

2004-08-30 Dharma in Nature

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SPEAKERS

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I just came back from teaching retreat at Tassajara zen mountain center. And the theme was on nature in early Buddhist tradition, and in the modern Thai forest tradition. And I wanted to tell you a little bit about what I talked about during the course of that we get to Sahara. And it was quite special to vsrx talk about nature because the Sahara is deep in the wilderness, in Los padres national wilderness. It's the there's a 14 mile dirt road, it takes about an hour up over this high mountain and down, down, down, down down down into this narrow valley. And many years ago, and I was living there, I lived there for about three years. man came from Holland to be a student there for a number of years. And he came into their central area and then you took a walk to the edge of Tassajara property. Looking up the river And he started crying. And he said he started crying because having grown up in Holland, he had never seen any nature that had been untouched by humans before. And it was such an awesome thing for him to see. So it also has this place, it's surrounded by kind of wilderness untouched. And it was a place that I practice for many years in context of being there in the wilderness was very important for me. In many ways. I spent a lot of time hiking up in the mountains or along the river. I was always aware of it could have been there in the monastery, you're always aware of the nature around you. And it was also important in my relationship to Zen practice or Buddhist practice. We would in many ways, but one way I think we know now is that we would spend a lot of time in the zendo in the meditation hall. We would eat in there we would meditate, meditate in there we have Dharma talks in there. And we did a lot of chanting in there a lot of bowing in there in the morning service noon service, afternoon service. And you know, had a certain or a certain Mystique and power of Zen practice, you have a group of maybe somewhere between somewhere between, I would say maybe somewhere between 30 and 50. Zen students who are all dressed in black robes, you know, it's quite a quite an impressive atmosphere. And it'd be sometimes I'd stand there kind of doing this chanting services and bowing. And I'd imagine what it'd be like, if we took away all the buildings and all the altars and all the Buddhists. And we're left there in the middle of the wilderness of the Sahara, bowing and chanting. And it kind of took the very different give me a very different context, what we're doing and kind of helped pre me a little bit from the, the aura of religiosity or a kind of collective practice that was going on there. And it was very refreshing. have that kind of imaging imagination. And then I could throw myself back in with a kind of different spirit, enjoying what I was doing. So Tassajara being in the wilderness, so to Sahara is a practice place. It's a place where people go to engage in very serious Buddhist practice. So people go there for many, many years. Some people go for three months of intensive practice during anywhere between September and, and may, April. And so there's a juxtaposition at the Sahara, of this very serious, very intense practice. Some of the people that are being trained in order to become leaders to make Buddhist practice their life, you know, becoming priests and monks and nuns. So you have the juxtaposition of this very serious practice happening, and you have the wilderness. And when you look at Buddhism, and Buddhism, the relationship to nature, you're always going to find that juxtaposition. The relationship of practice to nature and nature to practice, almost always that you're never going to

find any of practicing spiritual practice, very far from what Buddhists, when Buddhists talk about nature, at least in the early tradition, and in the Thai forest tradition.

And one of the places maybe to begin and talking about the tradition is to understand that the early Buddhist tradition, taught much of Buddhist British tradition talks about Buddhist practice as a path. And the word that's used in in Pali is maga in Sanskrit is Marga. And the word we have for religion in the West, is a word which is foreign to most other non Western cultures. And many non Western cultures had to kind of invent the word or figure out a word to scratch their head. What do they mean with religion? It's so obvious to us what it means right? But you know what? In the world is people thinking about religion. And so the Japanese invented a word, you know, because there to make that fit. And perhaps Buddhism shouldn't be considered a religion. Maybe it should it depends. It's Buddhism doesn't care that not sure what it's, you know, whether, you know it has that label or not, you go to the old Soviet Union. And Buddhism was clearly not a religion, because Marx was not done, you know, and marketing religion didn't go together so well so so, you know, what is it not a religion come to United States, and it's definitely a religion because you get a nonprofit tax status. Very happy. So, you know, it wouldn't be very flexible, you know, adaptable, you know, other people's labels, so, but the label the label that Buddhism has, for, that's currently kind of comparable to a little bit to religion, maybe not so close. The way was classified in India was it was a Marga. It was a mug It was a path. And there were other spiritual traditions in India that offered offered Margot's some of you remember, a nun DeMarco tradition that was quite popular for a while in the 70s. They still have a Center in Los Altos. And so it's it was offered a mark on a path and is talking about the path. The Buddha gave an analogy. He said that analogy was that of a man, a person who went into the forest and found a path the road in the forest that long ago had been overgrown. And there were just little hints and traces this path was there. But the path was there used to be a road that was quite clear to follow. And he was able to track and follow that little thing. hints of the road and follow the road into the forest until it came to a big abandoned city. Did you imagine like, you know, going down to Central America and the jungles and finding these big Mayan cities. So you go into the jungle for all this path you can't became to this big ancient city. And, and then that person then came back, left the forest and went talked to the monarch of the realm and said to the monarch, look, there's this beautiful, there's this path there that grow that goes into the forest. And it takes you to this great ancient city that's been abandoned. It's there ready to be reclaimed. And so the king comes and walks the road clears the road, and sure enough, they find this great city and it gets to be populated. And the Buddha says, that's kind of like what I've done. I have discovered an ancient path, a path that's always been there. I didn't invent the path, but it's always been there, but it's been Long overgrown, very hard to find. And I kind of went and you know, was able to find those little hints in the forest and find that path. And lo and behold, it led to this great city. And a great city for the Buddha was the experience of Nirvana, the experience of freedom, liberation. And, and so that was i, this is what I found this ancient path, and I felt I took it to the city of Nirvana. And then by using the analogy, the person is telling this to in the story is the King. But now he's telling it to us. So each of us is the monarch. And I love this, that, you know, royalty, the king or the queen, that somehow there's some kind of speaking to some kind of profound dignity or loyalty or strength in each of us. That's the part that Buddha was speaking to when he said, Look, I found this path, this road in the forest. And as as a royalty, as someone With some, whatever that means for you, then let's go reclaim that ancient pathway in the forest. Let's find the ancient city of Nirvana. So it's a nice analogy. It goes a little bit further, in that the Buddha

in the first instructions that he gives a number of places when he gives meditation instructions, just about the first not the first instruction, he gives that one piece of instruction that's most often overlooked. When people like me give meditation instructions, we don't use the status. We leave us out. The first instruction is go and sit at the foot of a tree. That's where you do your meditation practice,

go sit at the foot of a tree. There's a quote where the Buddha says if the monastics go is practice in the wilderness in the forest, then the way of the awakened ones will not decline. So, it's a pretty, pretty powerful statement about the importance of practicing in the wilderness in the forest. Someone needs to be in the forest into the way of the way from where doesn't decline to the whole path of practice doesn't get overgrown again. In other place we see it in the first instructions to a new monastic is go practice in the forest core practice in the wilderness. And then there's a whole bunch of other kind of instructions that are given, but the first one is go practice in the forest in the wilderness. The Buddha himself spent a lot of time in the forest in the woods. It said that the Buddha was born under a tree. He was enlightened under a tree. His first sermon was given under a tree And he died under two trees. This is where he spent much of his life trees were a big part of what Buddhist Buddhism occurred in ancient India was under trees with trees, in the woods in the forests, when it was time for the Buddha to teach his son, his son became a monk, or first thing was that we can't become a monk when you're too young, but when you're young and become a novice monk, so a son became a novice monk at a really young age. And so, he probably spent some time with his father because at some point, the Buddha felt that his son was ready to hear the Dharma, to have some really deep was ready for some real deep opening in the Dharma. And so what the Buddha did was he took us deep into the woods, and inside a monologue or an a log, I think he said, I'm on the edge of he had his big, huge roots, you know, these big, big banyan trees and stuff. And he sat him on the on the route. And he gave him a discourse that kind of opened the Dharma I have a son.

So the wilderness then the forest becomes a place of practice. there's a there's a very interesting story, a little one person's encounter with a bunch of monks practicing in the forest. It was story of a king who probably had a guilty conscience. And this king decided he couldn't sleep one night. And he'd heard this full moon night that the Buddha was residing in a forest nearby, with a large gathering of monastics. And he thought he'd go dark night and have a Dharma conversation, talk to the Buddha have spiritual conversation with the Buddha. And so he first got his armies together and he doesn't go without it. Usually his army I guess, and his chariots and he went to the edge of the woods, but Don't go into the woods where enlightened person is with all your arms and soldiers. So you left them all behind, went in disarmed and went in just with his minister and do the way and it was dark. They're going into this dark wood. And he knew that there were a large gathering amongst around the Buddha. And as the King goes into the woods, he it's really quiet. It's so quiet that he gets spooked. And he turns to his minister, and he says, the script, the script, the description in the suit versus his hair stands up on end. And, and the SS minister, is this an ambush? lead me into an ambush. And guess the minister says no, and they're in the distance, they see low light and they walked through the light. And it turns out to this large gathering, monastics, they're all sitting in meditation, and in that in the woods, and that meditation, they're all with the king couldn't believe you could have such a large gathering of people sitting in silence. It'd be lots of noise. That's why he was speaking By all, but they're all sitting in profound stillness in the woods, late into the night, an image of what the old forest monks a little bit were like. There are, there's nature poetry from the early Buddhist tradition, and mostly written by some of the monks or nuns who were disciples of the Buddha. As it's translated into English, it doesn't seem to make great poetry, but it might well be some of the earliest and not the earliest kind of nature, poetry in human history, so it's kind of interesting. And some of it is talking about the delight of being in the wilderness, being in these rocky crags where they're deer and monkeys and boar wild boar roaming around elephants or, you know, whatever sound to elephants make, they resound, a fellow with the trumpet trumpeting elephants and they talked about the Beautiful wet moss covered rocks, they talk about the trees that are full of flowers and the ground which is carpeted with wild flowers, which are beautiful places. And they talked about how their heart is delighted in this places of nature. And it's talked about how place being in nature is a place to uplift the heart to inspire the heart. And many of you probably had the kind of experience of being out in nature in the wilderness, and being inspired.

Being uplifted a lot of our worries that we have in normal life kind of can fall away a lot of our perspectives and values that we have and sometimes urban busy life get changed radically when we go into the wilderness. A lot of things which have important meaning here, have absolutely no meaning in the wilderness. If you have a PhD in Buddhist studies, and you go tell that to a tree, that forest, and the trees not going to be impressed. You know, if you're by yourself, no one's there to kind of Wow, you That's something that doesn't mean anything. And, and so use left you know a lot of things that we kind of build, you know, you put on the best possible clothes or you waive your bank accounts, you know, and, and you and no one there to notice and thank you notes doesn't mean much. And in some ways the forest, the wilderness, sometimes a great equalizer for people, people go into the wilderness, as groups often find that their relationships become equalized. And, and, and a lot of the social stratification that can happen outside, falls down and falls apart in the wilderness I've ever met many years ago a story reading a story about a young young woman. I guess she was writing a story but when she was a young girl, she I don't know how old she was, but 789 years old, and she got a haircut. That was awful. kind of cut it really short and just was not a very good job. If you can't really redo it was really short, you know, before shaved heads for people was more stylish. And,

and she was devastated by what had happened to her. And when her father came home and saw what happened, he said, Come with me. And they got in the car and they drove out of the city into the wilderness to someplace I don't remember exactly where but I imagine it's kind of like, edge of some great big mountain Vista or someplace in the wilderness. And, and, and the father said, you know, these mountains don't care about your hair. And that she said, frieder kind of loosened up from this kind of, you know, where she was kind of caught by her haircut. So the wilderness can change our perspective, can inspire us with beauty. The Wilderness can be placed, it's still tranquil or quiet. In many ways. Someone once said, The forest is a tranquil place, but it's not a quiet place. Sometimes there's a lot of animal sounds and sounds but it's a it's a tranquil place. And that tranquility that peacefulness can be very helpful for meditation practice, you don't get distracted by a lot of things.

So it's very easy to see you know how it's a great place to meditate. But Buddhist spiritual life is much more than meditation much more about getting peaceful and calm is also a very important aspect of developing ourselves, developing our character developing our strengths, the two of you kind of need to go together to just become peaceful just become empty. Without also developing some inner strength sometimes ends up to be kind of lopsided person lopsided kind of psyche. So going into the wilderness requires a lot of us. It requires a change of attitude, it requires change of behavior, often, a lot of things you need to develop a lot of skills in order to live in the wilderness by yourself. One of the first things I think about the wilderness is that it's a place where you need to travel light. You don't carry a lot of your baggage with you in the wilderness. So you have to learn how to travel light, both physically, but also, psychologically, you have to let go of a lot of the kind of extra baggage we have in our minds, extra concerns preoccupations, so we can really be present earlier this year. I went backpacking by myself for five days. And I was the first person I think, in the back country have been Emerald, immigrant brothers. And it was seductively parklike seemed very peaceful and relaxing and beautiful. And the first days was kind of just, you know, you know, just you know, you know, seems so innocent or so beautiful, so pastoral or romantic and you know, everything was fine and harmonious New Year. And, but you know, you've When you go if you're by yourself, you know, there's no one to help you if you slip or something happens. And when I got to the to as far as i was i was going to go then I noticed that it looked like it might rain, and I've crossed several deep rivers in order to get that far. And so I better get back across these rivers before they swell. And, and so I started hiking back, but I thought that the route I had planned to go back was at lower elevation than I'd gone in, but I hadn't hadn't anticipated that it was a north side of the slope. And so there were huge snow fields still there and the trail couldn't be found. And some places it it just was impassable and had to go around a mountain one point and

because the trails were so wet with streams of water, often district trails couldn't be we're confused confused trails with these running streams that kind of run off the trails that look like trails to me. And I found that that last full day that I was hiking in there, I tried to hike out as far as I could hike 13 hours. And every moment was a was a question of tracking, I had to be really present, I couldn't let my mind wander and think about my life or whatever. I had to be there for every moment, every moment was consequential. I'd be present and kind of figuring out where the next step was going to be, where the trail was, where it was not where at the might be backtrack, where was I go back to where I last saw the trail and find it. And I felt 13 hours of this kind of very intense mindfulness practice if you'd present, present, present present. And after about halfway through the day, I realized what I was doing, I was kind of amazed at the degree of presence because it was consequential. And you come to these rivers you have to kind of consequential how you cross the rivers. And you have to be very careful, but I promised my wife and you know, they were up to my waist. At one point I had to cross the lake and the trail I couldn't believe Even when right through a lake. I mean, the lake was kind of clear. So you can kind of see that you can kind of see the trail. And I was I guess it later and they sit late in the season, I guess, like, so big. So I walked through the lake was up to my waist. And

the wilderness sometimes is a place of hardship. And for all the kind of idyllic descriptions of being in the wilderness, there's lots of idyllic descriptions of it. Especially if you go to places were tropical India or Thailand. The litany of interesting insects you have to contend with, not to mention the leeches and scorpions, spiders, and then the Cobras, the snakes. And then there's the Tigers. And there's the mountain lions around here are one of our reverent vendors. rated local Vipassana teachers was in the wilderness this spring in Santa Cruz Mountains, and was roared out by mountain lion. Basically mountain lion was saying she never saw it but adored it plenty. She's just frozen shooting and smears it she stood up against the trees trying to figure out where is it. And it took her a while to realize that nothing less than one or two get away. So she went back where she came from, and then further went, bless the doors. But she said it was terrifying to have him. I've heard a lion roar once but probably has nothing like similar. So it happens right here. And now there's a lot of stories in the forest tradition, Buddhism of people practicing with tigers, rhinoceroses, elephants, and other kind of things that occur in the forest. And it's considered part of the training to contend with that. Those kinds of encounters. So rather than being a distraction from practice, it's what allows the mind to become strong. And you have to you have to in order to survive, you have to kind of It's only you and those wild the wildlife you know, it's not like we can't it monastics when they go in the forest, they don't have guns, they have weapons. So it's really up to you and what you know your own minds, the state of your mind the skills of your mind, abilities, you have to contend with this dangerous nature. Some of the minette Forest amongst talking about getting sick, deep in the forest, and they might know a little bit about herbal medicines of the forest. But mostly the herbal medicines don't help, then they're really left there to practice with their illness, and to use their power or their mind to not contend with the illness to help cleanse themselves or to help stay stay relaxed or, or somehow to very deeply penetrate the nature of suffering while they're deeply sick. And I've had friends who've been practicing in the forests of Thailand who had to deal with malaria as part of the forest practice. I don't I don't reckon If you go into the forests of Thailand get malaria. But, but you get a sense for these kinds of stories of what the practicing the forest is not just an idyllic place. It requires a lot and requires a lot of character building a lot of renunciation, a lot of letting go. And it's not like practice, you know, in comparison to some of these Forest Practices that go to spirit rocks, like going to the Hilton. You know, you know, it's the biggest danger you have to worry about there is you know, well, there are mountain lions, I guess, but it's pretty safe there.

The other thing that this tradition talks about the value of the forest, is it a forest teaches the Dharma. Nature is a place to teach Dharma and one of the founder of the modern Thai forest tradition. Gentleman says that when he was first ordained, his teacher took him into the forest. So he can learn

the Dharma, from the trees and the rivers and the flowers and the animals, that those are teaching the Dharma, so to speak, speaking the Dharma to you. And there's a lot of Dharma to be found in the wilderness. Some of the sometimes some monks talk about encountering death in the forest, dying animals or dead animals and then having to kind of contend with that and find the Dharma and they're seeing impermanence in nature, seeing impermanence in nature, and then seeing that same impermanence reflected in oneself. See that one's own body and inner life, and to see that one's inner life in one's own life. One's Own psychological, physical and psychological life is very similar the same as the life of nature around us. One of the great forest monks of Thailand who died a few years ago was John Podesta. And he had a forest monastery in southern Thailand and his instructions When he died, was take my body and prop it up against a tree in the forest. And just let it decay there. Partly so the monks can just see the actual process how it works. And because he was so famous, he didn't get his wish. They think that the world or the king and everybody got involved in the kind of big world funeral.

But the connection to nature is more intimate in Buddhism. They simply we can learn from nature, get Dharma principles from nature. They're the classic teachings of Buddhism. There's there's such an intimate relationship between nature and the human mind, or the that it's hard to separate them. That they're they're such close relationship to each other and the cause of perpetual cause and effect relationship between them is so intimate. That probably doesn't make sense. To have a sharp divide between the human world and the natural world, between the self out here in nature out there. And I think that often when Westerners have a strong divide, they miss misunderstand some of the Buddhist texts where they don't. That's not the worldview that existed 2500 years ago, the sharp divide was more actually a kind of a mutuality and interdependence, interaction of cooperative when teacher talks that nature and humans are cooperative, all life is a cooperative. They work together. And we find ancient myths in Buddhism, going back to the Buddha, that the state of human mind has a direct impact on nature around us in the environment. The more defiled the human mind is, the more the human mind is filled with greed, hate and delusion, the worse and worse the environment around us gets. And there's these myths that talk about how terrible gets just gets worse. worse and worse. We're actually in the upswing right now. According to the myth, things have gotten a lot better than what they were like the gods so bad at some point where people's lifespan was only seven days long. And just all these awful things were going on. And when things got really bad, and these things aren't as bad as they get, the way that society was renewed, was someone decided to go into the forest and practice and start living an ethical life first. And as people started living an ethical life and started practicing spiritual life, then then environment and nature that everything kind of started changing for the better again. And so that's kind of a myth. But that myth, you don't have to go very far to see how it's very true in many, many centuries, many times in human history, where human greed and aversion has created tremendous devastation around it, you know, it's really changed environments pretty dramatically in ways that have been very detrimental for everyone. So the state To the human mind in a state of the environment is so closely connected. And so part of taking responsibility for nature is also taking responsibility for ourselves and for our own mind, our own hearts and the quality of it, the state of it. So it then can help support the nature around us. If we don't see that relationship between the human heart, our hearts and the world around us, then there's maybe only other people's problems of the environment.

The connection to nature is even deeper than this in the in the in the tradition. You have quotes right? By the some of these forest monks.

Concerning the Dharma, the Dharma is the teaching, the Buddhist teachings, the teachings of truth, the teachings of realization. The Dharma is also the practices and the religion that come from spiritual practice in the Buddhist practice. There the Dharma is also understood as the some of the patterns and

laws that are inherent in human life and human nature. The Dharma is you know, what we take refuge in Buddhism, we take refuge in Buddha Dharma and the Sangha. Dharma is really central element to the whole Buddhist strong symbol strong has tremendous meaning in Buddhism. And here is Arjun Shah. He says, whether a tree, a mountain or an animal, it's all dharma. Everything is dharma. Whereas the Dharma, speaking simply that which is not Dharma doesn't exist. Dharma is nature. If one sees nature, when sees Dharma, if one sees Dharma, one sees nature, seeing nature, windows, the Dharma.

Buddha Dasa says the entire country cosmos is a cooperative, the sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees and the earth. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative, whether we realize that the world is a mutual interdependent cooperative enterprise, when we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering and death, then we can build a noble even a heavenly environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we will all perish.

Dharma, the Buddhist word for truth and the teachings is also the word for nature. That is because they are the same nature's the manifestation of truth and the teachings. When we when we destroy nature, we Destroy the truth and the teachings. When we protect nature, we protect the truth and the teachings. When I taught this workshop Tassajara One of the things I didn't anticipate is that the participant in the workshop, we're going to be surprised that there is still a forest tradition in Buddhism, that there's a monastic foresters and people who still to this, they thought it was something that existed long ago. But there are still people who choose to live their practice in the forest. And many of them will become monks or nuns, and they go off where they're still forests left in Thailand is very few left 5060 years ago, there are a lot now there's very little left. Now that it's these forest monks who are really some of the main people preserving the forest in Thailand, and their presence is kind of protecting it. But there are people who live this life there are people here in California, who live the forest monastic life Their forests are oak Chaparral, poison oak, woodland, and with bears and mountain lions up in Ukiah. And so these are the people that the workshop was quite surprised and inspire that this still existed. And there was some discussion about how useful would be in United States to have a forest tradition really well established here, because it would show a different relationship people can have to nature and other function of nature of the environment, people who go into the wilderness and to some degree, live it live in harmony with the wilderness. They're not there to exploit it for the brothers who live there in a very kind of non violence simple way. And two people, one person who had land asked me, What would it take for me to donate this land to quit to be a forest monastery? Wasn't it I thought was great. Wow. And so I told them all these things, again, addresses of Forest monks, and how you go about looking into it. And maybe he could find a group of forest monks to come to his state instead of a forest monastery. Part of the function of forest monks, is to be, in some sense, show a radical alternative way of living a life. And I'll end with one more quote from one of these forest monks. The lives of forest monks and nuns and the pattern of relationships in the monastic community, convey to people in the larger society certain messages, some of which deny or resist the prevailing values. Such messages point to the true value of life, indicating that development of inwardness is much more important than wealth and power. With a life of tranquility and material simplicity is more rewarding and fulfilling. Such messages provide both hints and warnings, which enable people to stop and reflect upon their lives, leading them to seek themselves rather than material gain and glory. Such messages are especially revolutionary for society blindly obsessed by impoverished values, to have forest monasteries admits, or to put it more correctly elevated above the lay society is to have communities of resistance that by their nature and very existence, questioned the validity of popular values. So is

America ready for that? So those are my thoughts. And it's kind of kind of a rough summary of what I talked last week. And we have a couple of minutes if anybody like to make any comments or questions

Yes, please.

So much.

movie itself is a work of art

that sounds familiar

Beautiful, getting up at four o'clock in the morning and putting one breath next to the other over and over again to finally some of them stick together and then make a beautiful pattern. Yes. Sounds like monastic life. Yes.

If you have a certificate of death and you can bear that person on your own property, so it occurs to me that perhaps having your body in a proper order so the question is, since in San Mateo County, people have the right to bury their dead and they're on property, you need to get a permit for that. And if you sell the property, I don't know exactly what happens then but, but but you can get a permit. And so maybe that maybe she said maybe in San Mateo County, we could do the same thing. You know, some of us when we die, we just kind of go into the woods there and prop ourselves up against the tree. And I don't think you can get permit for that. I think there's probably sanitation and health concerns around open corpses in San Mateo County. So I hope that was interesting and yes

and cold and Yes. And so if you think I know the monks in Thailand have something called the gork, which is a big umbrella, but they hang from a tree and then has mosquito netting draped on the sides. So they sit in with the mosquito netting. So that helps a little bit with the insects but not completely. And that's part of the value of being in the forest is that it requires us to muster greater level of strength and commitment and letting go then meditating in some places really comfortable. And you know, for just about just about becoming peaceful, then maybe we're better being in the perfectly air conditioned, beautifully quiet kind of you know, place. But the point is not just be peaceful. The point is also to be able to challenge the mind and some of the deepest places the mind is challenged with mind holds on grasps has a grasp clings to what it thinks is really important. And clinging to comfort is one of the great grasping that people have and, and learning how to have uncomfortable situations and have the mind be stronger than discomfort. So the mind stays peaceful is part of the spiritual cultivation in Buddhism. So you don't wanna just be relaxed, you want to have the mind strong enough. So you can, it can be balanced in any circumstance at all. If we're going to be if we're going to be Buddhism is about freedom, and you can only be free when things are comfortable. That's not really freedom. So part of the part of the value of going into places where it's cold or difficult, is to contend with those and there's many stories of people who, who know practiced in the cold or practice with insects or whatever, and, and then relied on the strength of their own mind. aligned with one moral story from the ancient suttas, of a person, monk or nun, a mature witch, who was practicing in the forest, and it's cold. And Mara comes along, Mara can be understood as kind of the personification of inner forces of death. Different things. And Mr. says it's too cold here, you should leave the forest and go find some comfortable house a place to go meditate and lock the door there. And, and the monk says, Oh no, I don't need to, I rely on the power of my meditation on loving kindness to, to overcome the cold. So you can develop a very strong concentration to deal with a cold. And so that's kind of a development of oneself. Not for everyone, but just for some people. One little quick little thing, then we could stop. There was a monk in time of the Buddha, who asked the Buddha to go if you can go into the forest to practice he got a

beautiful place to practice. And the Buddha said, No, this is not the time. And the monk asked three times, and we asked the Buddha three times it would have to say yes, he went to the woods to practice. And he came back a few days later and said, it's amazing. All the conditions, they were just right. There was brutal. Forest place at temperatures right there with some insects, whomever. And I sat down to meditate, and I just couldn't get my mind concentrated. And the Buddha said, Yeah, you weren't ready to go in the forest. So, you know, there's also preparation for that part of practice. So maybe someday we'll have a poorest place up in the foothills here and go out there and practice. So thank you all very much.