

# 2019-09-09 The Sacred That Includes Everything

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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In terms of the meeting of different cultures, a culture that I've had very little contact with over my many years that I've lived with the United States is Native Americans, indigenous people of this country. And turned out that my son's maybe my first son's, who's not 21, his best friend is Native American. We didn't really know that maybe he didn't even know it. It was kind of a little bit. I don't know, it wasn't really part of his family's, his immediate family. And, but he when he's 18, he kind of understood, he was told he had, you know, he's kind of a mixed background, all kinds of countries and cultures, but including them was Native American. And so he he looked into it, I guess, when he was 18. And his granduncle was actually he must have was a The tribal leader of his particular tribe, so he has a strong family connection. So he invited us, me to go to down to send one Batista yesterday, because his particular tribe he's kind of part of what some people called the aloni who are the Native Americans with a pinion so here going down towards Big Sur area and Salinas area and his particular band, tribal band centered around Morgan Hill. And San Juan Bautista is a very, very significant place for them because there's this San Juan Bautista mission. And so his ancestors were Native American answers were basically kind of gathered up by the missionaries and forced to come in, live in these missions that were built up and down. El Camino here and men them died, think they started being gathered together and to work and be kind of slaves or be converted in about 18 1779 in San Juan, but this diarrhea, and by 1830 19,000 of them had died at the mission because of all kinds of conditions. And then once California became part of the United States, someone went up to Sacramento to make a claim to this ranchos down there. And, and there was this land of theirs, which was considered sacred that that they apparently that was being kind of for some reason it was kind of reserved for the Native Americans. But when people went to Sacramento, the new government to say this is ours. And then government said, well, it says here that this belongs to the Native Americans in this. And the reply to that was, oh, they're all dead. They're gone. Okay, you can have the land. But they weren't dead. They were just didn't work in Sacramento to say that. So they lost whatever land they had. And, but even more, maybe more importantly, they lost because then there was they kind of were considered dead. They didn't get federal recognition as a tribe. And so they've been trying to that for many, many years. And so it's a long story within me to tell you the full story. But it was a point to what I'm going to teach you about today. And so their most sacred plan is down there, just south just around the area of San Juan Bautista about 300 acres that was sold recently to a corporation that wants to do gravel sand quarry and dig it all up. And apparently also to do oil drilling there because apparently there's oil underneath. But you know, they have that's the burial ground for their slaughter graves there and their sacred places for ceremonies and all kinds of things that they know about. So there was a march from San Juan Bautista five miles to place with us. This quarry was threatening to be mostly get the attention of the board of supervisors who could approve this or not. And so when I was invited, and it was kind of

amazing and wonderful thing to meet that culture and the intersection of it and and, you know, be connected to the indigenous people of this area. And, and, you know, heard a little bit about their story and a lot of them was very moving.

I think probably the thing that almost brought me to tears was they were Head to head up front before the March we have the five miles we hiked, there were speeches, a lot of short speeches there. And there was one last little speech and a sense of presentation was from four teenagers from probably 13 14 15 years old teenagers from their tribe who stood up on stage and spoken. And I said, wow. The kind of injustice just goes on and on and on the impact of their lives and, you know, and, and, and, you know, what are they gonna grow up in and somehow was more touched by them, then it was touched by all of them, but by thinking about the generational continuity of this challenges as people have with their own land and feeling of belonging, feeling of identity feeling and all kinds of things. But one of the things they talked about a lot was they use the word sacred a lot and they felt that Sacred connection to the land to Mother Earth, sacred connection to particular areas, sacred objects, the relicense were sacred. And every time they use the word sacred, I was inspired. It kind of got the feeling I got there could feel the reverence and their care. And, for me, what was particularly nice to hear was, they felt that the Creator, there's the Mother Earth or something was never clear what that is for them, had given them the charge, to be stewards of the land of the earth. And they saw it as their primary task, it seems to be from what I heard, was to heal the earth from all the environmental damage that exists in that scene and part of his witnesses have and in the context of being kind of the stewards and healers of the or the earth, that they kept talking about sacred and so reverence and care. And to me, it was quite inspiring. So as I left that I was wondering about this word sacred. And, you know, generally in Buddhism, we don't use the word very much. And so I said, Well, what what do what's sacred for us for Buddhists? And what about this word sacred? And so I thought I would try to talk about that a little bit. And, and I'm aware that the word sacred as far as I know, there's no direct equivalent in the ancient Buddhist language. And the unless it's Dharma itself, but Dharma means almost everything. And now certain things are considered. It's great reverence in Buddhism. And so maybe that sense there may be sacred, but I find it fascinating that some of the words that are used in a English in places like United States, that can be very centrally important in people's vocabulary, like the word sacred, or like the word religion, religious, or like the word spiritual. If you go you know I could bring you the polytech Society Buddhist English dictionary the Pali English dictionary and look at these ancient languages, and there's no really good equivalent and scholars say in Indian real Indian languages is not really a wonderful the perfect words for the English word religion. In fact, when Japan Oh, for example, Japan open to the west and a teen 50 or so 60s they started meeting Western culture and learning English and things like that and studying in western universities and they had to invent a word, Japanese word for religion, because they had no word in Japanese for religion until they you know, had to move make one up to make it match. And, and so you know, there's so the idea. So it's kind of interesting that words that are kind of second nature for some people here in the English speaking country and like everyone understands what it means. There's not doesn't quite work in other countries or other cultures. And I find that fascinating for those of us who might grew up in English speaking cultures, to kind of see centrally important terms, you know, are not so subtly important in other cultures. Maybe some of the things that those terms of refer to are related to things in other cultures are in Buddhism, but they don't quite match.

And one of the things that I reflect on when I think about this is that the origins of this English word sacred, it comes from a Latin and it means, you know, kind of mean sacred and sacrifice means to make sacred but it's The words in Latin was used in contrast to the profane and profane in Latin, the word feign. fondo it means farnum means the temple and Pro is in front of so in front of the temple. And so, there was a geographic distinction between what was outside the temple and what was in the

temple. And in a temple was where it was sacred and outside it was not. So the word profane and sacred, have their beginning in a really kind of clear geographic or location based separation of two different realms. And perhaps, that sense of separation is continued for a long time. And when people talk about sacred is offered in contrast to what's secular, ordinary or profane, and, and so some people will consider certain parts Life sacred, none of that not others and some people have suffered dramatically in the West, about this division. For example, the human body is not sacred, but something else is sacred. And or sexuality is not sacred, but, but other things are dramatically sacred, like asceticism or something. And so and so what is it that's, you know, so the word sacred, you know, do we want to adopt it in English for talking about Buddhism. And many years ago, I tried to use the word holy instead. Because some of you know this, that the word Holi comes from the dramatic root to behold, and it was about the 1500s that in English, they added the W in front of the H. And, and word Holi. in Norwegian, where I'm from, there's my speak the word Hole is here. And, and sacred is really in the key part is like the why in English for holy. So, you know this these these words so holy has a hole they lost the W hole has the W the whole, the whole shebang and so, I kind of like the idea that that's what's holy, what's sacred is everything and, and is the whole And so, what I've what Buddhist practice points to and this is one of the things I consider to be kind of for me kind of one of this more sacred things, place with sacredness is found is not so much exactly out in the world, but rather in the minds relationship to the world. The world in Buddhist analysis is neither sacred or profane. is neither good or bad because the Buddhist point of view the world was not made by a creator by God that made it sacred or something. And Buddhist terminology might be disappointing for some people to hear, but from a Buddhist orientation, the world just as the world I just it just what it is, and there isn't kind of putting good bad, you know, holy or profane on top of it. It's just, we just what's given kind of, but, but the place where the whole is, with a whole holistic in a way of discovery is the awareness. That doesn't exclude anything. The awareness that does not make these hard and fast divisions between right and wrong or sacred and profane. Inside and outside, those who are part of my sacred community and those who are not, but rather an awareness that dissolves the human tendency to get caught in these divisions and the tendency of the mind to say, well, I'll be present for these things, but these things are not acceptable for me. I don't, I'm not gonna I'm not gonna I'm gonna keep this out. And one of the one of the places that people do this a lot is with things which are uncomfortable

suffering, sometimes the suffering of the world. Some people have suffering overload. Some people just feel like that's not what they want to do. They don't want to feel uncomfortable. They want to just have a good time. And so there's many reasons people will start dividing their world and doing that they shut their awareness. They don't pay attention, they don't notice something. And people can do that to the world around them to people around them. But they can also do it to themselves. And, in fact, I think anytime we shut down to close up or, or exclude something from our people or the world, from our hearts from our awareness or attention and care, I think they'd be probably doing the same thing to ourselves simultaneously, that we're not really allowing ourselves to be full and whole. And that for a minimum, it's because when awareness is partial, when a bit wareness is divided, we stay with one thing and ignored something else. Within we're separating ourselves from our full capacity for our hearts to be really open or our minds to be fully open. And so the direction we're going in vipassana practice in Buddhist practice, is to discover what it's like to have an awareness that does not exclude anything that includes everything. That doesn't mean that we have to agree with everything. It doesn't mean that we have to say that everything is good. Or everything's the way you know, we just have to accept what's there. We might interactions in our speech, prove some things and prove disapprove other other things. But we will. Somehow the awareness, or the heart stays open in all directions. So if there's a corporation which wants to somehow create damage, tremendous damage to a sacred ground, that's something to march against. To me. For me, that's what I felt. But I'm not going to exclude the situation of people from the corporation what they're doing from my heart or from my

awareness, I'm not going to contract and get caught up in in my anger or my, my Guna whatever divisions my mind wants to you know, might make the practices stay open, stay open, keep open. And the reason part of the reason for that is when nothing is excluded from your heart. Nothing's excluded from the awareness. That's what's sacred. That's what's holy, and a toll because then the world is not the what we take in what we're willing to kind of be present for. is not divided is not. There's nothing outside the whole, everything's included. And I think it's hard. It's certainly hard to do that to learn that. And that's why we have a practice where we start slowly step, step by step, recognizing all that big, small ways and big ways in which we, in you know, classic Buddhist language, we say we, we get attached, we cling, we resist, we're pushing things away. We're greedy, we're hateful, and all these things that are creating divisions and separation. But we started recognizing the way in which things get excluded not included. And so then we open up, we went to open or if we don't want to open, we learned to let go of what keeps us closed. And this that the same the consequences of that, as we open, include more and more. And it's a remarkable thing to end up with a awareness of mind or heart that has no clinging in it, no grasping in it, that has no tendency to shut down, no matter how awful it gets around us, no tendency to shut down against certain things, because we have tremendous drives for other things. And nothing that no way in which we diminish our capacity to see the humanity of other people, because we have drives that, you know, you know, don't somehow include their full humanity and we see so much of that in our society. Through sexuality and through power and through, you know, capitalism and stuff that greed that people have, that the full humanity of people is not included. And that's partly why I was so touched by these teenagers and Native American teenagers on the stage, was it I know for them, they have a generations, recent generations of their people whose humanity was denied by this country.

One of the men, one of the men who spoke said that his mother when his mother was five years old, was taken away from her family. So the mother could be raised in a boarding school and not learn her native culture and native language that her family spoke and he said, you know, the suffering of that continues, I carry that suffering in me that the What happened to my mother because she really suffered from what happened to her being taken away. And so, you know, this still lives in us. And so I, you know, it was painful to sit there and hear this and, and it's easy to imagine you know closing down being overwhelmed and if they can't do that, but how do we stay open? How do we bear witness? How do we and I think the one of the ways that Buddhism emphasizes is know yourself well know what how you respond to suffering, know how you react, know how you close down, know how you are blind to certain things, know how you prioritize your desires or your preferences or your whatever it might be in such a way that you cannot stay open and stay present and really take in this world we live in. And that's how I think, you know, from above, I think a task of a lifetime. Keep doing that and keep understanding ourselves. But the benefit of that is, is to then touch into something which I call sacred or holy awareness, which is whole awareness which is capable of taking in all of it without any exception. And to and to discover that, to really feel that sense that to drop the agitations of the mind and the preoccupations of the mind and the reactivity of the mind and heart and really discover this capacity for you know, we've, you know, we often say capacity for peace, capacity for freedom, anytime the language of it is language is very personal in terms of feeling, you know, I discovered steep piece, which is, you know, a nice way of talking about it. But the corollary which comes along with that this is not just some personal experience, but an experience that that We've dropped all the things that get in the way of being present and open for an inexpensive way, for whatever is happening in the world, and to have that peace and that deep calm and that sense of freedom, and feel how that is a really dramatic sense of being open to at all. And, and present for it all and ability to be really present for work no matter what it is. And to feel that as peace to feel that as freedom in the midst together with maybe the suffering that we might feel the pain we might feel or what we encounter, I think is one of the great gifts we can give her our world. And so in a sense the sacred is found in Buddhism, in our the way that we

relate to the world. In awareness. It doesn't exclude anything. But when awareness doesn't exclude anything,

everything that's in her awareness, maybe is sacred to. And if everything is in our awareness, everything has a place in that expansive awareness, then the earth is inner is in our awareness that people have the worth and there are no renders, all of them are equally in our awareness. And, and so maybe that makes them The world is a sacred as well. So even though Buddha stones don't have this lady of sacredness so much. If it's, I think for sacred and Buddhism, it's really has to include everything. And to discover that through an open heart this really or open mind, I think is one of the great tasks and beautiful things. So what are your thoughts about that CES relate to you or interesting or relevant Do you have anything you want to say about this idea? You have different ideas of what's sacred for you or anything.

I was just thinking you really threw out a big challenge there.

Because I have

actually, I came here tonight looking for some solace for what I'm calling my experience of eco grief.

And

in needing

some community in which to explore that. And the challenge is to stay in that that level of awareness that you're talking about, and experiencing everything.

And

and I tried talking about this, some friends, and a lot of them want to turn away from it.

And

so I guess the challenge is that there are

times when

I must seek, I must step away from it. I must step away from an end. I got I don't know whether that means that I turn off my awareness to it, or whether I keep my awareness turned on and just find

finding some way to

not be okay. I'm kind of rambling here, actually.

But anyway, I, I found a lot of solace in what you were saying. I guess basically, what I wanted to say,

or what you said in the end that sometimes you have to turn away from it is true. I think the idea if we include everything, we also include ourselves, what's going on inside of us. And sometimes in order to heal and take care of ourselves. We have to strategically take a break, we have to strategically do



some inner work or some healing, so that we can come back and be open again to everything. And that's a way of being inclusive is to understand what we need and what needs to be done. And sometimes we're taking care of ourselves. So that we can come back in a refreshed way, and really beat it. And sometimes what's appropriate is to take care of what's around us and do something. And so have the wisdom and knowing where the attention should be where the work should be. But you know, the idea is to the theory, I mean kind of principle is to be open to everything, and then take care of what's what's in front of you that needs to be taken care of. And if you're the one who needs to be taken care of, then, you know, that's super relevant. To this whole this idea of being all inclusive doesn't mean we deny what's here. It's actually includes what's here in ourselves, and then we have to be wise about how to care for it to me.

Can I

Can I follow up just a second? I was struck by your saying that, that the march was appropriate to protest what this corporation wanted to do in my mind. Yeah. And, and then but the challenge was to be inclusive of the people heading up that Corporation and including them in rather than demonizing them, which is very easy to do, right?

Yeah, yeah. So I saw you know, a little bit I had to five miles was long enough to have all kinds of thoughts. And so I did have thoughts about you know, you know, maybe if I had a chance to meet some of these people, you know, how I would relate to them what I'd say to them how I talked to them and you know, with with that, that very thing in mind about how to meet them as with respect and care to

through their suits, so head over there.

Yeah, I don't know if this makes sense to anyone else, but

The

one of the most sacred things or the sacred right now for me is the present moment. And that's where I find solace from what's going on. When I am engaged in the sadness in the world, not always in the present moment.

And there's something about

being in that moment and maybe that's not the right name for it, but it feels like it when when I'm there. I'm not clinging. I'm not drawn out. messed up.

destroyed by the world.

Maybe being in the present. The moment is, maybe it's the same thing I'm talking about from a different point of view.

I think it might be. Thank you.

About a month ago,

I was in a meeting with some

climate activists who represent most of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish denominations and we get together every month or so. a month, the one that I'm thinking of the meeting I'm thinking of, we tried a little exercise to develop empathy for people like the heads of corporations that may be polluting the world. Specifically, we tried empathy for people running oil and gas companies. We didn't do very well. We had a very hard time. Imagine I would say, most of us did it, you know, imagining ourselves in their role in their shoes in their skin. I wish I had had your talk from the evening. Before that, before we had that meeting. Thank you

for that. Yeah, I think these are these hard decisions. You know, this what we're talking about here. So I'm not saying I think it's easy. My talk was enough, but one of one of the perspectives I rely on is the idea to separate the activity from the person. And so, you know, the activity is might be I feel it's wrong and needs to be addressed. But the person's not wrong. person is more than whatever every person is more than what they've the individual actions or choices and so great to meet that whole the whole person

Quick question on what is sacred and what wouldn't be sacred. So in other cultures or other, other places outside Buddhism, you know if there's something sacred or holy, that kind of means there is there are also other things that are not sacred or not holy. So, I don't know, but isn't much I'm still trying to learn the principles but in Buddhism, if everything the mind can think of is sacred, right? If everything is sacred in Buddhism, then what is not sacred?

Well, you know, it's, you know, for what I was trying to say today, from one perspective, there is nothing which is not sacred. Everything's included in this open awareness so that there's not this division between sacred and not sacred. That's why I like the word holy, the whole include everything. That in a sense, the notion of sacred falls away. If everyone A sacred and, but still, it's kind of points to something.

And

so I prefer not to have any I prefer not to call anything not sacred. I'm actually it's kind of heartbreaking to me that something would be considered not sacred that somehow excluded that way from what's sacred or what gets a reverence or gets our care. But he put us to distinguish in maybe, you know, we'll we'll have certain things which represent things of great value and inspiration that Buddhists will have reverence for or care for in a special way differently than other things. And you know, so someone might say like, you know, having the statue of the Buddha is kind of sacred for us. And, and the mop closet, the way we treat things in the mop closet and the way the mops are stored there. You know, if you weren't, you wouldn't open the closet door and say, Wow, those people are treating as mop sacredly. And, and so there is a kind of a distinction. But may I you know, but you know, it may be it's a sense of reverence, a sense of inspiration, a sense of care, a sense of it represents something that's maybe like the Buddha is just just a statue, right? But it represents, I look at it and for me, it represents that capacity to be hold or not to include the past capacity and include everything. And, and so we have something to represents that, but it's, you know, so, you know, so I could conventional language, you might say that sacred of the mop closet is not, but in terms of real religious doctrine or something that we wouldn't make that distinction. And many years ago, I tell this story before, but maybe many of you may haven't heard it. I was when I was a young Zen student. I was sitting at seven days and Reed center retreat at Green Gulch up here in Marin County. And in zen, you often sit on a platform like this and there's a whole Bank of them all in a row around the edges of the room. And, and that particular school is when you meditate facing the wall, but you turn around face out, like I'm facing you. And you

would have like, you have meals, you have bowls like this and, and you have this bowl and put in front of you in the platform and servers come and serve your food and eat and, and, but in the afternoon, like a three o'clock or so in the afternoon of the seven day intensive meditation retreats, we would all turn around and face the center of the room and they would serve us tea. And, and, and in the old days it was tea and a cookie. And so the first day they would come in, and they would first come in with a tea cup. And that tea cup, you would take the tea cup and put it down. Then they come with the cookie and then they come with a tea and it's important the cup and then you drink it. And then they would come and gather the no didn't drink anything because of the cookie came on a napkin that you just put in your sleeves. But the cup you kept that your seat for the seven days of the retreat. So I was doing one of these retreats and there was a Zen priest, monk from Japan, who was there during the retreat, and he was sitting next to me. And it was quite something to sit with him. He had a lot of Samadhi a lot of stillness. He was very poised everything you did you know you kind of feel that he was really present for everything he did is standing sitting, everything was very nice. It was wonderful to sit next to him. So I came Time, at the end of seven days, we had the last tea. So we didn't need any more cup after that. So then the server's came and picked up the cup and take it to the kitchen to wash and so and then everything is choreographed to like, when you when you stand when you sit down, what's foot goes forward when and you know it's all this stuff right in which direction you turn and it's like you know, it's a it's you know, if you if you studied dance, you might love setting and so if someone does something which isn't part of their choreograph, it stands out you can notice right away so they were coming to get the cups and this priest next to me. Before he gave up the cup, he bowed to the cup

and that cup blew me away, you know, wow, he's bowing to the cup out of gratitude or respect or care or some sense of that cup was special. And a cup is just a cup, right for, you know, who would pay attention with one about a cup? It's just a class, right? You know, but the fact that he would also include that into what he would revere or respect or offer his gratitude to that talk to to be in the world, that you're ready to bow to everything, no matter what it is. And so you even bow to the people who you have huge differences with and you're ready to bow to anyone. I think that's one of one of the beautiful things I think that I've seen in much of Buddhism. And maybe it's a different way of saying what I'm talking about here is they're always willing to bow to everything and everyone. We might not agree, we might not feel that you stay the way it is. But we bow. And one of the wonderful kind of ideas around bowing that I learned, in my early years of Zen when we did a lot of bowing is when you can do nothing else, about a situation about to it when it's hopeless, and you can't do anything else you've tried, you know, you can always you could always bow to it. And that's a quite a profound idea. And, you know, so we, many of us will come to situations where we can't do anything about it. Whatever the situation is, beyond our control, we can change anything in all kinds of ways. And maybe it's when it's your turn to die. You're about to you're dying. Or maybe it's injustice in the world that you've Can't change? What would it mean when you can't do anything about it? Maybe always you can. But can you bow to it? What does that what would that mean? And is that offensive that you will bow to injustice? Or is it somehow a healing gesture or a powerful gesture that everything's included, everything's held in our hearts everything somehow. So if this is what I'm talking about today about developing an awareness, it's all inclusive, not shutting anything out of your heart, anything out of your awareness. That doesn't seem you know, inspiring or, you know, points to something that's sacred. Then I offer you the challenge or the exercise that either really, or just in your mind's eye about everything for a while and see what that does to the world. You live in. And I suspect that if you do that, that the world you live in will start feeling pretty special. If you take the time to take your cup and bow to it to the people you're with about to the impossible situations you're in, just always bow. When in doubt bow that was a that was a Zen saying I made up from my Zen saying I made it up for myself when I was at present practice. Go when in doubt bow so thank you all