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SPEAKERS

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I thought that a good topic would be to talk about friendship, Buddhism and friendship. And rainbow was a good friend to our community. And friend to many people here and we were important friend for her. And friendship is a really central and really important practice activity. relationship in Buddhism, it's really, I wouldn't say it's the heart of Buddhism, but it's in terms of an external condition that supports the path of practice. Friendship is considered to be one of the most important conditions for supporting Buddha, Buddhist Buddhist practice for anybody doing it. And cultivating good friends having good practice friends, people you can share your practice with is really indispensable. Doesn't have to be a lot, but have a few. I would say for myself that without having had friends without having friends on the path, I would have barely begun the path. I probably wouldn't have gotten very far. But I was blessed to have many friends who were also involved in the practice many friends who were further than me in the practice and was inspired and guided by them. And many friends who were kind of companions on the path kind of similar places in practice. And it was really important to have those relationships to support me and for me to support them and kind of work together as we go along. Buddhism has a reputation I think, of focusing on meditation a lot. And meditation is when you close your eyes is seen as kind of a solitary activity. And, and sometimes people will pick out of the great corpus of Buddhist teachings those teachings which emphasize solitude. They're certainly important place for solitude in Buddhism. spiritual path is also said to be mature well and contemplative solitude. And so we go on retreats a lot silent retreats, where we kind of don't engage in a lot of social activity. Sometimes it's silent. It's really solitary treats people going. But those solitary retreats those two periods of solitude, are periods of solitude. In a ocean of relationships, most of most of us spend much of our time in in the world of relationships, and cultivating those relationships, that caring for them developing them, is considered a very, very important part of the Buddhist path. And it's often overlooked, that's the case. I've read that there's a trend in America, for people to have fewer and fewer friends. That's seems to be the direction of our society except for Facebook. And, and I wonder if there's a kind of relationship, inverse relationship between having the number of friends you have on Facebook, and the number of real friends quality friends this one has. And I think, you know, a friend that really you know, you know, there's different kinds of friends, many different kinds of friends to be had. And, and they're all valuable, but they're kind of special friends, people who for whom will sacrifice a lot for you. If you have friends that you would sacrifice a lot for them. People that you're really willing to share some of the most intimate parts of your life secret parts of their life from a private parts of your life really, things you grapple with, and their friends, you're not going to do that kind of deep sharing with their friends who will give you sound advice will give you advice that you'd rather not have and, and will, you know, and maybe friends that allow you to have that role in their life that you can tell them when you think they're off and something needs to be addressed. There is a very famous passage that we quote a lot in our tradition from the sutta DOS, where Ananda who was the Buddha's kind of attendant for many years, his cousin as well came to the Buddha, seemingly quite excited one day and said to the Buddha, I

understand that half of the spiritual life is having good is having that usually translated as good spiritual friends? literal term means could be translated as nothing spiritual and they call it an original language, but it's lovely friends are beautiful friends, friends who are connected to that which is most lovely

Meaning, not physically beautiful and lovely, but rather they're in their hearts, their inner life is beautiful that's connected to the spiritual life is what's meant. And the Buddha says, Oh no, I Nanda. Not the case. The entire spiritual life is dependent on friendship with what is beautiful. And there's a pun here or play of words. Because in Pali, the expression good spiritual friends and the expression that word Pollyanna Mita can be translated both as good spiritual friends and as as friendship with what is spiritually good. Or beautiful friends are lovely friends, and friend friendship with what is lovely or beautiful. So, because it's a little bit odd to say that the entire spiritual life is dependent Having good spiritual friends, I think what the Buddha was doing was he was kind of taking kind of agreeing, basically, but kind of kind of saying oh yes, so case, but actually the host, he was like kind of playing with the word pond since both meanings are allowed and saying actually the whole spiritual life is friendship with what is beautiful is lovely. But that this expression is held up this this dialogue is held up many, many times in Buddhism, as emphasizing how important it is to have good spiritual friends, friends who are beautiful or lovely or the word kalyana whatever that means. And, and you find a very powerful statement by the Buddha, emphasizing the importance of friendship, when he said the, the precursor for the Eightfold Path, the Eightfold Path kind of is stands for the Buddhist path, walking the Buddhist path entering the Buddhist path for oneself precursor for that the supporter of that, that the condition that most supports that external condition that most supports that is good spiritual friendship. So, how to have that? What did what does it mean to have it?

There is a famous story also of a monk named Maggia and Maggia, this story is told twice in the Canon because it's so important probably. And Maggia was and it was attending to the Buddha. And perhaps the Buddha was getting kind of old, needing attendance. And they were out about one day and they came across a beautiful grove of mango trees. And Maggia saw this beautiful, contemplative Grove and he said to himself, this is a good place to meditate. So he went to the Buddha and said, Could I have permission to go on retreat in this grove of trees to meditate? And the Buddha says, Oh, this is not the time yet. Maybe because he was attending the Buddha. And, and so Miguel said, Well, you know, you've finished your spiritual work. You know, and I haven't. And this is a really good place to meet for me to meditate. And please give me permission. And the Buddha said, Please, McGee is not the time. And so Maggie asks a third time, and there's a custom, apparently, time of the Buddha if you asked the Buddha something three times he acquiesces so he said, he asked again, the Buddha is Okay, as you wish. So media goes to his growth of his growth and starts to mention And after a while, he comes back to the Buddha. And he says, Buddha, it's really amazing. I thought, you know, this beautiful grove of trees at a time I sat down to meditate, I had the intention, I had the motivation to practice. And I sat down, and I just couldn't, I just couldn't meditate. My mind was so busy and engaged and I just couldn't get because you lay amazing. And then Buddha said, Buddha said, migi, there are five conditions that support spiritual practice need to have these conditions well enough established sort of to make sense for you to go off on retreat this way. The first condition you need to have is you need to have good spiritual friends. You need to have some connection to other people who are also spiritual in In the path that you're on, it's a little bit ambiguous what exactly this means, because the tradition has two meanings for good spiritual friends. One is somebody's fellow companion on the path with you. And another is someone who is further along than you are on the path. So exactly what the Buddha meant here is not so clear. But having a good friend is really important. The second and that's the main emphasis here, but the list the other four, the second is to be virtuous, to live an ethical life, so that when you sit down to meditate, your ethical behavior doesn't come to keep your agitated, which it will. If you do, you might not believe it. But just you wait. And then the third is to be able to have Dharma

discussions easily to be able to talk about the past and talk about practice. This easy way with other people. And the fourth is to be able to have some ability to self monitor one state of mind, so enough so that you could foster states of mind which are healthy and helpful. And then you can avoid those states of mind which are unhelpful and unhealthy for you. And the fourth condition that allows for progress in the path is to have a really deep appreciation of impermanence. Things are always changing how short life is how quickly things come to an end. And those five five conditions are really supportive. Then when you have those in good in place, then when you sit down to meditate, your conditions are much more favorable for be able to practice. The first one was having good good friends.

So the Buddha said, What is good friendship? Is the word kalyana Mita. Again, you could be translated as good friendship. Here, in whatever village or town, a person dwells, he or she associates with other others, whether young or old, who are of mature virtue, accomplished in faith, virtue, generosity and wisdom. He converses with them and engages in discussion with them. And then he or she emulates those people in regard to their accomplishment in faith for true generosity and wisdom. This is called good friendship. So a good friendship is their friendship with people. It doesn't say that they're Buddhists. But he says there are people who are virtuous. They have their generous their wisdom, and they have certain kind of faith, some kind of confidence. That is meaningful and then when emulates those people in not not emulate them in those qualities. And I think it's very, very significant says in those qualities, you're not supposed to dress like them or take on their mannerisms or, you know join their religion or political party, but the degree to which people are virtuous. Follow that example, to degree to which these people that inspire you are generous, follow that example, through to their wise. So that's one one definition of good friendship in the Buddhist tradition. And then there's another one see

a friend should be followed when he or she possesses seven factors. What seven, he or she gives what is difficult to give. He or she does not does what is difficult to do. He or she patiently endures what is difficult to endure, he or she reveals himself or her own secrets. That person keeps one's one's own secrets. That person does not abandon one misfortune and does not despise one because of one's loss. I think the last the last ones were quite significant I thought. It's very keeps keeps on secrets. You know, if you say something in confidence, you expect to keep it in competence, that's a friend. And, and if you have an unfortunate circumstances in your life, you get sick or all kinds of misfortune, then your friend doesn't forget you abandon you and if you have Have some loss. So those are good friends. This is you know, these one definition here, good the Buddha gifts.

So as I said earlier, there are different kinds of friendship, there's a kind of peer friendships and then there's friendships that have with someone who's further, further along with you in the path. And the most common way that someone's further along the path is called is called a friend called the enemy. Good friend, good spiritual friend, rather, in our tradition is called a friend, rather than a guru. So the idea that people who are teachers, our teachers, more in respect, there's a spectrum, a range from being a friend to being a guru, in our tradition, Buddhist tradition, we're on the far end of the spectrum, we're we're friends, more than gurus, partly because the relationships that are being fostered in Buddhism are ones of adult relationships adult to adult, much more than the idea of you know, we don't you know see someone as a child. In some spiritual traditions it's more the child kind of adult relationship that's emphasized explicitly or implicitly. And Buddhism is more adult to adult so you're expected to be an adult, adult learning. And then as adults, we teachers meet each other as students meet each other in that kind of respectful kind of capacity.

And then there's a discourse that the Buddha gave, called the advice to usually translate translate his advice to laypeople. It's called the Sigalaka Sutta. And in it, the Buddha talks quite a bit about

friendship. In here, I said what it says there are four types of people who can be seen to be loyal friends. The friend who is a helper is one. The friend who is the same in happy and unhappy times is one. The friend who points out what is good for you is one, and the friend who is sympathetic is one. The helpful minutes can define those four. So the helpful friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways. He or she looks after you when you are inattentive. He or she looks after your possessions when you're an attentive. He or she is a refuge when you are afraid. And when some business has to be done, he or she lets you have twice what you asked for. So you refuge when you're afraid. Her friend who has the same unhappy and unhappy times can be seen to be a loyal friend and four ways. He or she tells you his secrets. He or she guards your secrets. He or she does not let you down and misfortune. The next one is quite, quite significant

he or she would even sacrifice his or her life for you. And that's something so other people for whom you would do that for or something close to that. Do major sacrifice for the friend who points out what is good for you can be seen to be a loyal friend and four ways. He or she keeps you from wrongdoing. He or she supports you in doing good. He or she informs you of what If you did, did not know and he or she points out the path for you. And then the sympathetic friend can be seen to be a loyal friend in four ways. He or she does not rejoice in your misfortune. He or she rejoices in your good fortune, he or she stops others who speak against you. And he or she commands others to speak in praise of you. That's nice commands others speak in praise of you. But then the Buddha also said that the kind of kind of said that the near enemy of friendship or friend, near enemy in this Buddhist tradition, is a quality or a situation. That looks like a good thing. But it's actually the opposite. And so the near enemy of friendship is flattery.

So the value of friendship In Buddhism at least overrides many of the values that people sometimes will properly popularly hold up as being important. So for example, friendship is considered more valuable than money, more valuable than worldly success, material success, more valuable than your job and your promotions. And so it's an interesting statement. So, in terms of your life, you look at your life. And what you held up is about being valuable in the scale of what's valuable. Where does friendship fit in? And how important is friendship to you? And, and if it's important to be seen as important, how much do you cultivate and develop it? How much do you leave it to chance that friendship just happens or how much it's something has been intentionally engaged in and cultivated and nurtured and supported. There are some cultures where it takes a long time to become a good friend with someone. But when you finally finally accomplished then the person is really a friend for life. other cultures where people are really easy to be friendly, and just you meet them on the street and they're quite friendly and warm and, and but then next day they forgotten you. And it's quite confusing those two cultures meet is quite confusing, especially with people who they wait a long time before they establish good friends confusing when they don't understand what's happening when someone is so warm and friendly one day, not next. So what does it take to cultivate friendship and how much of is intentional? We're actually takes effort and time and insensitive practice to develop and that practice comes back to you with great benefit and support also allows you to support others and bring benefit to them. What are the qualities of friendship that are important? I think of acceptance is one, someone who kind of has certain kind of acceptance of you, who really loves you or cares for you or has this friendship for you, regardless of many things, a warmth, someone who has interest and cares about you, someone is interested in you and cares about you. And then I think one of the primary practices that supports friendship is being able to listen, to listen to others to hear them to really find out what's going on with them to be interested in them. I'm kind of fond of in the rules for the addict in I think it's a big dict in order of Christianity St. Benedict's kind of rules that he wrote out the first word in his document where the he writes out the rules of the order in 10. And now I guess in Latin, it says *escolta* which means Listen, first thing you should do is learn to listen. So I think one of the great blessings of having a large community like IMC

here, see how many people here today is that the kind of way we're set up is we're set up so that people can relate to this practice here and the place here in many different ways. And we want it to be that way that some people find it most meaningful to come here and be completely anonymous. And I remember some years ago, someone came here and said, this is the only place I can go and public. were together with people and leave me alone. You know, I'm except maybe that's the bus or something. But, and then other people who come here, and they want much more community and be connected with people. And so it's set up here, I hope hopefully. So that whole range from wanting to be solitary when you come in here and wanting to be social, when you're being here is available. And, and that's a very important that it's at range. But for those of you who this talk is meaningful, the idea that friendship is meaningful, then I hope that you will cultivate your friends that you have, and see them as being valuable and important, but also that you think about reaching out to some people who are on the same spiritual path as you so that you begin having some be able to be able to talk with people and converse with people and share with people.

And so you can develop friendships, at least one friend or a few friends of people who are engaged in the same exploit As you so that as the Buddha said to maggia, you have easy access to talk about the Dharma with your friends. And so we have a large community here with many different kinds of people. And then perhaps you'll find some people here if you make some effort, Rainbow was a real inspiration for me, because of her persistence for many reasons. Her persistence, she was very loyal to this community and to us, and it was a loyalty that was tested a lot of times, because, as with everybody there, in a community, there are times when there are sparks or disagreements. And, and rainbow always came back, always returned was here was here was here, and their sense of her warmth, their dedication and willingness to kind of work through the difficulties was always here. And so This wonderful depth of connection was able to develop for many people here with rainbow and rainbow to us because of that persistence of hanging in there having the acceptance, that interest that caring, and that offer that support that she gave us so many times. So, I think it's a, you know, like to remember rainbow as one of our most dear friends and good spiritual friends, for whom we will always kind of be nourished by always, and who we are as a community has been nourished by her with many other friends here. And as we continue on our way, and our path here at IMC rainbows nourishment will continue to feed us. So May we all be good spiritual friends for each other so thank you all very much. And those of you who are stay for the memorial dinner or lunch, if you can help set up a little bit that would be great. And thank you