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SPEAKERS

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So we're about I don't know how long eight hours, nine hours away from that hallowed evening that we sent celebrate here in America. And probably all of you know the word hello means sacred. We use it mostly I think in two different contexts in America with hallowed ground is usually a battleground for patriots of dies, and it's something like that, or cemeteries were there. And then we talked about Halloween, the evening of the hallow of the sacred. And its associated reasons called that is that it's the night before All Saints Day. And so November 1, back in England, I guess, or wherever, it's was All Saints Day. And which is, you know, imagine with all the saints so coming together one day, it's a pretty sacred wonderful day. And so here we have the evening before all the saints come, all the demons and goblins and ghosts. And all the kind of things we usually don't associate associated with a sacred, come visit visiting, they have their last hurrah or something. And now the, you know, kind of the maybe odd thing that's happened in America is that Halloween has been domesticated. And so we have these wonderful demons that come around who are about three feet four feet tall, and knock on our doors. Or some people have Halloween parties, but mostly it's kind of a domesticated tradition. Some people come as angels and all kinds of things like that they're kind of domesticated or tame, they're relatively safe. However, it doesn't have to go too far back in history to realize that even angels were terrifying beings. And people have wrestled with them and fought with them and they fought with each other and

So I think it's, you know, kind of kind of one of the few times in our culture where we kind of give some kind of lip service to respecting or honoring or calling forth that side of life which we can call, you know, non sacred. And if we allow for this kind of distinction between the sacred and the profane, the sacred and the demonic, sacred and the hidden, the sacred and the unacknowledged they kind of pushed away or the repressed. If we live in that kind of world, then it becomes very important to somehow honor respect call forth occasionally, that side which is pushed down or repressed or hidden. I don't know if we need to be to live in that kind of duality between the sacred and the profane, sacred and whatever. And I think that Buddhist practice is trying to point out in the direction of trying to heal that those kinds of divisions, so we don't have some idea of some Sacred Realm apart from some profane realm, but that all of life is what it is, we might want to call it sacred. Or we might want to call it just what it is just like is what it is. It is what it is before the mind separates into these dualities. But it's such a strong tendency in human minds in human culture, to create dualities to create these divisions. And then once we have divisions there's what's preferred not preferred this what's we're willing to look at and not willing to look at. and Buddhist culture has it as much as any culture I think probably every every time you get human beings together, you get a culture gets created. And this family's cultures and neighborhood cultures and, you know, National Cultural kinds of cultures. And cultures by I think, by their nature tend to focus on what holds people together. creates harmony, which creates healthy, healthier relatedness among people. And so there's often certain values that do that. And those values, then get championed and honored. And those values of those ways of being which don't relate to that

kind of way of being, then often gets ignored or pushed aside or people kind of shy to show that side of themselves. And here and what I've seen in many of the Buddhist environments that I've been in, it's very common for Buddhists to champion values like kindness, compassion, being peaceful, being calm, all kinds of great things that Buddhists are supposed to be. And when you have a culture like that, then the opposite of that tends not to be we don't feel so free to say that to me, come to IMC and most people are kind of polite and nice and kind and, and we don't growl at each other that often and yell and we don't, you know, show people you know, are horrible anger, demonic anger, and how were you this last week, you know, fine You know, I was possessed by some kind of demon of wrath and I was ready to kind of, you know, whatever. And you know, it's not a Buddhist thing to do. And so people sometimes aren't willing to talk about that side of themselves so much in these kinds of circles. So it can be said that kind of the shadow side of Buddhist cultures, sometimes it is anger, or some, you know, because sometimes Buddhists don't want to show their anger so much. This is what I've seen in many Buddhist environments I've been in this is of course, there are exceptions. And sometimes there's those exceptions we wish we wish weren't exceptions. That person is always and the but I think any culture has this kind of shadow side. And it's very important to realize that and then a culture society, individual people need to find some way to to bring that to light and so Halloween in a sense, perhaps it's an attempt to do that. Some people call their Alter Ego a dress up as an alter ego or the dress up, but what they're most afraid of or the dress up in some aspect of themselves, they haven't really had a chance to kind of act out so well. And so it's a kind of chance to bring something to life that is often not brought to light. The I like to think that in contrast to culture, Buddhist culture, Buddha's the function of Buddhist practice is to bring these things to light. And maybe in the privacy of our own practice, you don't have to necessarily demonstrate it to everybody else. But part of the function of practice is to kind of break the division break this the walls between the we might have between what's preferred and non preferred between what we what we think is appropriate and not appropriate between the sacred and the profane. So it all can arise equally freely into the psyche, into the mind into awareness. And then once it arises into awareness, then to learn how to be free liberating in the midst of all that, and no longer living that sometimes the divisions we often tend to live in. So the function of the practice

is to impart is to bring out what is often ignored or repressed. And for some people, it's not the demonic, but it's the what's most beautiful. There are some people for him, the beauty that they are, is not something they're willing to face and look at they're shy about it or embarrassed or just it goes against the grain or against goes against their religious upbringing that what's most beautiful or joyful in them can be honored and respected. So the part that's often repressed or hidden, it can be a wide range of phenomena, both beautiful and ugly. But it's a function of practice to really let all of it come up. And, and I find it quite wonderful and joyful and liberating, that I have a practice that you know, that I don't have to censor myself, that at least I might censor myself a little bit in public at times, but Because maybe it's not appropriate to say what's on my mind Exactly. But at least in my practice, or my practice relationships and relationships I've had with my teachers, for example, that that's what those relationships are, that's a place within me that I'm not going to censor, but rather try to bring everything to awareness to really see what it actually is. And unless we have some kind of healthy relationship to that which we don't want to look at ourselves, what we don't want to look at is going to fester and cause difficulties and problems. It's been pointed out that in some cultures, they have carnivals and carnivals are a time to release social pressure. Sometimes carnivals are designed so that society gets turned upside down. And the hierarchies of society are kind of turned Topsy, topsy turvy. And so it's releases a lot of the pressure that builds up when you have a fixed society and fixed hierarchies and rules and lines of authority. And Carnival is a time where everybody just lets loose, releases the steam and that lasts you know for another year until they have the next current Or perhaps

in East Asia, in Buddhist East Asia, Asia, they have a ceremony. The ritual in Japanese is called sakaki. And so gaki means feeding the hungry ghosts. And, and when I was in a Zen monastery in Japan, we spent the whole month feeding the hungry ghosts, the hustle author in the, you know, in the Buddha Hall and, and we had this whole ceremony and chanting and all the stuff we had to do. And it was all about feeding these hungry ghosts. And it was a lot about in first inviting them to come into the temple, invite him to be present, inviting these ghosts to be there. And then at the end of the end of the month, if you fed them and give them Dharma talks and all these wonderful things to Ghosts, then you sent them back and to wherever they came from, and till next year where they're invited back, you do the same thing. And I was kind of surprised by a lot of things I saw in the Zen monastery in Japan. I had grown up kind of in western Zen Buddhism and, and it's just like, you know, very, very simplistic. It was kind of, you know, what they tell you a story of DT Suzuki, someone like that, or maybe John Cage influenced by DT Suzuki in the 50s got up on a stage and pointed to some kind of, I don't know, it was a painting or something, you know, you know, the wall behind him and said, you know, what is that point is his blue kind of painting or something. And people in the audience started apparently making all kinds of ideas as telling what it was. And finally he said something like, it's just blue. And they were interpreting and making all kinds of stories. What am I doing And sometimes blue is just blue sometimes a rock is just a rock to look at, if it doesn't have to be anything else. And there's something about Zen training where you learn to see things directly as they are just be in the present moment how things are without any kind of complicated elaboration. And, and, and then I went to the Zen monastery in Japan and it was populated with deities of all kinds. I couldn't believe it. Any wisdom was populated deity, you know, deities are equipped with spirits and ghosts and you know, they had one of the surprises once a month we went in and up to this little hut up in the mountainside and we recited the perfection of wisdom literature. We didn't recite it because ritual perfection of wisdom literature is really just a really long book, really, really long book. And it will take years to go recite the whole thing. When you have this accordion fan like book, what you do is you go and then you read it. You do it a few times. And, and but the deity that was there was being appeased or taught or something was the goddess of the Ganges. What in the world is the goddess of the Ganges doing it is that Japanese Zen monastery. I mean, that was in India, there's the Indians who do the, you know, Goddess of the Ganges. And, and then to the beginning of the practice period, we did this whole thing about kind of, I forget exactly how it went. But somehow relating and caught with kindness and generosity to the spirits of the place, each place that have spirits. And if you're going to do the practice period, you can just spend this retreat time in a particular place. You want to somehow relate to those spirits and ask permission to practice and ask for their support. And then we had these hungry ghosts that came for a whole month was Quite a wild place. And that was the first place where I met someone who actually said they met a ghost. The one of the monks said back back at his home temple, he met, he seen ghosts and when you take care of ghosts in Japan is you chat the Heart Sutra. we chant Heart Sutra, and that took care of that.

Why am I telling you all this? The other sakaki that's why this month long thing. And so what happens here in the West, is in western Zen circles, many of them is they've adopted the cigar key ceremony, but rather than having it in Japan in July, when it's usually done, around July, it's done. They do that things at Halloween. Some of you have been to the Obon says ceremonies Japanese temples do that's part of that it's part of the whole same thing. And what they do on Halloween is entered. They have a ceremony called sakaki, feeding the hungry ghosts. And it's done to feed two different kinds of hungry ghosts or record recognize acknowledge two different things. One is the people who have died over the last year in recent times, for whom we still have karmic karmic connections or unworked karmic connections for so to evoke their spirit evoke their presence evoke the memories of them, and somehow in that in their Vokes presence, and invoke memories of them to try to resolve or finish or complete or acknowledge something that needs to happen in that relationship to the people who have passed away or to feed them. And the other is to acknowledge something about ourselves, the hungry

ghosts, the unacknowledged that we haven't seen in ourselves. So one of the one of the chants or that's done in the Zen center. They say at the ceremony welcome hung Ghosts be at ease. The vaguely known the unconscious and unknown. Welcome. The safe. migrate was last time you said that to yourself. Be safe, like whatever comes later come be safe. You're welcome here.

Here's another version. or another thing is chanted sometimes, as part of this ceremony in Japanese in temples. 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 offer each of you food. We sincerely hope that each and every one of you 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 play freely in the pure lands of the 10 directions. So sakaki then is transported into Halloween in the West Indies, and then at this time to invite all the differently spirits, the unseen, the demonic, the difficult, the hidden doors, invite them and help them make feels make them feel safe. And then in some way, feed them. The question is, what does it mean to feed the unseen to feed that which is repressed or hidden? And I think each of you needs to answer that for yourself. You know, it's different things in different times. But to feed it to not just push it away, but actually feed it. There's a story I don't remember so well, but I'll just make it up. But I don't remember. That's how they do still began anyway. It just that's usually they don't admit it. They're made up of milarepa great Tibetan Yogi who spent a long time practicing in a cave, high up in the mountains. And he was off away from his cave one day and he came back and escape was visited by five demons gruesome demons, big teeth, you know, teeth, the size of forks, you know, big gaping mouth, blood dripping down. tears of blood streaming down from their eyes and bloodshot eyes. You know, claws the size of chainsaws and

fiery breath as he went into his cave and there are these five demons And so the first thing he did was he growled back at them and said and kind of started to attack. Well, one of them run away. And the other four started dancing onto him. But didn't work well enough. So then I try and change tactics. And he said, Oh, it's good to see you. Welcome. You know, inviting Tim, welcome. So good to see you. You know, what can I do for you? Why don't you stay for a while I like your tea. And with that, two of them vanished. And but then two are left and they were the fiercest, meanest, baddest demons of the ball. Right? I count right. That's not how I meant to tell the story. The first time was me when he was growled at them. Two of them disappeared. That's okay. And the second time that he offered kindness to more disappeared, and then, but then again, then now that really the meanest one kept approaching and big, open, teeth dripping in blood are ready to kind of snap all over milarepa he tried me used to tricks he had, so he didn't know what else to do. So what he did was he just laid himself down in the mouth of the demon. And with that the demon vanished, and he found himself sitting peacefully in his meditation cave. So he fed himself to the demon. And so different different ways of different approaches. Sometimes we want to meet what's difficult with our ferocity, and that's appropriate. Sometimes we want to meet what's difficult with tremendous kindness, kindness and gentleness, and that's what's appropriate. And sometimes, we want to just feed it, somehow feed it, support it, help it along with us. selves feed ourselves place ourselves in it. And one of the one of the things that means is when there's something strong energy, strong emotions that arise are strong things with our mindfulness, the power of mindfulness, especially if we built up a certain strength of mindfulness, to use that ability to be present in place ourselves right in the middle of our strongest feelings, kind of bring our attention in places those right there. It's great to do with meditation practice where you don't have to act and do anything, just sit there and let these horses come bubble up and just sit in the middle of them and feed yourself to them. With the idea when you feed yourself to a demon like that. You're not trying to get it you're not trying to get rid of it. See, the first two approaches milarepa was trying to get rid of the

demons through these different tactics. But the last one he gave up trying to get rid of it and just surrender to it gave himself to it. A friend of mine had a dream many years ago that he was holding a poisonous snake by the neck. And he couldn't let go it is safe that way, right? Because it can bite you. But, you know, after a while your arm gets tired. He wants to let go of it, but he couldn't let go of it because then we could, you know, come back and bite him. So he didn't know what to do. So in the dream he was going around like this and wondering what did wondering what to do. And finally in the dream, he let go of the snake, and the moment he let go of the snake, the snake vanished in that great tree. So sometimes the moment we let go of our grip, or our aversion to things, that's just place ourselves in the middle of it, allow it to be there in unconditioned complete way. And sometimes, it's no longer the frightening thing there was there's no longer even there sometimes. It doesn't happen often that quickly. And also it doesn't work very well. If you're going to unconditionally feed yourself to the demon accepted completely. That's presence there. So that'll go away. That doesn't work either. So it's a little bit you know, something how do you do this and sometimes can't really do it. It's really something occasionally, it's something you can't really do. But there's something that you're forced to do and you have to give up. And sometimes in spiritual practice, there will come a time when you're up against the wall and you kind of trying, trying, trying, and you realize it's hopeless. All you can do is give up, give up, all everything. And only then does something happen when you really give up. And I've been in situations like that, where I try to give up, give up, I give up. And, you know, nothing was happening. It was just awful. And finally, finally, you know, I couldn't give up but just like it's hopeless. And then something changes.

So the demonic or the beautiful, the hidden, the repressed that which we don't want to look at. And sometimes it's helpful to have rituals, because it's hard sometimes the psyche to really evoke these things or give them expression unless sometimes We do a ritual or we do a ceremony we do a party. Some of you may be went to. There was a party last night called, was it was it called for Buddhists? Or was it What was it called was a wholesome title? Many of you want admitting there. Just there was a called hungry ghosts for all Buddhists. And here are some demons from early Buddhism, the ferocious, they're dangerous. They will sack your life away, they will destroy many of the things that encounters Not always, but it can be the worst the Miller epass Pierce demons in this cave. See if you identify any of these and yourself sensual desire discontent, hunger and thirst, craving sloth and torpor. Fear, doubt, obstinacy, obstinacy, praise and fame, slander, and disparaging others pretty good listener. What's left? Those are the 10 armies of Mara. Any armies are the kind of Buddhist devil. So the number of approaches to the demonic so much I've talked about

one way is more kind of external. And that is association with things that are that are with wise friends or pure friends association with that which is kind of pure in relationship to maybe what is most very difficult to get in In the Japanese Buddhist pantheon of Bodhisattvas, Japanese or Japanese Buddhism or Mahayana, Buddhism has this whole pantheon of almost godlike figures called bodhisatta. They call sometimes sometimes called celestial Bodhisattvas. And they're all kind of archetypes. And all the Ark is archetypes have functions as archetypes do, and all these archetypes are depicted human form are depicted as lay people, household people, people who you know, just like like us, most of us, I think are lay and except for one, and not one, his name is Japanese is Jizo Bodhisattva. And Jizo is the Buddhist is the Bodhisattva for a variety of things, right people, it's pretty sad for children. But it's also the Bodhisattva of people who are really down and out. People who really gone to the depths of despair, people who are maybe depths of dealing with Some addiction issues and just kind of, kind of, you know, it can be pretty dire the depths of you know, nothing can reach into, into sometimes to people you can't even talk to them. You can't really help nobody get to them. Things are so dire and difficult and so diluted or caught in their addiction. And Jizo is the is the archetype that speaks to those people? I think because he's the he's the only one who's a monk. And the monk is the archetype of purity, that

somehow the archetype of visions, that archetype can sometimes speak to people get their attention that other things can't. And it's still I think, very much true, I think, in our modern society that people are clearly identified as monks, or as religious people. You know, somehow, people gravitate to them or see them in different ways. Before I became a Zen monk and shaved my head and wear robes. I was this long haired hippie, long beard and long hair down to here. And some people either ignored me or you know, you like, the cool people say, Hey, man. But you know, you know, there certainly was a lot a lot of people just ignored me I'd sit on airplane seats and the next day wouldn't talk to me the whole time there. And but once I was ordained as a priest, I noticed that everyone would come talk to me all these kinds of categories of people who didn't want anything to do with me before. Now they would walk up to me and bus stops, introduce themselves and talk to me. And people would tell me these amazing things about their life. And the only thing happened to that shake my head, you know, somehow that archetype, that image has a very, very profound one for the human psyche. I've had two friends, who in their moments of despair, so I have photographs of on the wall on the wall of Ramana Maharshi. And seeing that photograph turned the whole life around. And you know, seeing that face of Ramana Maharshi was a great Indian saint. And somehow so here's a photograph of it kind of, you know, in their deepest despair, some caught their attention. So this is kind of like using duality to heal duality. So sometimes people are depth of some great dualistic despair. Sometimes you use the opposite end of the duality to kind of bring some kind of to pull them out. Some people like to turn to a power that's greater, rather than matching duality of duality and some power that's greater than what's most difficult. And there's many things people use for that. I would like to suggest that in the mindfulness tradition be possible that the power that's greater than almost anything, is the power of awareness, essential. It's a power which we develop and strengthen which was used, but it's a tremendously powerful force, the powerful the force of attention, and it has the ability to handle and meet anything that that arises. any difficulty anything is threatening and challenging. And it's a wonderful thing to have developed that power and that ability for awareness itself, to hold what is what is going on. And awareness itself then allows us that the power of seeing things as they are seeing things as they are, unclouded by the dualism of, you know before and after, or dualism of better and, you know, good and bad or even self and other sometimes just to see things as they are, can be very, very freeing.

But that means really being willing to see things as they are being able to see ourselves as we are being able to be be willing to see that which is beautiful about ourselves. And that's what is difficult about ourselves to see the whole range of ourselves. unfiltered, Uncensored, who we actually are. And that means occasionally be able to see through really horrible, really difficult to remember once going seeing one of my Zen teachers and you know, usually you go to a teacher and it's peaceful you know, you sit in this interview and you met it sitting in meditation from You're together and then you have this nice talk and the person's teacher just sitting there and, you know, responds in whatever way was basically a common peaceful thing. And a good project Exactly. I forget the exact words he used for the teacher suddenly kind of leaned forward and opened his eyes wide his mouth and his hands like it's like I'm a demon what Where'd that come from? So you never know when you see these end teachers. What you're what you're gonna meet and but you just have some place where these things can bubble up is very important, and learn how to be present for it. The famous story of the kind of almost Also offense, the Liturgy of our tradition of Mara coming to see the Buddha. And the Buddha says admires the Buddhist devil. And the Buddha just saying to Mara, Mara, I see you, and Mara runs away. And it's a nice story. But thinking something about seeing, that's really, really profound important. And of course, Buddha can say, I see you because he really knew Mara. Well, some people can say I see you tomorrow, but we don't really know marwell anger, I see you, but you don't really know your anger. Fear, I see you, you don't really know your fear. But to really know something about really spend time with it and familiar with it being present or let it come into awareness to really know something so well, so well. That the power of saying I see you is all that's needed to become free of it. And that takes

familiarity to it getting to know something. naming it is very freeing We can understand that to some degree, the demonic within ourselves a difficult within ourselves the repressed within ourselves is a disowned parts of our personality. As long as they're not integrated, they'll still appear as demons. But once we've learned to integrate them or hold them in awareness and see them, they stopped being demonic.

So there are many different classes of this kind of unseen world. And one of one class is called the hungry ghosts. The Knights, the Knights of the ghosts, and hunger ghosts are those beings which have huge, hungry mouth, and huge even bigger, huge Huge hungry bellies. And then they have these throats that are, you know, as thin as a matchstick. And no matter how much they kind of try to, you know, eat, they just can't get enough food down their throat fast enough to feel their belly. So they're always hungry, always wanting more and more and more and more and more and more, kinda like a six year old, sometimes. And something about the nature of desire that can make people into hungry ghosts. And then there's the assurance, which are kind of like the called, sometimes called the jealous gods. And they're the gods that are kind of beings that are always jealous, jealous of others who have really wonderful things. And there's some demonic that arises and that jealousy can destroy a lot of things in life. And they're always fighting against the gods because they're jealous. And then there's the realm in Buddhist Buddhist cosmology of the fear, fear realm. Those beings which are motivated and driven by fear, and whether you like it or not, you might not like what the Buddhists say about this but they fear realm is the animal realm. animals that are said to represent fear. And, and so, and then there's the hell realms, realms where just unremitting suffering goes on for a long time.

So Halloween has been domesticated. But it's something that we have to remember. We shouldn't be to domestic about it. We shouldn't we should be, I think it's important to be very respectful of the this realm that Halloween is pointing towards. And understand that it's not necessarily something which is, you know, lightweight or something's just simply to play in. But it's something really big, very important in serious part of human life. And in the playfulness, because it can be useful and helpful in many ways. But we're talking about very deep forces within human heart and human psyche. And sometimes we need to call forth. Powers, forces of compassion, forces of love for forces of strength, in order to be able to be able to meet these kinds of forces within us. And certainly forces of wisdom to know how to approach these things and what to do.

When I noticed that a lot of the stories that my son, fairytales stuff my son encounters at school have to do with vanquishing the dragons and demons. And, and I think it's fine, maybe healthy for kids to learn that that side of human life. But what I don't hear is the opposite, which is how to befriend the demons and dragons. So at home, I tell them stories and make up stories about befriend dragons and demons. and hoping that he gets the idea that sometimes you want to turn around and face these things. And so I'll end with one short stories that many of you heard, I love this story. Because the kind of story that even though you might know it, you're supposed to figure out how it applies to your life. I knew every time you hear it, so it's always knew that way. And that's a story of the ugly runt of a little throat troll. jumped up on the throne of the great Brahma, the great God, the great Zeus of the Indian Pantheon, and no one but Brahma sits on that throne. And this ugly runt of a little yaksha of a troll got up there. And all the other gods in court got angry and upset. And the more they got angry and upset and told them to get down off that throne, the bigger and stronger, more beautiful, that troll that he got. And they got confused. So they might be found Brahma, he was off someplace. So just something unusual is happening back on your throne. And they explained, he said, Oh, so he went back. I knew what to do. He said, he went back. And there he saw this beautiful, radiant, strong, huge being, but that time he had gotten really. And he said, Oh, I'm happy to see you. I hope you're comfortable up there. It's nice. I haven't seen you for a long time and about to him and as he offered his kindness, respect,

his acknowledgement of him being There, the troll got smaller and smaller and frontier and frontier and uglier and uglier, smaller and finally got so small he's disappeared. And then yeah, Rama got up back up on his throne. And he said, explained that little yaksha that little troll is an anger eating troll. And the more anger you express around it, the greater it more thrives. It feeds on your anger. But if you stop feeding it anger, then it just withers away. That's what he did. Brahma came and stopped being angry. So now you know what to feed and what not to feed. And may you enjoy Halloween so thank you