is the only thing that can speak to people who to the demons, some demons are deep down, you know, that are so paralyzing and difficult to face, you need to have a counter force that's as powerful to be able to hold that. So we don't just kind of plunge in by ourselves, we find somehow to find some place of purity, practice of purity, some kind of pure, pure thing that holds it. Isa indoorsy. He was kind of a friend of mine. He was a Zen priest who was kind of down and out at some point in his life, strung out on drugs and if he was leaving, and I think he was leaving the streets that point but he His life was spiraling downwards, out of control. And somewhere on the wall someone's wall, he saw a photograph of Ramana Maharshi, the great Indian saint, and, and that somehow got his attention and nothing else had done. He kind of snapped him out of his downward spiral. And he started somehow found himself to San Francisco Zen Center, and started a spiritual practice. And by the time I met him, he was probably the most inspiring person for me at the San Francisco Zen Center. He was basically illiterate, in a culture of people who most people were literate, very literate, had been college educated and all that. And

he was just, you know, just being of light and love. And most people's Zen Zen culture back then when I was there was kind of aloof, a little bit cold. But he had nothing else that he was just full of love and warmth.

Some people come to retreats specifically, in order to in order to feel safe, sacred place to allow these things to surface. Then there's a practice of associating with good friends, which is very important part for really facing the deepest, darkest places within us. Then there's a practice of Vipassana, which is seeing things as they are, which is learning the art the skill of looking directly in the face of what frightens us the most. Learning to have the skill to not turn away from that which we think is unacceptable. What is that? What is it that's most unacceptable for you? Often what's most except unacceptable is that which challenges some of your most cherished ideals and ideas of what it means to be human being and what it means to live. What is it it's unacceptable? What's unacceptable for the awareness for your awareness to open up to that doesn't mean we condone or accept things out in society and certain behaviors, but in meditation itself, to see things as they are, is to somehow open up to give space for what is there without any inhibitions or any resistance or any denials of what's there. And let it Let it be there and then look at straight in the face. And that can take a lot sometimes requires tremendous amount of courage. They sit still in this container of meditation and let things bubble up. I just face them, look at them. And milarepa found his fifth demon to be empty. Maybe all five demons were empty. They're just products of his own mind. And if you're sitting there and meditation in a safe place, a safe time. No one's threatening you. There's no threatening activities in the world on you. The dangers that you feel the great fears that that you feel that point. Chances are in some way or other they're products of your mind. At that moment, at least, they can't be anything else.

fear about what might happen in the future. idea is you have what's acceptable and not acceptable. To sit in meditation and look at your deepest fears, to look at that which is unacceptable. And look at it deeply enough sharp enough to see it's empty nature to see the way in which is a product of your mind and then seeing how it's a product of your mind to become free of it. So there are demons and there are also a mentioned what's called hungry ghosts in Buddhism, and how many ghosts are usually understood as tremendous forces of desire of addiction. And we're not necessarily afraid of the hungry ghosts. Ghosts in unnecessarily afraid They're not demonic beings, but they're just kind of filled with craving. And the image of the hungry ghosts is that there it is very, very, very big bellies and very, very thin little throats. And no matter how much food they can take in, they'll never satisfied their empty belly. So they're always hungry and wanting more and more and more. And there's another image not less known for hungry ghosts. And hunger goes to these beings who have great thirst and great hunger. But every time they consume something, take some water or take some some food, it turns into fire in their mouth and burns their mouth. So there's there's they're out there hungers next, there's is never satisfied they're always wanting more and more, but the very thing they want burns them. So there's sometimes we have these hungry ghosts to face

And hungry ghosts sometimes best faced by loving them by offering kindness and love because probably what the hungry ghost most needs is not food or money or status, status or winner all the things we kind of may be addicted to. But really deep down inside just wants to be loved to be appreciated. And probably most demons are the same way that most demons also deep down inside. Within the demon there's something really quite beautiful. And part of the reason to face down the demons is to see that beauty that's within us. So when I when I was taught the children's programs Here some years ago for Halloween, I made this contraption we had a different Buddha, but had this this mask over the Buddha like this. And then I had kind of a sheet over everything and so all you can kind of see was his face fears face. And the kids be kind of far away and that's okay. I want you to really look at the team and really carefully look inside look really look at it deeply and see what do you see at the heart of the demon inside. And what's this way what you see inside even closely, you see a Buddha.

Someday all of you find Buddhists inside of your demons and hungry ghosts. Many you all make space for it. They They let them come and discover wise healthy ways of being present for them. In May you find healthy ways of avoiding them when they're too absolutely, actually too much to deal with. And may you have tremendous respect for those forces. So those are my thoughts for this evening of Halloween. What are your thoughts? Do you have anything you'd like to say after that?

I have a question. Say anything.

So

if the demon comes in the form of a tiger

This one, cultivate the skill

to surrender to that

force, which totally freaks you

just totally freaky

normally and throws you for a loop. So you have the intention to be with it, you want to be with it, you want to face it, but it's so overwhelming. That like, obliterates your intention. And you just find

this you're talking about your meditation sitting there.

Talking about not just in meta, but yes, well, I really on the cushion, you see clearly, I mean, so

offer offerings After the tiger offers to off offer your life by yourself die

sorry. What's a ghost? A ghost in Buddhism is a being which is not satisfied. disinvited, disembodied being, which is roaming around dissatisfied, looking, looking for some satisfaction. So ghosts are not usually understood as being so terror being so terrifying Exactly. But as you know, kind of so they on the document that is Sarah In Buddhism, where they invite, like I read at the beginning, where you invite the ghosts, the demons, invite these ghosts, and then you feed them. And so once once a year, you feed the ghosts to help them along their way. Yes.

You made a comment that, you know, in traditional societies like in Thailand, they believe in ghosts, but actually, it's all over the place, right in the United States, right in Palo Alto. Which is a Nope, goes. Yeah. So I just felt like,

yeah, I shouldn't have said,

traditional societies. Everywhere is right here. in the Bay Area.

You're completely right. And

there's like a whole network of Ben breakfasts that are famous that they're haunted to actually go from just to just experience a ghost. So It's not traditional,

but we're a traditional Society of some sort. I agree. Yeah, I yeah. So I stand corrected. Thank you. I agree. If I guess for me, that that was in Asia that I discovered that element of society where people have strong beliefs in ghosts, I hadn't really encountered that level in America. Yeah. Yeah.

How we're gonna live the Tassajara there was a, there was a job that was given to people to wake up early in the morning and by dawn lanterns, so that people coming to the zendo could see where they were going. And during practice period, this person had to sleep in the zendo at night. And people were quite terrified to sleep in this beautiful Meditation, beautiful center because it's rumors that there were ghosts that visited. And some people were absolutely convinced they could hear footsteps sort of like agencia. I see

I guess the ghosts must have come after my time because I spent a whole summer sleeping in the zendo. That's in particulars. And there's a friend of mine who lived up in skyline and kind of down a dirt road off by himself. And then look Kevin, and he started hearing these footsteps at night and leaves, you know, and they sounded like, you know, two big, very big two footed animal or, you know, two foot hippier target person that goes two feet, you know, kind of walking like two feet, I guess you can hear a difference between four footed animal and he'd go out looking and he was kind of spooked by this, you know, be it's like a really big, heavy, two footed person, you know, walking around and he couldn't find a middle nowhere and last if you haven't, number of evenings, number of nights and then one day he was driving home down his dirt road coming close to his house and he saw where it was. It was an ostrich see someone up there had an ostrich farm and it escaped.

And then when I was when I was at Tassajara It was during a sushi sushi and during a seven day intensive retreat. People weren't talking with each other particularly and this custom was lead everybody left their shoes kind of outside of the door on their doorstep and outside the door when you go into a cabin or into place a house, the building and most you place slippers slippers they put up because you take them on and off a lot there Tassajara and shoes start disappearing during this session. And often just once you disappear, people come out from you know out of the meditation hall and Issue missing, you know, are both issues a missing, you know, they wake up in the morning they have more shoes missing and you know, and this lasted for you know, several days and you know people didn't know what to say because they weren't talking to each other so people weren't you know, but so they came out and you know, where are the shoes what's happening and, and then there was a Dharma talk being given Dharma talks were 10 o'clock in the morning and had these sliding glass, glass sliding paper windows that were open to there's no screen just open to the outside. And in during the Dharma talk in through one of these windows jumped baby Bobcat. And what had happened was that the ASPCA had released the bobcat, Bobcat up on the Tassajara road is 12 Mile Road A 14 mile road that goes into Tassajara and it was kind of the middle of the adventure. wilderness was father's national mountain mountain mountains and so they thought they would let it off you know, middle of nowhere but the mountain it just follow the road down to the end and the end

of the road is Tassajara Monastery. It was used to people a little bit so it was kind of hanging out there and looking for food and I guess the shoes you know, we're kind of like food for it. And

so

ghosts demons.

I have always wondered why.

Zen tradition has a ceremony to honor the dead when they read the names of people who have died, maybe spirits.

But usually they do it as part of the cigar key ceremony. The integrated integrated that into the sakaki ceremony. discuss every feed is the ceremony where they call forth the demons and ghosts of the past. And the dead dead or sometimes, sometimes potentially, ghosts that are wandering around died unsatisfied or something. And so you invite them back. And what's happened in America is that they've, they've adopted the ceremony to also include a kind of Memorial time kind of memorial ceremony people have died over the last year. And it just nice, it's very, very nice. It's very healthy, very helpful for people sometimes to have some place where they do Memorial, kind of recall the people who've died and you know, and so it's a kind of place to mark that.

The original intention was these coasts that are wandering around still not settled, usable.

Yeah, that's my understanding. And I was in Japan when the monastery there that's all you think about saying Traditional society like Thailand, I didn't mean like all of Thailand is traditional. What I meant was traditional culture within Thailand is a lots of, you know, kind of, you know, the modern modern Thailand, you know, you know, you're out in the autumn if you're out in the, you know, the rural parts, rural parts of Japan, real parts. Thailand, but you know, rural parts of America, I think, you tend to find much more beliefs and ghosts than you tend to have in the cities. But cities you'd have ghosts to

find that I was not happier.

Just jolted me a little bit. The way I heard it was like traditional societies meaning like, superstitious, primitive, less than civilized, that's the way I heard it. And because he also gave some stories about shamanism, which he didn't name as shamanism. But you know, when you talk about the guide Blue right all right, that's really a classic traumatic experience and also the person trying to snake the

snake, those are all experiences that are different than

making any distinctions about those differences.

Yeah, I wasn't making any distinction smack taste. And

those are, those tend to be considered less than just generally considered not as, you know, civilized as this culture.

When I was in Burma at the monastery, they're the they have they have this belief in nuts, kind of spirit spirits, Tree Spirits and stuff. And, and just very big monastery it was that I was living in a huge monastery and strands of Burmese mountain. Burmese Buddhism is very rational. No. And in one day I was in the in the Abbott's quarters, and I look out the window and there was laypeople visiting the monastery, who were praying to this big tree in the monastery grounds. And they prep, you're praying to the spirits. So I asked the monk, what was going on there and what were they doing? Are they praying to the knots? And he was kind of amazing to watch. He wanted, he denied that they were doing anything at all. For him where he was because he for him that whole belief in spirits and stuff was if we had any any validity to it was considered to be secondary or insignificant compared to the importance of Buddhist practice. And he's wanting to kind of he for him was there's no place for it in the monastery. He just kind of blocked it out of his, you know, at least these it's got discussions with me and you find in Buddhism in Japan and other places, I kind of uh you know, I'm not saying this is good or bad, but it's kind of you find a very strong tendency to have a kind of at least a two tiered attitude towards a lot of things which are very much respected and considered to be have their place in society, but they're considered to be of a lower status, then what Buddhist practice can accomplish. So, that means Indian Buddhism, for example, is very hierarchical in Indian culture, in general, very hierarchical and thinking and things are placed in different hierarchies of what's better than what's better and better and higher status. And, and so you do find a very strong tendency to put like shamanic experiences that it's different level than what Buddhist practice can do in Indian Thai Buddhism. And it doesn't just, you know, the modern modern rationalist to want to do that. But you do find it very interesting to find that. And so even even the notion of gods, the, if you you know, you know, you see pictures of the Buddha, you never see a picture of a Buddha, or statue of the Buddha, with his hands together like this, even the Buddhists do a lot. You know, it's really beautiful expression to bow like this. But you never see a Buddha doing that. Because a Buddha, there's nothing for which the Buddha the Buddha is the pinnacle of the highest status in the Indian Buddhist kind of situation. And so it'd be appropriate for the Buddha to about anything. Even the gods have to bow to the Buddha. The Buddha doesn't bow to the gods. So, you know, just very casually, your issue raises a very interesting one and complex the issue of, you know, the various the status and the tendency to dismiss or not dismiss or put in different different hierarchy or different status, different kinds of human experiences and practices. And it's complex and, and sometimes it's dismissive of other people and other practices. And sometimes it's not what you're used to it's complex phenomena.

And what you see what you see and what's one of the things interesting, it was interesting for me to go to Asia, was to see the degree to which the demonic experiences and the unseen world of whatever the unseen world was, was, at times very closely integrated with the Buddhist culture and the Buddhist practices and institutions. Whereas here in America, my encounter with Buddhism in America and the unseen world for the most part, except for this once a year sakaki ceremony for the most part, the unseen world. And the demonic experiences were kind of either were not brought with Buddhism to America left behind their in Asia kind of was very easy to separate it out from and bring it to America just kind of just simplified or purify just kind of what some people was what some people thought it was just what Buddhism is in and of itself, and how much they many of the Convert Buddhists in America. were simply not interested in that level of with Buddhism, whether it was integrated as part of the Buddhist scene in Asia. I was surprised how much of it was integrated, even though it was often hierarchical. Anyway, I'm just talking on and on and I don't know if it's useful or helpful or ads to whatever wound that I've caused in my, my inappropriate remarks, yes, just want to

say I'd like to the cigar key ceremony in Greenville Sunday. And it was a really beautiful ceremony.

Again with a coffin a musical instruments.

It's quite dramatic kind of scary.

But then the emphasis was very much on satisfying the hungry ghosts within all realms but also within the individual desires.

Number one presidents

are really looking forward to the ceremony, and breakouts are just random.

really wonderful.

Okay,

So there's about three hours left to the evening. So maybe all of your demons and ghosts be well attended to get their chance. Thank you all very much.