The Brahmavihāras and the Climate Challenge

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 52:54

Namo'etassa bhagavato arahato sammasambuddhassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambhutassa. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambhutassa. Buddhaṃ tamaṃ saṅghaṃ namassami.

This is my first time here at this group. It's not my first time in the monastery, but my first time coming to this group. I want to thank you all for your welcome, and it is very lovely to see this room filled with people. When I was first sitting here, I thought most of these people will probably have a very long practice because I know that James's group has been going for a very long time. Then I realized there are a lot of people here for the first time. So there's probably quite a mixture of folks—very seasoned practitioners and those just dipping in and beginning. It's lovely to have that mix.

It's very inspiring to see so many people interested in the practice who are here at this time in the world. I think it's very important that there is a real deep interest in the practice, in the Buddha's path, because we're in quite turbulent times now. They say there's a Chinese curse: "May you be born in interesting times." We're certainly living in interesting times. Whether it's a curse or a blessing depends on what we do with it. It depends on how we meet it.

When we first start to practice, we begin by learning to train the mind a little bit, settle the mind, focus the mind. In doing that, we see how it's pulled here and there—the tendencies, the particular tendencies we have. Maybe we have a lot of sensual desire and we're always pulled out into beautiful things, delicious things. Or we might have a lot of ill will and we always see what's wrong with the situation or what's wrong with a person or what's wrong with what's being said. Or we may be delusional, get confused easily, or get spun out into wonderful dreams that can't quite get realized.

When we start to practice meditation, we get to know these different tendencies of our own mind. We've all got different leanings and different ways those manifest. We get to know the parts, the volition of the mind that pulls us around. Before we get a handle on it, we're just following those forces.

As we continue the practice, we start to see: "Oh, I want to sit for thirty minutes and my mind is being pulled into wanting to do some really nice thing somewhere else. I don't want to be here." Or it's lost in a sense of aversion because our seat isn't comfortable enough, our body hurts, it's really irritating, or it's too noisy—that crow outside is distracting us. We get lost in these mind states. But as we practice meditation, we start to see those mind states. The more that we see them, the more of a handle we have. We have a choice. We don't have to be driven by them anymore.

Even though we get caught—we forget and we get caught up—then we have to remind ourselves again. That's all very much part of the practice, part of the training: to come back and start again, and remind ourselves of our potential.

I always like to reflect on the fact that the Buddha was a human being. He was born from his mother's womb. He was nursed at his mother's breast and then at his aunt's breast when his mother died. He was raised with food and exercise and education. He grew to be a man and then he went on his spiritual quest. He went to quite extremes on his spiritual quest before his enlightenment. But he's a human being as we are.

What he discovered—the awakened mind that he discovered—is not unique to the Buddha. The way of finding it was unique to the Buddha, but the awakeness itself is our birthright, our inherent nature. We can easily forget that. We get caught up in the personality, the stories, the scenarios of our lives. Maybe we come and practice and we're just trying to get a little bit more peaceful or a little bit less angry or a little bit clearer. That's good. It's good to do that. But not to forget that the actual legacy of the Buddha is much greater than that. It is a path of awakening. We all have the potential to fully awaken, and we find that moment by moment through training our minds.

So as I've witnessed the process of this practice, we start—often, I'll say we, it might be different for you—but often we begin with a lot of confusion, a lot of chaos of mind, a lot of maybe strong emotions. And then we start to meditate, start to train the mind. And maybe we can even have some quite good concentration, so we can drop away from the turbulence of mind into some very pleasant states. And then we come out of those pleasant states and oh, there's the world again, challenging me, irritating me, provoking me.

So the practice is balancing. We have to have enough collectedness of mind that we're not just wandering, the mind isn't just wandering here and there. But we also need the continuity. So not only to sit in meditation, have a nice experience, and then not worry too much about what you're doing the rest of the time, but to use the practice in a continuous way.

So it might be that the meditation, particular sitting, is not very focused, a little bit distracted. The mind is agitated. And then we might think, oh, I didn't have a good sit. And then another time we sit and we go into a state of bliss and the body feels really relaxed and everything falls away for a while. Oh, I had a really good sit. That was really good. So it's like, this is actually, I had a pleasant sit and I had an unpleasant sit. That's true. But a good sit and a not good sit, that maybe is not so true.

So what makes a meditation really valuable is the awareness that we bring to it. So if we sit for forty minutes and we're sitting with a lot of, let's say, agitation or anxiety, then if the awareness is really present, there's knowing. This is the state of the mind. The mind is agitated, it's restless, it's anxious. And then we can bring a sense of well-wishing towards ourselves. We can use the breath to help calm. And it may or may not subside—the anxiety or the agitation may or may not subside. But the important thing is

that we're staying present with what's going on. We're keeping the awareness with what's going on.

So awareness itself, it doesn't have a preference whether what it's aware of is pleasant or painful, dull or interesting. The awareness is embracing all of it. It is fully present with all of it. And this is the practice that we need to cultivate, the practice of strengthening awareness.

So I'm very aware that at this time we have this interesting situation, this challenging situation, where we take on the practice and it's about calming and getting more clarity and living in a more skillful way. And then what can arise is a sense of... We might have like a peaceful meditation, but there's a certain sense of kind of tension or anxiety. I think it's a very, very common problem, a common phenomena now at this time is people live with a lot of anxiety or depression.

And when I look at the situation of the world that we're in at this time, I think, well, that's very healthy. That's very appropriate. Because it's pretty anxiety-provoking, what we're in the midst of. And for a long time there's been a kind of a denial of what's going on. And I was very encouraged to hear our President Obama actually kind of say the climate change is a reality. We don't have time for meeting with the Flat Earth Society. This is the truth. We are in a very challenging situation.

I think one of the difficulties is if we let it in, it's so overwhelming that we feel that we're just going to fall apart and we don't know what to do. So we'd rather just not really let it in. Let's just keep working with this heart here. May all beings be well. Try not to do too much flying and use ecological washing-up liquid and everything will be all right. And it helps. It's good that we do those things. But it's not... You know, there is more than that.

So the other week I was just sitting with this feeling of the tremors and the overwhelm and the anxiety that arises in the heart when you really take in the situation that we're in as a planet. And the sense of, you know, a few generations in my grandmother's time, it was normal to assume that you'd probably have children and they could have children and they could have children and on it would go if you were that way inclined to have children. And now it's a little bit different. You know, you have children and you wonder what are they going to be growing up into? What are they going to have to deal with?

Our children or our grandchildren—what are they going to have to meet in this world? Are they going to be able to survive even? This is a very different situation than we've ever known as a species before. We might have encountered it in pockets, but not at this global level. This is not a small thing.

To take this in is scary and overwhelming. If we absorb the whole picture, if we consume too much scientific information about all of it, we can become paralyzed and catatonic because it's simply too much. Yet I think it's vital not to turn away from this situation. When we remain in our little bubble, doing our practice while this bigger picture unfolds—something we don't really want to acknowledge but know is there—we create tremendous stress for ourselves. This cannot truly be a path of awakening. As long as we're keeping so much out, it isn't really a full path of awakening.

As I was sitting with this feeling—we'd been speaking in our little community about this intense situation—we went into our daily meditation. I sat there with this turbulent heart, observing it, and I could see that this state wouldn't actually help anything. I couldn't make wise decisions from this place. I couldn't take skillful action. It only created more stress.

Sitting in meditation, what immediately arose was the qualities of loving kindness—soothing the heart with metta: "May I be well. May I be free from all suffering. May all beings be well. May all beings be free from all suffering." I connected fully with that intention, and as I did, the heart began to calm and settle. But you don't want to stop there.

From that foundation came a natural progression. The metta, the loving kindness, provided the support to move into compassion. Compassion means opening to the suffering—opening to the suffering of others, of oneself, being present with it, allowing the heart to open. Because there was the support of metta, because the heart was calmed, it could open to the suffering without being thrown around by it. There was a foundation on which this could be felt.

I let my heart feel that painful feeling. I felt with the anger of an eleven-year-old I'd spoken with recently about environmental issues—the rage she felt at being a little girl growing up in this situation. I took in her anger, the fear of grandparents, the anxiety of probably all of us caught in this mesmerizing way of living that's difficult to escape. We're all part of it. There's actually no finger to point—we're all part of it.

Taking that in, feeling it: Yes, this is what's happening. The body is here, there's a certain foundation, and this is unfolding. Then I moved naturally to mudita. At first I wondered: What joy could I feel in the midst of this rather tragic situation? Where is the joy in that?

Then I thought of the sound of wind in the trees, the creatures living on planet Earth, the movement of river water. I thought of human beings with their dreams and intentions and love for their dear ones. Animals and birds do the same—they care for and love their families, their young. Thinking of this, of the beauty of this planet...

This planet appears like a jewel when viewed from space—a beautiful blue, green, and white sphere suspended in the cosmos. Simply feeling this sense of mudita for the beauty of our world, for the love that exists throughout this realm of sentient beings, naturally brings a sense of uplift and joy.

Then there is upekkhā, equanimity. This is a tremendously important quality—I think of equanimity as a very high form of love, a pure form of love. Equanimity involves looking from a broad perspective, not from a distance in the sense of distancing oneself from what's happening, but rather gaining the expansive view of understanding.

I'm reminded of the pelicans I watch near Ocean Beach. While other birds flap frantically and people rush about on the shore below, these ancient creatures—survivors since the time of dinosaurs—cruise peacefully along, doing their thing. They glide slowly, then descend to skim the water's surface before

rising again, unhurried and serene. To me, they embody the manifest symbol of upekkhā. Having survived for eons, they demonstrate how that quality of maintaining a broader perspective, of not being caught in the rush of circumstances, possesses endurance and lasting value.

The Sanskrit root of upekkhā literally means "having a broader view." When we look at our situation with the mind of a mouse, everything becomes terrifyingly overwhelming. We don't want to venture out our front door or engage with anything because we're examining life from such close proximity that we become paralyzed by the intensity.

But when we adopt the view of the pelican—the broad perspective—we begin to see the changing nature of all things. We can zoom out into the cosmos and observe our beautiful planet Earth within this solar system, within this galaxy, which itself exists among perhaps two or three billion other galaxies in the universe. The scale is mind-boggling, inconceivable. This vast context helps us understand our place in the larger scheme of existence.

Similarly, when we examine life not with mouse-like anxiety but with microscopic precision, we observe the constant flux of all phenomena. Everything remains in perpetual motion. What I call "me" never arrives anywhere permanent—it continuously changes. Everything functions this way, always.

Even Berkeley Buddhist Monastery has arisen at this particular time and exists in the process of being Berkeley Buddhist Monastery. Eventually it will become something else. It is already decaying and will continue to decay, perhaps crumbling, with parts potentially repurposed or a forest growing here one day. This represents the nature of all existence—constant transformation.

Nothing can be permanently fixed or reach a point where everything remains safe and settled forever. Life simply doesn't operate that way. You might wonder, given this reality, why we should concern ourselves with anything at all. Why bother caring whether our grandchildren will have a habitable world, if everything changes anyway?

What's the problem?

So this is like the ultimate view. And then there's the conventional view. The Buddha brought these two together—the ultimate and the conventional—like two palms of the hand. You could say the ultimate view is like the wisdom view, cutting through, seeing the true nature of things: empty, changing, constantly changing. And then the compassionate view is seeing the sentience.

Here we are, sentient beings. We can pretend that we're empty, but we're sentient. We're both, actually. We're sentient beings, so we feel. We're influenced by, we pick up, we respond. And not just human beings, but every living being on this planet. So compassion meets the sentience—it meets life with tenderness.

There's a story in the suttas which you may be familiar with about the Buddha as he's wandering. He

comes to a group of monks and most of them are sitting in meditation, practicing. But there's this one monk who's inside, lying in his own dysentery. He's lying in his own excrement. He's alive, he's living, but he's very sick.

So the Buddha asks the monks, "Why is this monk lying here in his own excrement?"

And they say, "Oh, you know, he's had dysentery for ages. He's sick. He can't do anything. He's of no use. So we just leave him there and we just get on with our practice."

The Buddha is with Ananda, his attendant, and so he asks Ananda, "Please get me some water and a cloth." So Ananda gets him some water and a cloth, and the Buddha bathes this monk. He takes off his robes, he bathes his body, cleans him of excrement, of dysentery—filthy, stinking stuff. He bathes him, gives him fresh sheets, makes sure he's comfortable.

And then he says to the monks, "You must take care of your fellow monks." He uses the example that now we don't have family because we go forth from home to homelessness. So he's saying now you don't have family—well, you maybe have family—so we have to take care of each other. You can't just leave people like that. You have to take care. Nobody else is going to come and do it. You have to do it.

The Buddha knew very, very deeply—as deeply as it gets—that everything is in a state of flux, that all that is born must die, everyone that is born must die, everything that comes into form even must break up. The Buddha knew that more deeply than anybody else in the world. And yet he responded to that sick monk in the way of: you have to take care. He wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. You have to take care.

So this is how it is. We're here on this planet Earth, which is maybe a little bit in the state of that monk. There's a lot of pollution. There's also a lot of taking. There's a lot of—resources are being used up. And there's a culture of taking and throwing away. I watch it every day. I see people buying drinks that last for maybe five or ten minutes in plastic cups which last for thousands of years. They have their drink, throw it in the bin. Don't even manage to get it into the recycling bin. This is the culture that we live in. It's asleep to the realities of change and of impermanence.

So we're in this situation where it could be in our lifetime—it's quite possible in our lifetime—that we meet with very extreme change. And if we pretend it's not going to happen, it's not going to help.

If we get overwhelmed and frightened and freaked out, it's not going to help. So we need to learn how to open with awareness, open to the way things are. Open to the sentient reality, the reality of our vulnerability, of our mortality. And open also to the ultimate reality, that on an ultimate level, everything's okay. Everything is in fact perfect, doing its thing. We were never going to survive anyway. We were born, we go through our life, we're going to die—that's how it goes. But meanwhile, we take care, the best care we can, out of love, out of compassion, out of understanding our sentience.

So I really hope that you will not just hear this talk and go home and say, "Oh yeah, I heard a talk by a

nun," but actually take it into your lives and see: What can I do in my life—even if you're already doing a lot—what can I do in my life that brings this a little bit more deeply, a little bit more clearly, where I can live from a place of increased integrity?

Like I say, we're all part of this. Nobody's got clean hands here. We're all part of it because we've grown up in a culture that didn't actually know. And now we're starting to wake up to the effects of our actions, cause and effect. Once you know, then that's a whole different thing. Then we have a certain responsibility to meet this situation. We all have different strengths, different qualities, different abilities, different connections. So we'll all do what we do in different ways. But I just really ask you, implore you, and hope that you will really take this in and not just put it on the shelf because it's too uncomfortable or because you don't quite know how to meet it.

Let the discomfort come in. It's not going to kill you. Let the discomfort come in. Don't get overwhelmed. Stay in your body. Keep breathing. Keep breathing. But let the discomfort come in. And then use the tools that the Buddha gave, the *Brahma Viharas*, those four beautiful tools of the heart, to guide your heart in the right direction and strengthen your heart and mind. So it's all Dhamma. None of it is other than Dhamma. And it's how we meet it that is important.

So you may be familiar with the Eightfold Path. The Buddha speaks in terms of right intention. He speaks about thoughts or intentions of renunciation, of non-harm and non-ill will. So non-harm can be like wishing for the well-being of others, not wanting to see others experience harm. It's loving kindness, compassion, and non-ill will.

So getting angry at the big powers—it's okay if it gets you motivated to do something, but it's not a place to stay. It's not to just remain angry. That doesn't help. So to use the energy that this brings up, guide it in the right direction. Don't just get caught in aversion, anger, resentment. It's not going to help.

And then the intentions of renunciation. Just looking in your life: In what ways can I give up a little more? Because if we all give up a bit of comfort now, we can save a lot of discomfort in the future, whether it's for ourselves or for others.

Just to see—I mean, I'm a nun, so I give up things that you might take for granted, but I still enjoy comfort. I like nice things. I'm not beyond sense pleasure. But still, to bring that thought when you're going to go and buy something: Do I need it? How would it be if I didn't have it? Maybe, what if the money I'm going to spend on this big drink, I just have some water and then give that to some other more useful cause?

So just to bring in those thoughts of renunciation, intentions of renunciation. And renunciation, the true renunciation, it's not giving up to be pious and be really holy, but it's about giving up—

what is good in order to receive what is much better. That's actually how it works. Otherwise nobody would be doing it. I wouldn't have been doing this for twenty-something years if it wasn't like that. You give up what is good, what gives you some happiness, in order to open to what is much, much greater than

that.

So I offer these words for your encouragement and reflection. And we have about maybe ten minutes if anyone would like to ask questions about anything I've said or share anything in particular on this theme.

[A participant raises their hand and speaks]

Thank you very much for the talk because I live with this discomfort that you're talking about all the time. I actually was really serious back in December—I had a lot of anxiety, just an extreme amount of anxiety. But I have a meditation practice and a yoga practice that I do on a really regular basis. And now I feel like it's been about six months or over six months, and I wasn't so in the grip of it, really trying, like feeling like I might kind of drown in it and just keeping my head above water. And so with my practice and with feeling, using my mind and my feelings, I have been able to get to a place where I feel like that grip is loosening somewhat. But it is still very challenging to face the situation that we're in. So thank you.

Thank you.

Could you elaborate more about the sunflowers, purifying things?

Well, I can only say—I don't know a lot—but as far as I know, when you plant sunflower seeds in the ground, or little seedlings in the ground, if the ground is toxic... I mean, I don't actually know which toxins, so obviously some things will kill sunflowers, but if the ground has toxicity in it, then the plant transforms that. So the sunflowers will take in the nutrients from the earth and they—I'm not sure what they put back—but they somehow transform that toxicity and produce these beautiful flowers.

I actually don't know enough about it to give you a proper answer. There might be someone else here, but apparently there was a young man who does know better than I do, who had the idea: wouldn't it be a nice symbol if people on this walk held a sunflower to remind that this is possible? And then to actually plant—his idea was to plant sunflower seeds there on the site, which may not happen because it's a privately owned company and all that. But there will be, I think, a garden somewhere nearby where sunflowers will be planted as a symbol of that possibility for transformation.

I just wanted to say I really appreciated how you shared the fruit of your actual practice about this. It was very meaningful and very close to what it is when you sit with these kinds of questions. So thank you.

Could you tell us a little bit more about your monastery that you're trying to set up?

Yes, so at the moment we, as I say, live in a little house in the Sunset District near the ocean. And we came to San Francisco—the idea was this was like a little transition time. We thought maybe a year maximum, two years, and then we would move to the country. So we've been there for three and a half years now. And it has been a wonderful place. It's a lovely place. And I do encourage you to come and have a look for yourselves.

But we are actually forest nuns by practice. So forest nuns meaning naturally we would live in nature. Nature being like a support for the practice in terms of quietude. And also when you live in nature and observe nature, it is teaching the Dhamma all the time. The teaching is going on all the time.

And there's something about being in a city, even though we're right on the edge of it, we're on the kind of quiet edge of it. You know, it's mind-made. It's constructed from people's thoughts and intentions. And nature is kind of from the mind of nature rather than the mind of nature through the human being.

So, you know, I was just recently co-teaching a retreat in the wilderness. And while I was there, it was so clear—this process, the ever-changing process of nature was just so clear. And that shift that I was talking about between the emptiness that everything is—it's kind of emptiness, sort of flux—and the sentience, because all of these swallows were having chicks and the little chicks were flying and we were watching and they were kind of like, "Oh look, they got their first flight."

So there was the sentience, the kind of marvel of the way they would sort of snuggle up together and the way the mother and the father would take care and the whole kind of process of that sentient aspect. And then recognizing this is a constant changing process. It never arrives anywhere. It's changing all the time.

And then coming back—and we were teaching this retreat just a few hundred yards from the ocean, so out in the wilderness on the big flats of the Lost Coast. Then I came back to San Francisco to our little monastery, which is almost exactly the same distance from the ocean as we were there. And yet we're in a house, there's cars, there's music going on around, there's people, there's all this stuff going on. There's a computer, there's a telephone.

So it's a very different scene.

By our practice we're forest nuns and we naturally live in a rural environment, but because we've come over here as foreigners really to start a monastery, we wanted to be in a central place where we could get to know people and make contacts. So we've been there for three and a half years and we're now actively looking to move into a rural environment.

During this month, we're looking at three different areas. Actually today I came back from Sonora. We're also going to look out in the Placerville, Sutter Creek area. And we're also looking in Sonoma County. So those are the three areas that we've been exploring.

One of the reasons that we want to move from where we are—it's not because it's not a nice place—but because we're a community of three nuns and we have one lay steward. And we have requests from women who are interested to live as nuns, who would like to try out the life. We don't really have anywhere to put them. So we're looking for a place where it's of a similar price but with more rooms and a bit of land so that flow can start to happen.

"Could you say a few words about how Ajahn Amaro is doing? I was so disappointed when he left here

and went back to England. I probably sent him at least 75 articles because I thought he was bored up there in the sticks. He's got a bit of work to do. And I just wonder how he's doing."

I haven't had a lot of contact with him actually, so I can't tell you how he's doing right now. But as far as I know, he's just come back from a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. He went on pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and he's just back very recently. And he did come to see us in October last year. He was doing very well, very well indeed.

The Amaravati Buddhist Monastery is a complex place. It's a big place. There's a lot of people coming through. There's a lot of people living there. And it's pretty complex. And he's doing a great job in pulling it all together and getting some cohesion there. I think he's far from bored! He seemed to really be very happy and enjoying the challenge of it all.

"So speaking of Ajahn Amaro and Amaravati, is there any change in the status of women? Because my understanding is one of the things he's going to be doing was making some change around that. Has anything happened that you know of?"

Well... I know that's a big subject. It's a big subject. I should just make it clear that I trained in that community and I was part of that community for 18 years. But since I've been in America, we actually left that community in order to take full ordination. So I'm no longer officially part... Our little monastery is no longer officially part of that lineage because we decided to take full ordination, which is not possible in that lineage.

So I think around the time that we were leaving—it wasn't the cause of our leaving, but it just happened to coincide—there was a lot of difficulties between the monks and the nuns, and the nuns' position was pretty difficult. It was not good, which is why I ended up leaving the lineage and quite a number of people left that community of nuns and a small number of monks also because of the real difficulties in the gender discrimination.

And so far as I know it's on a day-to-day level much better for the nuns now in terms of it's not so challenging as it was during those last couple of years. But no, there are no actual changes made in terms of the status of nuns and so on. It's the same. But you don't get your nose rubbed in it every day. So yeah.

"We've just got a couple of minutes. Don't ask me a big question."

"Can you talk about your process of transitioning from being a civilian to being a nun?"

It's kind of a big question. I'll try and tell you really short. I came across, I kind of went through, I had quite an insight when I was about 13 into death, where I just realized that we're all going to die at some point, and that this whole process that we're in, whatever we do, is going to end in death. And that was kind of a bit of a wake-up call. And it was quite a difficult thing to take on at that age because you're supposed to be preparing for the future. It's all about preparing for the future and becoming somebody.

And it was like, oh, and then we're going to die. So what is it all about?

So I had that when I was 13. And then fortunately, I got very depressed from that.

and probably a few other things too. And then when I was 14, by my good fortune, I came across the Four Noble Truths—the very heart of the Buddha's teaching—in a book. That really changed my life because it offered a sense of the way out of suffering. You don't have to wait until you die, but you can find it here and now somehow.

When I read that, I would say from that day on, I had faith that the Buddha knows the way out of suffering. I didn't really understand how to find it, but I just trusted that over time I would start to understand it.

Then when I was 20, I met someone who had just come back from Thailand and had stayed with monks there. I didn't know that there were monastics alive at this time—I thought they had died out centuries ago. When I heard that, I remember saying within about five minutes, "That's what I want to do. I want to be a Buddhist nun." Sometime later on, after I've enjoyed myself a bit more.

I did have a little time to enjoy myself, but I must say it was shorter than I planned. I thought I'd ordain in my thirties. I was imagining thirty-six as my ideal age. But the calling was very, very strong. When I was twenty-two, I first visited a monastery and had just a feeling of coming home. Then I was a bit frightened because I felt I was much too young. So I managed to stave it off for a couple of years.

When I was twenty-four, I went to live in the monastery for a year, knowing that it would be a one-way ticket. I left my partner, whom I loved very much. I said to him, "I think it's kind of a one-way ticket." He was like, "In a year, you'll be out"—because he'd also spent time in the monastery himself and knew how challenging it could be.

I actually had quite a difficult year. But at the end of that year, it was clear that I needed to carry on. And it just unfolded from there, really. It was a calling. In some ways I would say it wasn't my choice. Sometimes people ask why that particular lineage, why that tradition. It was a calling. It just fitted together. Perhaps it was karmic—I don't know what you could say.

I can say I'm very grateful that I had that opportunity. I have a lot of joy in my life and I really love to live as a nun. I'm very grateful also to have been received so well here, that we have been received so well in this country. It's not an easy path because we're kind of having to reclaim the path in a way—the nuns' community—but it's worthwhile.

Do you have a closing? Do you do a sharing of merit at the end? We have a chant that we do, but you won't know that chant probably, so how do you normally do it? We'll chant the sharing of blessings in English. If you don't know it, just align your heart with the intention. This is really bringing to mind the goodness of your practice, the effort it takes to continue in this practice, the fruits that you've gained through the

practice, and that you share those generously and liberally with all beings.

Now let us chant the verses of sharing and aspiration:

Through the goodness that arises from my practice, may my spiritual teachers and guides of great virtue, my mother, my father and my relatives, the sun and the moon, and all virtuous leaders of the world, may the highest devas and evil forces, celestial beings, guardian spirits of the earth and the Lord of death, may those who are friendly, indifferent or hostile, may all beings receive the blessings of my life. May they soon attain the threefold bliss and realize the deathless.

Through the goodness that arises from my practice and through this act of sharing, may all desires and attachments quickly cease and all harmful states of mind. Until I realize Nibbana, in every kind of birth, may I have an upright mind with mindfulness and wisdom, austerity and vigor. May the forces of delusion not take hold nor weaken my resolve.

The Buddha is my excellent refuge. Unsurpassed is the protection of the Dhamma. The solitary Buddha is my noble guide. The Sangha is my supreme support. Through the supreme power of all these, may darkness and delusion be dispelled.

Maybe see you next week.

I'll be back next week, all being well.

Thank you for listening.

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