

2007-11-11 Saddha Faith Knowledge

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SPEAKERS

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Partly what I have in mind for today's talk is to turn you all into Buddhist scholars by first teaching you and telling you a word in Pali, Buddhist, ancient Buddhist language and then talking about the word for a while and leaving you with the task of figuring out what is your preferred translation of this word into English. And interesting enough? So the word in Pali is saddha saddha, spelled s a d d h a. In Sanskrit, it's shraddha. And it's a very ancient Indic word, it goes back to the ancient Vedas. So it could be as old as 4000 years old. And in the most ancient use of the word back in the ancient Vedas of India, it meant something like generosity or hospitality, but in particular in relationship to the gods. So the ancient Vedas believed in a kind of a gods. And if you worship them made offerings to them in various ways, were generous to them, offer them hospitality, then they in turn, would somehow give you health or help your rice crops to grow well or, you know, there's kind of reciprocal relationship. Then, it was a word that became very important. It's very important in Buddhism and the Buddha certainly emphasized it and And generally when it's translated into English, it's translated as faith. And faith, for some people is a very important word. And, and, but for some people, the word faith is a problematic word. Sometimes there's a lot of associations that go along with the word faith. Some of them are quite satisfying and comforting or happy associations. And some are unfortunate. Sometimes when people have had troubles sometimes with theistic religions, where faith is tied to believing a creed, then they don't want to have anything to do with faith because they don't have to believe in creed, which they have no evidence that really is true or something where they feel forced into believing something they don't believe in or something. So there's other associations with faith that maybe doesn't work for some people engage in Buddhism, even though it's the most common translate In this word, other translations of the word are people can people hear okay? out there in the hall? everyone hears okay. You can't hear out there. So, is that any better out there now? Yes. Can you hear?

Let's see. Oh. Let's see now. Can people hear out there now that was working now? Okay. So we're talking about faith and the word sutta. And sometimes sutta translate the state. And but there are other choices that some people by far prefer some translators and one is coffee. Common common one is confidence that sodomy is confidence, and other is conviction. And a third one that sometimes I've seen is trust. So we have this that's the most common translations in English, faith, confidence, conviction and trust. So, it's the word appears often in Buddhism and give you a couple of ideas of references. One is the Buddha was said at some point very emphatically, that there are a number of things which can be proved that turned out to have been empty, name and false. And one of those things are things that are held on faith. You can believe something or hold something or, or trust something, I have conviction of something of confidence in something which turns out to have been not worthy of trust, confidence, conviction, belief, faith, whatever. And so sometimes Buddhists talk about the problem with blind faith. Entering into believing something or having trusting something, when you don't really have all the evidence you haven't really investigated it. The Buddha when he talked about saddha, he

emphasized the importance of sometimes the importance of investigation, that before you have confidence, or faith or trust in a teacher, for example, you're supposed to check that teacher out. Investigate that person. Look them up and down and see if the person is influenced by greed? Is the person influenced by hate or confusion? And if it is, then perhaps you can't have any confidence in that person, certainly in those regards. But also if there's too much hate and delusion going on, then perhaps that influences colors, how they teach the Buddhist teachings. So it puts a high standard for these poor teachers to live up to. But I think it's really a good thing to do that somehow students you're supposed to check them out. And then and then based on having some kind of investigation, then to offer some degree of faith. So do you have confidence or some solder so this is called, sometimes called investigative faith, faith that's discovered through investigation. So the same thing can be true with teachings, rather than just taking teachings you know, or practices as blind thing. There could be some exploration, some consideration some investigation of these, some of that uses your reasoning, your logic, some that involves trial and error and learning about it, but you don't really Engage, you don't offer your faith or confidence, conviction until you've done some investigation doesn't mean that the investigation is conclusive. But you do some kind of checking out first. And then based on that kind of faith, or this word *saddha*, that whatever *sutta* is, wait for the plane to go by.

Whatever there's words *sutta* means it's not an end to itself. It's always presented in in the ancient teachings of the Buddha, as a motivation as something that prompts you or motivates person to engage in the path of practice. And the path of practice then, is the practice of integrity of meditation wisdom. This leads to deeper and deeper insight and Standing, at some point, what you have faith or confidence in, gets, because you're following a path of practice leads you to knowing to knowledge. So and then when says knowledge, then sometimes there's this wonderful stories of people who say, they have no more faith to the confusion of others. So there was one man who was being was at when Buddhist disciple, when disciples of the Buddha, who was very mature in his practice, and someone asked him something like, Well, do you have faith in the Buddha? Or your faith in this practice that he's teaching? And he said, No. And then the guy who asked the question said, Oh, good, you're really smart. If you shouldn't Of course, they shouldn't have trust and faith in these you know, bald headed guys. And then the Buddhist disciple said, Oh, but can I ask you a question in return? Oh, yeah, you can ask a question. And he said, What is more valuable or what is more refined? What is more *saddha*, faith or knowledge? And the guy was critical of the Buddha said, Oh, knowledge is more, you know, valuable, more refined than faith. And then the Buddha's disciples said, Well, it was the things that you were asked about faith in. I've actually practiced a long time. And I know I have knowledge about this so I don't have to have faith. And then the guys was upset at Oh, you're just a fool. So on one hand, he was smarter than the other hand. He was full Based on the preferences of the questioner and, basically what you see here is a movement, from faith from the word *saddha* to knowledge to understanding. And the so this is where the *saddha* is at the heart or maybe it's the heartfelt at the heart of that which motivates a person to engage in a deepening practice of the path. So, that sense is not an end to itself. It's not like you're supposed to have faith and then just everything's gonna be taken care of, or have trust and everything will be okay. It's a kind of trust and confidence in practice, in teaching and teaching our practice to go together. And so in that sense, and prefer the word confidence, it's having confidence in something. And then the confidence you're able to act as opposed to just sit to trust and expect that everything somehow will be taken care of for you.

So, one of the really most common objects of confidence, conviction, they have *saddha* in the early Buddhist discourses, is in the Buddha himself. And it was kind of a little bit grand, wonderful language of faith in the discourses of the Buddha, that you know about about language about to the Buddha is a wonderful he is a perfect he wasn't all that. But the Buddha is presented as someone, object or thing so then I'll explain a bit further about that because some people get troubled by that, oh no, you know, you

know, the Buddha is supposed to kind of worship this guy now have faith in this person who I don't know. So, the Buddha gave an example once or say this way some some, a prince came to the Buddha and said, if people engage in the teachings of practice you teach, how long will it take them to become awakened, liberated to change to some degree of peace? And the Buddha said to him, ah, Prince, it seems that you are really have been really well trained as a I don't know what the word is, as that elephant Master, someone who you know, back in ancient India, they had all these elephants in the world. My hood, my hood is someone who trains in a minute, so he was trained to kind of, you know, he was trained to tame elephants and herd them around and ride them and do all the things you can do with elephants. And so the prince was a hoot. And, and so the Buddha said, if someone comes to you and has no solder, no confidence in you, once if someone comes to you want to be trained to learn how to be an elephant Master, and that you're going to train them but they have no faith in you. No confidence in either what you're doing. Can you train them and the brain said, they have no confidence in me. I can't train them, they have confidence in me. And so but I would have said the same way if someone comes to me to be trained, but they have no confidence in me. I can't train them. So what I like about this technology is that he uses a very common, he uses something similar to the life of the prince himself as an example. And he uses something which is a skill, so that you train and develop it. And probably many of you have developed a skill or some capacity in your life. Maybe you've learned a musical instrument or you've learned some craft, you've been to school, perhaps, variety of things. That all involved involves developing some mastery over something, to learn a skill to do the to cultivate something. And I think that often, we don't even think about the confidence, the conviction, the faith that we give to the people who are teachers. But if you go to college, for example, and nowadays, if you go to college, the college textbooks are really expensive. And, and so you sign up for this class, and you have to invest all this money in your textbook. And to some degree, we do that with confidence or conviction a little bit. It's not not it's not it's not blind necessarily, but we give the benefit of the doubt at least we can give the benefit of the doubt.

We say that's kind of a negative way of saying it, but we kind of have some faith that the university has hired, the college has hired someone who is trustworthy enough to have chosen a worthy book that you need. So we invest certain degree of confidence or faith in that teacher that institution in order to put out \$200 for the textbook or something. So you sign up for a class and he has some confidence that the university has some, you know, chosen someone who's basically the good. And you know, you find you go there and you find out that actually there was a mistake, the person doesn't know what they're talking about. But, but you have to invest some degree of faith in order to put up the money to sign up. So the idea of having offering some confidence or some faith or some trust or conviction, in someone who's going to teach is a very important element of learning a skill. Now, this is particularly important, I would say, in spiritual practice, like in Buddhist practice, because what's being asked, or what's the path that's being offered, is something that includes so much of our life, so much of who we are. So it's such a radical transformation, that if we're going to engage in this very radical transformation and invest so much of ourselves in this, then I think you can require some high degree of confidence, conviction, trust, faith, whatever you'd like to call it. So one of the most common objects of faith in this early tradition is the Buddha himself. The other objects of faith are the Dharma, the teachings and the truths that come with practice. And the third is the community of practitioners, especially those practitioners who have somehow realized, have no this for themselves have not just have it on faith, that practice is good. But they're taking the practice to the point of knowledge, they really know. The practice lead somewhere, they know where it leads to. And they've, you know, tasted that transformation in themselves. So they have faith in those three things. And the most common expression of that faith or confidence is in a formula called the triple refuge. And so Buddhists will say I take refuge in the Buddha I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha and the idea of refuge can for some people Little bit of what I was gonna use the word defeatist. It's kind of like, you're helpless, you're here, you

need to go someplace for protection, it goes someplace for refuge. And, you know, you're not really taking responsibility for yourself, you're just kind of going to get help someplace. Now, you know that you're a Buddhist, you're a refugee. And so the idea of a refuge and, but the idea of refuge is understood in this early tradition, as this expression of faith that you you're, you know, you go to the University of professor and little bit here and you're interesting, a certain degree of confidence in this person in this thing. And then trusting of confidence is an important part of, of learning. If you don't have some respect for confidence in the future. Maybe you're not gonna really listen to what the person has to say. So the idea of refuge is offering this respectful confidence, confident respect or something And then it's meant to be not just, you know kind of surrender of your, of your own responsibility for your own practice. What it is, is, is having confidence that there is an orientation, there is a practice there is an example of people that support you in take responsibility for your life. So, rather than forfeiture of responsibility going for refuge is, is meant to be taking responsibility and taking responsibility with the support of this other help. And the thing we take responsibility for most in Buddhism is to understand our contribution to our well being to our happiness or suffering. To understand what do I contribute to the fact that I am upset, angry, depressed, sad, afraid, you know, all kinds of forms of suffering. You might have what's the what's our contribution to it? So when I've taught Buddhism to kids sometimes I have used the analogy of if you take if there's a candle flame for example, and or fire and you put your finger into the flame How do you blame the flame? To flame responsible for your pain?

Bad bad flame shouldn't do that. You have your finger finger in there stop that you flame someone to do something about that flame you keep your finger in there. No, this really hurts. You know, I think I've heard refuge is good. I'll take refuge in the supreme deity of the universe. Keep your finger in the flame. I trust you. I believe in you. You know it's kind of silly. Right, you have to pull your finger out. And you don't expect the supreme deity of the universe or Buddha or anybody to, you know, take responsibility for getting your finger out, you kind of do that. So that's taking responsibility for your contribution. And so Buddhist practice then involves turning around having the confidence to the conviction that you could turn around and begin looking at our contribution to look at the ways we cling we hold we push with what's going on in our own minds, our beliefs. And sometimes the source for our suffering is the way we hold the object of thing as well. And somehow we're clinging to Buddhism, we're clinging to this practice, and clinging to practice is understood in Buddhism to be one of the forms of suffering. Even though practice is so important in Buddhism, so central, there's all this warning don't cling to it. It's like, you know, it's like, if you're if you come out of the taking a swim in the pool, and you're all wet, and you want to get yourself dry, and so the towel fell into the pool, you pull the wet towel out of the pool and use a wet towel to dry yourself doesn't work, right. So, if you cling to the practice like that, you know, the claim to the practice, you're not going to dry. So there's ways of holding Buddhist faith in the ways that is counterproductive because against the very intention of it all. So I believe that Buddhism should be held lightly. Even though it can be very, even though it can be the most serious thing a person does in one's life. And this is a part of the idea of saddha faith for people who engage in the sense of refuge is that it becomes the orientation around which their life has purpose. Their life has meaning and their life has direction. For some people, the primary purpose of primary sense of meaning or direction of their life is represented by the idea of, of going for refuge. The idea, the primary motivation of purpose of their life is Buddhist practice, the liberation of freedom, the compassion that is involved in walking that path. And it's very meaningful for a lot of people very significant to have a central organizing principle or central motivation, that this is what my life is about. Some people are depressed in society and have trouble with their life, because they don't have that kind fistula around. There's so many different motivations. We can have so many different purposes. We could have society to Barbados with all these things that are important to do. Some of them are really worthwhile. Some people are spread thin, doing all the different things we could do to have a central focus this is what my life is primarily about one or two things, allows you to kind of muster up your forces kind of channel yourself

or gather together all the different forces of your life to really support that direction. And one of the things that I've learned is that when you do one or two things really well really kind of devote yourself to it. It might seem like you're narrowing your life for a while. But after a while, it opens up opens up again, the mastery or the master you have an area then eventually touches into so many other areas. And then you have that reference point of some mastery to you know, to relate to the rest of your life. So in the in the ancient tradition, the word saddha for some people was so important that it represented the primary orientation or a sense of purpose that their life had. They were meant to be as I want to stress over and over again, faith is not an end to itself. That is word solder. This idea of soda is meant to be motivated. If we're prompt someone to act, to engage in a practice, and that practice is meant to be self confirming.

With time you're supposed to discover for yourself that say, this way versus Discover the Truth for yourself. So the faith in a sense is replaced by knowledge. That's the whole direction we're going and then you can become one of the Faceless Ones. So solder so what do you think of that? So the word is solder. And now it's your turn to be Buddhist scholars. What do you think? We'll have a debate? What do you think is a preferred translation is a fake confidence, conviction trust, or is there some other possibility as well? So Victor,

what I noticed in your talk is two things that stood out that the feelings emotions, thoughts that go behind faith are usually pretty pretty altruistic as to what you're feeling what you're about. You don't have faith in God, I'm gonna have a lousy day tomorrow. It's usually pretty altruistic or good motives. That and also, behind faith, or the notion of faith is a strong component of desire. So there is a desire of something and it's not good or bad thing. It's just as interesting to note that desire to that aspect underneath it

good. Yes, the Buddhist tradition says explicit explicitly that there's faith there's words saddha, has is connected to desire to motivations and motivating force. And in that regard, it's it says explicitly in the texts, that it's, it's it's somewhat related to greed. And not that it's greed that no, no means agreed. But greed also wants something there. So there is kind of a healthy form of desire of wanting something. So it's one thing you know, to go further to do, to understand, to become freer be transformed. And then you talk about the emotions underlying it. For some people, that word faith in English is primarily a cognitive idea, mostly intellectual ideas are created you believe in for other people video faith is something deeply emotional. And the question is, the word saddha does have an emotional side to it. And And I would say that in that the earliest meanings of the word, were generosity. generosity is much more something heartfelt. It's an attitude of heart. I think that a lot of Buddhists have a tremendous emotional connection, deep emotional connection to this word saddha or to the Buddhist tradition. And so it's very heartfelt. And it's the heartfelt the core heartfelt movement, to engage in a path and a practice. And for some people, it's very, very emotional. I know people who cry, because it's so there's some movement of people who come here who come to Buddhist teachings, and they've maybe lived a life that's been problematic, difficult, struggling, confusing. And then they come across some teaching, that gives it suddenly it shifts their whole understanding, and gives them some sense of unrest. direction and clarity and sense of rightness that they never had before. And some people will be known to happen. And some people also motivated the emotional connection, to act in ways that can seem devotional. Sometimes we think of Buddhism is not being as devotional as some other religions, like, sometimes Hinduism associated with bhakti. And Buddhism is not supposed to be so Bhakti oriented, so devotional oriented, but there's plenty of devotion was in Buddhism. Partly because the idea of sada for some people does feel so deeply emotionally devotional, devotionally emotional or something. And so I remember a number of times, where my teachers in Asia where I felt so much emotional, warmth, happiness, respect. appreciation, gratitude for them that just felt so appropriate from yourself so

motivated, moved in that context of that coat that those forms that they had to do full baths to get down on this kind of valve will perfect my hair on the floor and just bow deeply. Because it was such an emotional thing. I could have just said, thanks, that was great. You know, great you know, with the saying, hey, thanks, that was great. You know, just kind of says something, but it says something very different than coding like that, right? You know, going like this vowing to putting my hands together flat and tipping my head forward and bowing expresses something that to me, comes from the heart. That's very different than going Hey, thanks. Thank you. Yes, please, having grown up in a Hindu

household, unquestionably with a sense Hindi word started off.

When you started translating it, I also came up with the word faith, but faith not in the western sense faith in a more positive sense. And my feeling was that it's actually the all four words seem to make sense. But whenever we talk about shraddha for some, somebody has shut up for that person or that deity. It's always in a very positive sense. Even if it's blindly, it's been very positive. So

we can hear a little bit more sense of how it's positive. Fun. Can you give a little more sense of how it's positive?

When you talk about some human being having trouble for a deity or another person,

it's always

meant as if that's a good thing that he has or she has shut down for somebody. It's never as a criticism. Say that if it's blind,

even if it's blind, it's positively mind.

Thank you. So here, feel for me,

Salah means confidence. And the reason I have confidence in the Dhamma is that the practice that I have done has had positive results. And so it gives me confidence to practice some more. And then then the more you practice, the better, hopefully, usually better the results are which increases confidence. So it's a progressive thing of confidence and more knowledge and then more confidence or knowledge.

Confirmed confidence. Thank you. So here

sometimes, at the end of chanting in Pali, we say the word Sati, which seems to be similar to sign up, and I was wondering if this is more of a question than personal experiences. That's the equivalent in the suit as we're at the end it says the monks rejoiced in the words of the Buddha. If you think maybe that's they use that words saddha to kind of agree with the teachings and express faith and

when it says that they rejoice in the teaching, they use a different word. And the word solder and solder, solder and solder, I don't think they're connected, even though they sound similar. And solder kind of dictionary definition usually I think is excellent. Excellent, excellent. Excellent. Say it's three times Excellent, excellent for the end of a Dharma talk, and do so. And it could be like hallelujah. be translated into English. Or you know, So anyways, I think different words, but there is a sense of rejoicing. Video rejoicing is perhaps can We rejoice that we have faith and we have confidence in. So

again, the emotional component of it. Thank you. So after this one, I think we're gonna have to ask for a woman to speak a little bit.

The word sada reminds me of a couple of words that I'm familiar with in Malay. Malay language has quite a bit of influence from Sanskrit. So the two words The first one is called Sudha. Sudha is a word connotated. With completion, something has been done. So if you say, I already took a bath sudah Monday, or you have done your meal sudama can. So there's a sense of completion, having done so in fullness, and also the second word is close to the car. So the car is form of offering. And so when you would actually perform offerings in temples is a form of silica, or when you give a gift to someone who is let's say, as in a form of charity, you would also call it in the form of silica is a offering and what little I know about linguistic there is a certain root word that sort of half a sintered winter relationships with with one to another. And I think set or set has that connotation. And for me, said that the way you describe it to me for my personal perspective, sort of wholesome, meaning it's all encompassing, include the concept of phase investigation, fulfillment,

satisfactions and so forth.

Beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. So there was a woman and oh, in the back. Thank you very much.

Anything I can do?

Anything, anything I can do to help. Um, I've been a psychotherapist for the past 10 years approximately. And I have observed the importance that faith plays in one's growth. Especially it seems to serve as a bridge from the material world to the spiritual world. There's, there's a certain you know, in my, in my practice, I come across a lot of people who are strictly academic, in how they practice and they are extremely limited by that to the material world. But those that have faith seem to transcend the materialism of knowledge and it takes them takes one person much deeper and to a greater capacity of have knowledge and of happiness. So for me, faith plays a very important role, even if it can be seen as somewhat limiting. It is still a person following that bridge to a deeper understanding of life. Thank you. And there's also been

studies they say, people who have faith tend to get healthier and live longer than people who don't, even here in the West. And in this story I told you about the Buddha and the prince. There's a sentence there it says, talks about without faith, a person will not learn what can only be learned with faith. So it's an interesting concept that certain things can only be learned with or with confidence or conviction, whatever the word might be. So I would like to have the last word they said, Okay. It's a It's almost time here. So there are two other words that are closely connected to the word faith, or sada. And then probably language. And sometimes these are translated like faith, but they have different connotations. One is pasado and prasada. persada means has a range of meanings that include confidence or faith and self interest that is confidence or trusting confidence or, but it also part of their major meaning it also means

calm, peaceful,

pure, pure, purified, clear, a bright, light, bright light. And so, those are the connotations of pure calm or peaceful or bright. It's just the idea that sod our faith, whatever it might be, has a quality of being peaceful. Being kind of calm, as opposed to being hot and fiery kind of faith. It's a Buddhist faith is just it's kind of a calming faith helps bring sense of peace. The other word is the word. I didn't look, I didn't look or would it look the Bhakti and it has a little more than meaning of resolve or decision or inclined

towards. Sometimes it can also mean apparently to believe in, but it has meaning to inclined towards or to resolve or make a decision. So this is sometimes translated as faith or confidence, but it has association of, it's a kind of confidence that or faith where it prompts you to make a decision that prompts you to act in a certain way to incline to resolve in something. And this speaks to the idea of faith and Buddhism has also this feeling of direction, purpose. You know, it's a it's a it's a step along the way, it's motivating you to go a certain direction. So, at the middle you have the word sada which each of you can not discuss among yourselves now, but what's the best translation for you and then supported on either side of it is the word prasada and it moved. On one hand persada incur emphasizes the calm where the peaceful quality of this whatever this saga is, and and it would emphasize the side also admit to be motivated in your life we resolve or they could resolve in certain direction. So I hope that was interesting enough for you and for those of you who are faithless, I apologize. And so then that's it. Thank you and so you could stay for tea and talk about this if you weren't today. Thank you