

Going for Refuge Class 4

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Came back. Am I speaking loud enough? And driving down here today, I was thinking about how there was so much we should have covered, or could have covered, and talked about. In particular, you know, all the whole more involved discussion of the precepts. But you have all considered the precepts for yourselves before, and tonight, you know, I may talk a little bit more about taking refuge in *Saṅgha*.

It is often said that in the West we often overlook the refuge, the jewel of the *Saṅgha*, and we give a particular preference to the Buddha and the *Dharma*. Community is something that maybe some of us are ambivalent about, or we do not really see the direct connection between being in a spiritual community and our own personal practice. In a sense, I think among many Western *Dharma* students, the practice and their engagement with the Buddha's way is something very personal or very individualistic, and we bring an individualistic slant to the practice. So there is a tendency to kind of ignore the refuge of the *Saṅgha* itself and discount it in preference to the other two.

And I feel myself fairly strongly that the three are considered equal, equal in value. Not only equal in value, but they exist together. They reinforce each other. They support each other. They interact with each other. And you cannot really have one without the other. I cannot really have the refuge of the Buddha without the *Saṅgha*, and the refuge of *Saṅgha* without the Buddha or the *Dharma*.

We talked a little bit about what the word *saraṇa* means, the refuge, going for refuge. But I looked it up in the *Pāli-English Dictionary* today to see what they say about the definition of the word *saraṇa*. One of the definitions is refuge, but it also means protection, literally. It also means an abode or a house, a place where you live. So it has those multiple meanings: refuge, a place you go for protection, and also a place that we live, or a home.

And I like that very much, because the idea of protection seems a little, you know, we think we need it, and we do need protections. We need protections from ourselves and from the world we live in, in a sense. But we do not want that to be a kind of protection that cuts us off from the world like fortress walls. It is some place we are at home in. I like that a lot, the place we find our home. And so the *Saṅgha* is a place we find our home.

And I know in my own practice and life that the *Saṅgha* has been a very important protection, a very important refuge, and a very important support in my own practice and life. As I have said, I do not think I could have practiced the many years I practiced without the support of the *Saṅgha*, the *saṅghas* that I practiced with, the communities I practiced with, the teachers I practiced with. And during much of that time, I took it for granted. I just went to the centers, and they were fully developed, and there were monasteries to go to, and they were already there, and teachers were already there, talking away, you know? And I just showed up, and they just kept talking away, and so I just kind of took it all for granted.

But I realized after some years that it would not have been possible for me without the tremendous support that I received from the *Saṅgha* and the community. But it was more than just support for the practice. It was more than just a protected place for me to kind of engage in the practice and try to live from the point of view of practice. The *Saṅgha* for me was also a mirror, a very important mirror. And I went specifically to come to live at the San Francisco Zen Center, my first Buddhist community I lived with, because of the value I saw in having people there to mirror me.

And I was, you know, a kind of standard neurotic kid, you know, with all kinds of trips. And what I found in the community was people who were not going to buy into the games that I had been used to playing, kind of unconsciously playing even. And as I was trying to find some way to live free of those games and live a kind of deeper authenticity, then I noticed when I went to Zen Center and I tried to act out my trips, that there was no response. And in no response, you know, that was kind of a little bit jolting. So I saw that as a mirror, a way to kind of see myself, to kind of ask, what is going on? What am I doing here?

And it was very valuable for me in the early years of Zen Center to have that, to have the mirroring of people who were not going to buy into what I was doing. And many of the teachers also had, I felt, that quality for me, that they were not going to buy into what I was bringing. And sometimes they seemed somewhat, you know, aloof in that role. And sometimes they were aloof. And even if their aloofness often, you know, if you use it right, a good student, you know, will always use the bad teaching, you know, in the right way. I have to say this carefully. But a good student will always find a useful way to take a bad teaching, will get the

best out of it, wring it for its best.

And now I feel myself tremendously and deeply connected, and very gratefully connected, to this interactive relationship I have had with communities, and teachers, and their teachers, and the communities they practiced in. And it goes back, you know. I can kind of see that it goes back in time, that the teachers I studied with practiced with their teachers, and their teachers back, and their communities, and it goes back and back and back. And in the Zen tradition, it is very clear, at least, because they give you these lineage papers that trace the historical lineage of teachers going all the way back to Śākyamuni Buddha. I should not say historical, because it is pretty clear that some of it is mythological, that they made it up, filled in the blanks kind of. But it goes back at least until the seventh century. That is pretty historical. And that is a long time.

And then you can just go back and see teacher to teacher. I have this lineage paper, and I have my Zen teacher, and you can find on this paper his name, and then his teacher's name, and that person's name, and that person's name, and that person's name, going back and back and back, at least until the seventh century. And that is phenomenal, I think. And the fact that, you know, in the Zen lineage, it is about ninety teachers between me and the Buddha, about ninety generations. And there were more than ninety people sometimes in this room on Monday nights. So it takes that many people, you know, to have a living back-in-time connection to the Buddha. Gather those people in this room here, and I am inspired by that.

And I take it on. Mythological myths often point to something that is true, and I see that. I am pretty convinced that the teachings that we have received have overwhelmingly been transmitted by word of mouth, by contact with individual teacher to teacher. People did not read in the old days as much as we read, you know. They did not go down to the corner store and buy a book on Buddhism and then sit down to practice. It might have involved a little bit of that, but very little compared to the direct contact of living tradition, face-to-face meetings that happened, and we continue that to this day.

And I think, to me, it is extremely difficult for someone to have any serious encounter with the possibilities of practice and waking up without meeting other people who are doing it, sharing in that attempt in their own life. So I see this historical lineage going back, you know, generation after generation. It is just a living flame kind of that goes back to the historical Buddha, and I find that tremendously inspiring, to be kind of part of that lineage. And it is not simply the fact that it is historically face-to-face transmission. It is also many, many generations of people who have refined and honed and worked with, and made mistakes

with, trying to teach and trying to practice.

And that is a kind of refinement and development that has happened, I feel, over the twenty-five hundred years that we inherit. We inherit it, you know, from many, many people. And I kind of like to think of it as a twenty-five-hundred-year refinement. But maybe that is a little, you know, mythological to see it that way. But at least you can see it even just in the last few centuries, those of you who can study the history and how the teachings have come to us here. There is a refinement of many people practicing, working.

And we are part of this refinement. We are kind of playing it out and working it out in our own lives and in our own culture, and making mistakes as we go, and finding other ways that do not work, and we are contributing to the kind of collective wisdom of a tradition. So for me, taking refuge in the *Saṅgha* is also somehow taking refuge in the collective wisdom that has been carried for so long, and also the collective compassion and the collective intention, the collective *mettā*, the collective generosity. Whatever the teachings are, whatever the opportunities to practice are, they have survived down through the ages in Asia and here in this country only because people have felt moved to generously support it. So it has been acts of generosity, I know, for all these years.

And so we are the receiving end of twenty-five hundred years of generous activity, of compassionate activity, people engaged in teaching out of compassion, or practicing themselves out of compassion. And loving-kindness, you know, it is saturated with loving-kindness. So I am personally deeply inspired by that, and deeply moved, and very grateful for that connection that I feel, even though, you know, some of it is, for myself, in part a mythological connection. It is what must have been. It is what, you know, I know we do not know actually, year to year, generation to generation, exactly what happened. So it is kind of conjecture, but I can believe it.

And I am willing, you know, to cop to maybe some of it being mythological. But that is okay with me. I do not mind it. Still, you know, it is my faith, he says, and I should be granted my faith. I do not know how it is for any of you. But taking refuge in the *Saṅgha* is to recognize, I think, the great importance of having a community to practice with.

And *Saṅgha*, as many of you know, I think now means different things in Buddhism. The strictest definition of *Saṅgha* is those human beings who have been witnesses to the truth, who have been witnesses to realization, to the real possibility of freedom. People of practice who have really somehow, in their own life, borne witness to that are considered part of the strict *Saṅgha*. A little wider definition of *Saṅgha* is the monastic *Saṅgha*. Monks and nuns are not necessarily people who have witnessed the truth, but they are often considered to be the

custodians of a way of life that most clearly perhaps points to that experience of realization, or points to a way of living from that realization. Though it is not the only way of living, it is kind of the clearest, cleanest container for that.

So a wider definition, which is still somewhat strict, is just the monastic community. A wider definition of what *saṅgha* is is anybody who is practicing the Buddhist practice, or anybody practicing in your particular tradition, kind of circles, concentric circles going out. So anybody in your particular tradition, like we have the Palo Alto *Saṅgha*, is our *saṅgha* here. But then wider than that, there is the Insight Meditation *Saṅgha*, the *Vipassanā saṅgha* in America, which is a much wider circle. And beyond that, there are American Buddhist practitioners, you know, of all different Buddhist schools. And then beyond that is all the Buddhist *Saṅgha* all over the whole world, you know, that we are connected to.

And then the definition goes beyond Buddhism, and it is anybody who is practicing freedom or the truth or the *Dharma*, whatever way they want to talk about it. And then it was very nice, Ajahn Amaro, who is an Englishman, who is a Theravāda monk, is going to build a monastery up there near Ukiah. And that is finalized. They got their property up there, and on Saturday they are moving in, and they just have a little bungalow up there right now. They are preparing to build a monastery for all of us. We can go visit.

And it was very nice. One of the neighbors on one side, it was very auspicious, because they went to visit the person, and they had a Buddha image in the living room. And it turns out that he is friends with the Thai monk in the Thai temple in Fremont. The neighbors on the other side are some kind of unusual European Orthodox Catholic monastery of forest monks who are living out there kind of as hermits. And so they went to pay their respects there to the abbot. And what he said was they brought an icon as a gift, and I took the icon to mean a Christian icon, because you do not use the word icon usually, especially for an Orthodox person, Eastern Orthodox. And it was really marvelous that this Buddhist monk brought a Christian icon to a Christian monk as a gift. So who knows, you know?

So the wider *Saṅgha* is all people who practice freedom, non-clinging, awakening, truth, whatever. And then the widest definition of *Saṅgha*, the least strict, is all living beings. And it has to do with our kinship with everything, all life. And so the whole world is our *saṅgha*, actually. Then in some schools of Buddhism, they even go beyond that. Not just living beings, but even inanimate beings are part of the *Saṅgha*. And so all existence, all creation, is a *saṅgha* that we are connected to.

So to take refuge in the *Saṅgha*, you know, it depends on how you see it. And in my own life, in different contexts, different definitions are what is appropriate for me. And I have

tremendous reverence for the monastic community, and I am quite content to call them the *Saṅgha*. And when I am with the monks, to bow to them and pay my respects. And I have tremendous reverence for the Palo Alto *Saṅgha*, what we have here.

I think it is really remarkable what has happened here over the years. And now I am kind of amazed at, I think, the friendships and connections that have happened here in the *Saṅgha*, and the sense of how this *Saṅgha* has been so supportive for so many years, for so many people, to come here and find something of value, and find maybe a kind of home. And I know I bow with respect to this *Saṅgha* also. I think it is really phenomenal, what you all have brought here in your intention and practice and commitment.

So to take refuge in the *Saṅgha*, to find value for oneself in a *saṅgha*, to find in it a source of protection against the forces in life which pull us away from practice, to find in it support. The *Saṅgha*, I feel, is a place for us, you know, to be ourselves, hopefully. The Buddhist tradition, the Theravāda tradition, talks over and over again about things as they are. It is like a refrain: things as they are. And after all, that is what they mean. Things as they are, not how things should be, or how you wish they should be, or anything, but just how they are. That becomes a refuge. That becomes a thing very important.

And that means us as we are, not us as we should be. You know, ideal saints, and you know, just as we are. And a *saṅgha* is a place where we really see, and really observe, and have deep respect for things as they are in us, as we are. And I would hope that a *saṅgha* is a place where it is safe to be who we are. It does not mean that people like that. It does not mean that people do not like that. But it is a place where it feels safe to have people even disagree, where it is okay. We feel like you can actually be who you are, and you feel that people are not going to turn away from you.

And that is, for me, one of the key things of a *saṅgha*. People are not going to turn away from each other just because they are, you know, I think, a bit funny, or in a way that you do not like. But it is a willingness to stay open for these people here, at least in this context. So it feels safe to come in here and be maybe a bit funny or odd, which we all are, funny and odd. I mean, I certainly am. And I assume that some of you are at least, you know, at least as much as me. And that it is okay to do that.

And it is okay to disagree, and to, you know, even to argue sometimes, because we are not going to turn away from each other. That is something I hold as very important, this idea of a *saṅgha*. I do not think a *saṅgha* has to be harmonious in a narrow sense of harmony, you know. Rather, its harmoniousness is that we are willing to stay together, and hang out, and work it out, and be honest with each other.

And I took a lot of advantage of that in my times when I spent living at places like Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and the *saṅgha* there, where I even experimented, you know, as I was trying to find ways to express myself in new ways that came out of my practice and what I was feeling there. I did not have, you know, necessarily models. I did not actually know how I should do that and what form that would take. So I would experiment in different ways of being. There were times when I experimented with being silent a lot and not speaking much, and I always felt that it was a tremendously safe place to do that, and not speak a lot, and be silent. And I did not have to be anybody for anyone. I was just going to be there quietly, and people left me alone. But I did not feel like people were going to reject me because I was silent. They were there.

And other times I experimented with being much more talkative, and talking, you know, experimenting with talking as much as I could. Anybody who was willing to talk to me, I would talk to, just, you know, whatever. And at other times I tried talking in particular ways with people, or tried to interact in particular ways with people, seeing if I could find some way that was my own way, but taking some risks at that, and feeling that the *Saṅgha* was a safe place to take risks, to experiment.

So then Saturday we will have the ceremony, and later tonight I will describe where and what, things like that. But I want to kind of underline what I said the first class, which is that the reason that I wanted to do this is that I felt that there were a lot of people in the *Saṅgha* here who have made a serious commitment in their life toward practicing. And I think people who come regularly on Mondays for a number of years, for example, a lot of people have been here for many years, and I really am in awe of and deeply respect that kind of commitment. It is not easy to have that, to come every Monday regularly over and over again, through all the different pulls people have in their lives, and all the different things, and working, and being tired.

And when it kind of dawned on me what was going on like that a couple of years ago, I was kind of blown over by it. And I felt it was very nice to offer some way to acknowledge that fully, and that level of commitment and engagement and seriousness that people have toward their practice, that it could be acknowledged in a formal way, to kind of solidify it, give it strength, to encourage it, things like that. And so I wanted to offer the ceremony as a way of doing that.

But in offering it, what I want it to be is that each of you reflect on what it means to take refuge and what it means to take the precepts, and that really this ceremony is for each of you a place where you channel or bring together your particular intention. And it is not that

I have some fixed idea of what going for refuge is, and what taking the precepts is, and what this is all about. But rather, this is a chance for you. I mean, we all do the same kind of ritual, same form, and say the same thing, but with the intention and meaning that we invest into that form and into those words. And really this is what I am trying to do: to honor what is already here in all of you, not kind of add anything to your life to make sense. So really, it is yours.

Even though it will be a constant kind of standard thing, and you all do the same thing, you will find your way, right? And traditionally also, this is in a tradition where this kind of ceremony would mark a person becoming a Buddhist. And I am not particularly interested in creating Buddhists, and that any of you feel like you are becoming a Buddhist by doing this. If you want to do that, that is fine. That is nice. But if you do not want to do that, if you do not have that identity, that label, you do not have to do the ceremony with that intent.

I think that if you sincerely feel there is a way in which going for refuge and taking the precepts means something for you, and kind of represents your practice and your intention that you have here, and it is not necessarily for you, you know, a clearly Buddhist orientation, that is okay with me. So it is for you to decide how you kind of touch this, for you to decide what you make of this. For me, on my part, it is also what I make of it. I also make something of it. I contribute to all this to some degree or other.

So part of it, I am trying to make a space for, is kind of acknowledging what is already here. But what I bring is what I feel is a very deep faith in something. And faith, no, it is odd to say, but for me I feel quite comfortable, after many years of not being comfortable with calling myself a Buddhist, with supporting Buddhism and helping Buddhism flourish. So I am going to go to the ceremony as a Buddhist, very clearly offering a Buddhist ceremony to people who can use it in whatever way they want. But I am not going to pretend that I am not there as a Buddhist. That is really what I am bringing. And how you negotiate that is up to you.

But that is what I bring in, offering it in a way that hopefully is comfortable even beyond a kind of Buddhist identity. So I hopefully bring reverence and respect and gratitude and many things toward a tradition that I feel like I am representing, and that somehow I am also a carrier of, since it is my role to sit in this seat and to teach and represent it. Maybe that is enough from me about that. Do you guys want to say something about *Saṅgha*, or ask any questions, or just say something?

Or some of you, for whom it is those people who have realized in a tangible way the possibility of freedom, in kind of the traditional Buddhist meaning of it, you know, more or less. The word enlightened is not really a Buddhist word except in English, in what is called hybrid

Buddhist English. But those who have attained a liberation or freedom, or have a taste of *nibbāna*. And so that is the narrowest meaning. Most of us have tasted some *nibbāna*, or the great ones said so. We have a big *saṅgha*. They could well be.

Yes, I have some sense of *saṅgha* as the daily working out of something I spend my life doing. A medicine man said a wonderful thing once. He said, "If spirituality doesn't grow corn, I am not interested in your words." If your spiritual life does not bring forth life now for you in your connections with others, in how you work out the results of your studies, it lessens its value. So this is a chance to increase that.

I think of spiritual friendship, and quicker people also regard this in this way. It is called corporate. And in seeing, the *Saṅgha* is enlarged, or the group meaning is enlarged, open. And for me, I add in my own sense, a very strong sense, that if there is a commitment to practice, to live with freedom, free of greed, hate, and delusion, to be open, that openness connects us to others, and that connection to others connects our practice to others. And at some point, it does not make sense to even talk about practicing just for yourself, where the practice is for incorporation, whatever is community, joining the world. So the true *Saṅgha* and the Buddha-*Dharma* coexist as our equals.

Now to me it is obvious. You do not have a Buddha without a *Saṅgha*. You do not have a *Saṅgha* without a Buddha. And what that means for different people varies, but there is an element where one of the fulfillments of a Buddhist practice is in community life. It is not, you know, in isolation. But what that community life means is different things for different people. And there are people who by disposition are naturally kind of more solitary. They love solitude, and that is their form of fulfillment. Community takes a much more solitary form for them than for others. And there are other people whose disposition is much more social, and so it takes a much more social and engaged form.

Sometimes I wonder what I am doing being a teacher, because I actually do not like to speak that much. I always liked to be quiet, and here I am, just yakkety-yak, you know? And I talk more and more the longer I teach. Occupational hazard.

Yes, I just remember what it means to take refuge in Buddha. Why is it? Well, the Buddha represents different things. And again, like *Saṅgha* has many definitions, so the Buddha can have different definitions also. There is the historical Buddha, and I have deep reverence for the historical Buddha, and it means something for me. It has a living relationship for me because it represents something symbolically. The historical Buddha represents something.

But also, refuge in Buddha represents for me the potential for freedom, for awakening, that is

in all of us, each of us. It was not just embodied in this one person, but it is found in all of us, in each of us. Or it is that capacity. So taking refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in awakening. And to the extent to which any of us have tasted it, even casually, and get a sense of that possibility or a hint of it, it becomes a refuge, a place of protection, a place of inspiration, a place of motivation, because we understand what practice is about, what the possibilities of freedom are. So you can take refuge in that, you know. You can find support, protection in that idea, in that sense, and that experience, and that memory.

And I would not have chosen that word. But you know, okay, yes. Yes, that is a living Buddha. Where is the living Buddha? So the range of meanings, and there is a place, a context, for each of them. And so I do not think I would change what you said, maybe just that I myself would not use the word really, because that implies the only, and could almost imply that, you know, really the *Saṅgha* is, you know, this wider connection. And I think the *Saṅgha* is the wider connection. But we do not want to limit it to that definition only, because there are other definitions which, for me, are very inspiring.

And in certain contexts, I am happy to let the *Saṅgha* be the monastic community, but I do not want to limit it to that either. So yes, for me it is also very important that we have the sense that it is the wider community. And I think Thích Nhất Hạnh offers a lot in his very ecumenical, open way. But sometimes if you are too open, ecumenical, you lose something that is very definitive. And I think there is a place for definitive anchoring also. So it is to be flexible and know the different contexts where different ways of definition, of relationships, of involvements, are appropriate.

In a sense, no, no, no, it was not a criticism. Just that I would not be using the word really, because in my ears the word really shades into only. I was not implying that you said that. I was just kind of doing, you know, forgive me, a teaching. It was not really directed toward you. I just took the opportunity as a jumping board.

Can I try again briefly? So what I heard you say was that the *Saṅgha* is really the connection to this wider living world of beings. And so I heard the word really, which is a fine word. It was a fine thing to say. I said, oh, you do not ought to defend yourself. But I just used it as a jumping board. And I should not have responded to you that way. But I was just going to make this point, that there are different definitions for what *Saṅgha* is, and that if we are too open with a definition, sometimes we can lose sight of particular definitions and their value.

So if we only define the *Saṅgha* as being all beings, for example, it is easy then to overlook the value and inspiration and support that can come from the monastic example, the monastic *Saṅgha*. The monastic *Saṅgha* I find very inspiring and supportive in what they are. And

that is a narrower sense of community, but that Buddhist sense of *Saṅgha* that the Buddhist tradition offers. And sometimes what happens when you make a really broad definition that makes everything the same, you lose track of the particular value of particulars, you know, the uniqueness of different things.

And what I have seen, I am not saying I saw it in you at all, but I have seen in some people who want to do away with distinctions that the values of particulars get lost. And sometimes people discount the value of monastic life and say, well, that is silly, you know. They are these world-yucky people, afraid of life, they are losers, and it seems like a medievalist tradition, and how could it represent enlightenment, and all that stuff. And there are certainly odd things about the monastic community. But there is something about it that I have experienced which is also very wonderful. And so I guess I am a little bit sensitive to the need to be very open and connected, and sensitive to that, and also to the fact that sometimes we can lose track of the particulars in the context of doing that.

Yes, not limited to being, not limited to being only open. That is making more sense. Almost as individual persons who are really quite truly themselves may have the widest ability to be sympathetic to other people. If the *saṅgha*, as it is Buddhist in an inward way, defines itself and is truly itself as Buddhist *saṅgha*, and truly its import, then I think the tolerance or sense of inclusiveness of the rest of the world will come of itself. But if the foundation is shaky, it will be hard to even. So, oh yes.

One way I think about *saṅgha* is in terms of spiritual friendship. And it is the way that I like to relate to people, to the encouragement you feel from everybody. It simply keeps coming. I appreciate this. So in terms of soul history, something came to my heart while talking about ninety generations, and the virtues of that, and it is sort of kind to identify with that. I am somehow available, and a generation is going on now.

Yes, it came up for me while I was saying it. I do not know if you noticed, but I shifted from talking about his teacher, you know, before him. I switched to the teacher before the teacher because I started getting wearied in my mouth. In the ceremony, we will be invoking women in the tradition also, some of the women I have studied with, and some of the women who I have not studied with but I feel connected to. So some of the women in history will not be absent. I am very sensitive to this.

And you know, historically, I mean, that history is sad, right? We do not want to deny that is the sad part of it. Voices of women have been silenced periodically in the history of Buddhism, and women have often gotten second-class status, even the nuns. And it is not necessarily a pretty history. I do not want to deny that either. But I also do not want to deny and continue

the silencing of women's voices. And there were some wonderful voices, wonderful teachers and practitioners in history, that if you go digging, you can find them, and they can be reclaimed, and can be understood as part of our lineage.

And I am certain that in the Zen lineage that I have now, for me it is all men going back. But I feel, you know, maybe it is mythology again, but I feel pretty confident that in the living tradition that I am connected to, besides the document, especially in the Theravāda tradition, where you do not have lineage papers and it is much more of a fluid environment, I am convinced that periodically through those centuries there were very strong women who were part of that lineage and support of what has happened now. And not just simply as support by, you know, maintenance support in the background of monastery cooking, but really as practitioners and teachers. In my view, it might have been minority history, but I think they are there.

And just in the last hundred years, there was a great revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka about a hundred and twenty years ago, and it lasted for about twenty or thirty years. Buddhism had waxed and waned in Sri Lanka over the centuries, and it suffered terribly also under the English, under colonial rule. By the 1800s it was pretty weak, Buddhism in Sri Lanka. And then partly in response to the colonial powers, there was an upsurge of interest in Buddhism, a revival of Buddhism in the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s. Much of that was propelled by women, and the status of women teachers and women who took religious vows became much more elevated than it had been for centuries and centuries.

And we think, you know, the modern era is kind of women making more inroads, being more equal or having more voice in Buddhist traditions. But actually, in Sri Lanka, they had a much stronger voice a hundred years ago than they have now. So historically things have waxed and waned. And so the Sri Lankan tradition has been part of the modern revival of South Asian Buddhism that I feel connected to. So I feel connected to those women who were part of that. I am conscious of it, and I try to make myself more conscious of it because of the great lopsided way that the people who wrote the histories, you know, wrote the histories.

Yes, I think about the *saṅgha* and what it means. When I was working with the monks on *dāna*, they said the *Saṅgha* was monks, and since that is mostly who were there, that seems appropriate. I like your more fluid definition. I think that this *Saṅgha*, the feminine element in the *saṅgha*, is a very strong element. And I think there is an openness and sharing that goes on here that I do not think would happen in a more masculine *saṅgha*. And I, for one, appreciate it very much. And I think this is one of the flowers of *saṅgha*, that when we come here, we can feel open to the extent that we want to.

There was a bit of silence as sitting here to explore. So does anybody have any, like last class, you know, we are going to discuss all this before we meet on Saturday. Does anybody have anything they want to ask or bring up, or feels unresolved for them in terms of participating in the ceremony and looking at the precepts or the refuges for themselves? I mean, it would have been good if we could spend more weeks, maybe five weeks just on each precept, and maybe in the fall we will do that.

How many of you do not know the chants, or quite a few? Were you going to get a chanting lesson tonight now? How many of you have to leave at seven? In that case, I do not know whether it makes sense, but maybe it can be part of the ceremony, a chanting lesson. Let us see. Anything else people wonder? Anything else seem empty, unresolved?

Yes, Bill.

In all of the reading, the study that I have done, I suppose it is clear. But some of the things I guess I heard little or nothing said. So it seems to be kind of in place. But I understand. The only one thing that gives me a little misgiving is what I read about them. There are always accounts of the Buddha's life where he is, the one that comes to mind is he goes to a particular town, I do not remember the name of the city, and there are in this town three groups of ascetic monks, and he goes from one to the other and performs some miracle or other to get their attention. And somehow that is desirable because it is the sort of thing you would expect from some lightning-flash-fingered, you know, god. And what I see here, and what I feel here, and what is most important to me here in the greater *Saṅgha*, is the sense that that is not what it is about. It is a quiet thing. It is a recognition of the reality and quietness as a strength of the moment.

There is no miracle in all those instances, just form. In the Zen tradition, they make the point that carrying water and chopping firewood are the great miracle powers, miracle things to do. Just eating and sitting and working and walking and all those things, those are miracles. And I say that because what we are very careful for is not to make a separation between a kind of silence and intimacy, which is possible in action. And if you do not make a separation between them, it includes action. Then it might include, in its own appropriate ways, maybe almost all kinds of action, and there is a place for maybe many different ways of acting.

If psychic powers like those the Buddha had, if he really had them, if it is not just one of the myths that was made up, maybe that is just another form of action. And maybe there are contexts where it is appropriate, is called for. So I mean, I am not defending it, but the point is, if you do not make a gap between silence and action, then where do you limit the action that is appropriate, you know, in the world of appropriate action? How do you define that?

Does that make sense? I am sure it is not a satisfying answer, but as long as it makes sense.

Jean: I think I have been introduced to greed, aversion, and delusion, and made a big one of fear, and then even that, trying it. I guess the simple answer is that greed, aversion, and delusion are just kind of generic words that cover a lot, umbrella words that cover a lot of things. I, by the way, see that they are not the primary colors, and from that we construct other kinds of mixtures of colors. And fear is a particular kind of aversion. So fear is a kind of aversion that usually fits under that category of things, but maybe it is mixed with other ones, a kind of combination of many different things.

But this is not, you know, careful scientific psychology, but rather general categories, just general categories supposed to represent the unhealthy, suffering-causing tendencies we have. And if you want to start pigeonholing, then they say, well, fear fits under the category of aversion, as the great theologians, the great writers who wrote poems on Buddhist psychology. So we do not have to listen to them, but. Excuse me, because we are getting close to the time. What I need to do is get everybody's name who is going to come to the ceremony, maybe printed so I can see it, so I can read all the letters clearly.

Maybe I will pass out sheets so that you can write your name, whichever name is very, whatever you want. It does not matter so much. Whatever way you feel most intimate with yourself, whatever name seems most intimate. Phone numbers I do not want. So if you can write a name, that is okay.

So now I can tell the details. We are going to start at 6:30 on Saturday, and we are going to meet at Bonnie's home. If you make a special effort, Bonnie has instructions on how to get there. We can meet at 6:30, and we are going to start with a potluck kind of dinner. And we will do that for an hour or so. Then probably around quarter to eight, we will gather for a sitting, and we will sit, you know, for a while. Then we will probably take a little break, and then I will give a little *Dharma* talk, and then at some point we will start the actual ceremony itself with some chanting and whatever we do.

And hopefully, if we do it right, hopefully it starts getting dark on us. But you know, it is getting light so late now. I think it will still be dark enough. And then I do not know if the moon will cooperate fully. But we know that the moon is full. And then, you know, at some point, we will finish. I am not sure how long it is going to take. And then at some point, anybody who wants can go to the all-night drumming at Stanford. It is all night, so you are out to ruin.

Since it is a potluck, the suggestion is that we coordinate the meal a little bit. Also, what we need to bring is, as the sitting will happen on a soft, nice green lawn, you might want to

bring something to sit on, either a mat or a blanket or something softer. And as part of the ceremony, I think you all should bring some gifts, some offerings.

What I would like you to bring is that each person should bring one flower, and that will be an offering to the Buddha. I think Bonnie has vases. One flower is what I want you to offer. And one candle, and it should be a taper that is not too long, maybe six, seven, eight inches long, something in a taper. And you should bring a holder for it. But the holder should not be too tall. Ideally it is relatively short, one that keeps it low to the ground.

And the taper you can take home with you. You are not giving that away. But you would use it. You are bringing a flower and a candle as a gift to the Buddha, and then you bring a second candle which would be a gift to me, as part of the ceremony. So bring two tapers and a flower. It does not matter what kind. And then you should also bring something to sit on. And I do not know if there are enough chairs. If you want to sit in a chair, which is fine, you are probably better off bringing your own because it is not clear that there are enough chairs there for everybody.

So if most of you or all of you want to sit in a chair for the sitting part, you should try to bring some kind of chair. If that is difficult, it is probably okay not to bring it, because Bonnie has a few. But it is best if all of you who think you should bring your own do so. Also, it would be nice to coordinate the meal. If each person brings their own plate, oh yes, and a pencil at any rate. If you want hot water too, I do not care to be no industrial-size hot mode. There will be some space where people sit down, or there will be some sheets, and otherwise people can sit on the ground, like that, either way.

Most of all, think of this as being an outdoor picnic. The important thing is that everybody is accounted for. Everything else can be kind of fluid. So I hope that, anyway, I look forward to seeing you all there. And if any of you feel you want to discuss something beforehand with me, I will probably be home all day Friday. If for some reason you want to discuss any of this, I am happy to do that. And it will be nice. We will get together and have a nice gathering and ceremony, and things will never be the same.

Yes, and anyone that is interested, I can get copies of a piece on the value in the precepts that you say. So we can see it. It is the principles stated negatively and then rewritten positively from some years ago. That is fine to do. There are ten, and we will do five. We will do the first five. They are also five dollars. They have changed their policies, so I have to know the count before I get them, which is why I do not bother with it.

But what accounts for the, you know, why I let go? And the lineage in tradition is ancient,

you know. It is twenty-five hundred years of people kind of sorting things out and coming up with ideas and playing around. And in twenty-five hundred years, you can get different ideas. There are actually many lists of precepts. There are five, and there are eight, and there are ten, and there are two hundred twenty-seven. Anyway, we can talk about it more, but people are beginning to go. So I think we should end. Thank you.