Mindfulness and Climate Action: 5

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 1:08:40

Welcome everyone who has joined us for the call this morning. This is the last call for our series on Mindfulness, Dharma and Climate Action. It's the last call of the series but not the last way that we can gather around this really pressing subject.

I'm so glad you can join us today and I'm also very glad to welcome our teachers who will be presenting today. Unfortunately, Bhikkhu Bodhi messaged us this morning and said that he was so looking forward to joining us and giving some input, but unfortunately, due to health considerations, he's unable to join us. I really recommend that each of us explore the work that Bhikkhu Bodhi has done as a leader for all of us in climate action and bringing our attention to the emergency of our situation.

I'm very glad that we have David Loy and Aya Santajita and Aya Santusica joining us on the call to give some guidance and input, and also to our team, Lou and Kristen from One Earth Sangha, Yong and Barry. Without further ado, I would like to hand over to you Lou to begin our call. Our focus today is what can we actually do? How can we turn all of these conversations that we've had, all these considerations into action? So, Lou.

Thank you, Tanisra. Hello, everyone. Such a wonderful topic to wrap up this series on.

Climate change really is such a big problem that sometimes it feels that we can't make a difference. In fact, social scientists tell us that this sense of hopelessness is one of the top reasons why people don't act at all. But as our conversation last week reminded us, we aren't just our small selves in this. We're part of this larger body that's acting. And together we absolutely can make a difference in so many different ways on this issue.

I can tell you from where I sit, change is happening and we are making a difference. The background paper that we shared for this series includes on pages five and six and in the appendix some of the many ways that you can get involved, that people can get involved. I want to mention two quickly without judging them to be better than the others, but just as examples of the change that's happening and different ways to get involved.

The first is to really name a revolution that's happening right now in our electric power generating systems around the world. As you probably know, the generation of electric power is the number one producer of CO2 pollution in the world, but right now there's a revolution going on in that system and it's driven to a great degree by a revolution in solar power. As you might know, there's been a sixty percent reduction in the cost of solar panels over the last five years and a ninety-nine percent reduction in those

costs since 1977.

What studies show is that if as few as five percent of households in many utility systems in, for example, North America and Europe were to switch to solar panels on their roofs, this would create a tipping point that could change our entire utility systems towards renewable energy. The background paper has more details about how going solar can be accomplished, especially with a focus on North America and Europe, but with resources for other areas, including ways that individuals can join together to make this change happen through bulk purchases of solar systems that can bring costs down even further, like going to Costco to buy solar panels with your neighbors.

So solar is a place where every individual action really adds up and it's a place where there are tipping points that are right around the corner.

The second area that I wanted to mention quickly is political action, which is absolutely critical and sometimes can be discouraging because our political systems don't always seem up to the challenge. But we can't ignore the opportunities that arise within those systems to make change around climate. The last month's People's Climate March began a road that leads to Paris in December of 2015, where countries will negotiate a new international climate agreement.

There's a key stop on that road to Paris that I want to make everyone aware of, and that is the deadline of next March, 2015, when countries have to put new national carbon pollution cuts on the table, all countries of the world, ahead of Paris. This is a key moment. No matter where you live right now, in your country, the government is developing a new national target for reducing climate pollution. So I encourage you to find out what that process is like in your country and make your voice heard.

In the U.S., you can add your name to a petition to President Obama to put a strong target on the table for the United States. You can call your members of Congress to say we want a strong outcome in Paris. But most of all, as you think about getting involved, find a way to do so that speaks most to you. By doing even a little, studies show that people gain confidence and they do more on this issue. Remember that you aren't alone. Whatever way you choose to contribute really does matter and is helping us get to the change that we need.

I'm really excited for the panel that we have today. I want to turn things over to David Loy to get us started.

Thank you, Lou, and thank you to Tanisra. I'm really very happy to be a part of this conversation. I really appreciate the invitation and the opportunity.

Listening to the conversations that have happened so far, a number of things have come to mind for me, and one of them in particular that I think I need to begin with is to look at the fact that I think one of the things we're called upon to do now is actually to reexamine our own tradition. What I mean by that is it's not only an issue of what Buddhism might be able to do to help us understand and respond to the climate

crisis, but also I think the climate crisis also encourages us, in fact, challenges us to look at our own tradition and what it is within it, certain ambiguities there that I think sometimes haven't encouraged us to take this kind of step.

What am I getting at here?

I've been trying to discuss climate and ecological issues for a number of years, alongside broader social concerns. Frankly, until quite recently, there's been considerable frustration with the often indifferent and sometimes even resistant response within certain parts of the Buddhist community.

For example, about five and a half years ago, John Stanley and I co-edited a book called *The Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency*, and frankly, the response was rather a thunder of silence. I've been struck by this. Why hasn't there been a more progressive response on the part of Buddhists generally?

Thinking about it, looking into it, I could see some ambiguity within the foundation of our tradition that I think we really need to address. When you look at some of the earlier Asian traditions with their emphasis upon transcending this world—understanding the goal of nirvana as not being reborn, for instance—insofar as that becomes the goal, it's sometimes understood as encouraging a kind of indifference to this world.

This world of samsara is sometimes devalued as the place of not only suffering but craving and delusion. Often the response of Buddhists has not been to want to engage with it but to try to transcend it, to try to escape it, to try to check out of it. That can be very problematical when we're in a situation such as we are now, where clearly we do need to engage.

I'm not so sure that this is the primary perspective we find in Western or Westernizing Buddhism. But there is a kind of opposite response that isn't always more helpful. As Buddhism has come to the West, there's been this really interesting and generally very fruitful interaction with Western psychology, especially psychotherapy. As I said, I think there are a lot of very wonderful, important things that have come out of that.

But one of the implications that has sometimes gone along with it is the sense that my problems are in my head—they have to do with my own mental and emotional life. If I simply work on that level, then the basic problems of my life will be solved. In other words, this too doesn't necessarily encourage engagement with society.

If the more traditional approach is to understand this world as samsara, something that you want to transcend, a more psychological approach can encourage us to see the solution as simply engaging with our own minds. As a result of that work, when everything will be okay, we will harmonize or fit into the world better. The danger is that both of those discourage the kind of engagement with the world that we really need now.

What I'm saying here is that I think we really need to clarify the nature of awakening and acknowledge that the fundamental issue isn't so much about escaping this world or fitting into it, but rather realizing how much our experience of the world is due to the way that we construct it—due to our delusions, due to our cravings. We have this particular dualistic understanding that makes us feel separate from the world. In a way, that's the challenge: we need to overcome this sense of separation.

Insofar as Buddhist practice can encourage us to simply try to transcend the world, it can actually encourage us to move in the wrong direction. If we realize that our own personal problem is this dualistic relationship with the world—the sense that I'm inside my head in some way and the rest of the world is out there—insofar as I need to deconstruct and reconstruct that way of experiencing the world, the same thing is true collectively. The same thing is true socially.

The dukkha that we're talking about with climate change and the ecological crisis generally—and indeed a number of social and economic problems—it's not just something individual. It's something that is institutionalized, and it requires us to clarify and develop the Buddhist tradition in this way in order to really successfully address those concerns.

So that's my first comment and concern: this need to clarify exactly what it is that we're doing when we're doing Buddhist practice. Are we trying to transcend the world? Are we trying to just fit into it? Or do we realize that we really need to reconstruct the way we experience it and experience ourselves?

Moving on from there, it seems to me that within the Buddhist tradition, we have an archetype that speaks exactly to that. In fact, sometimes I wonder if this might actually be the most important thing that Buddhism has to offer, to contribute to the kind of situation we are in now. Here I'm referring to something that Jack Kornfield mentioned in the first conversation, but I think we can say a bit more about it. I'm referring to the bodhisattva path.

If one looks at the history of the Buddhist tradition, the bodhisattva path has sometimes been understood in a kind of sectarian way as part of the Mahayana critique of Theravada. But I really think we need to rise above that and realize that it's rather providing us with a particular orientation that can really help us address the kinds of situations that we find ourselves in now ecologically.

What is so special about the bodhisattva, of course, is that he or she has a double practice. That is to say, they're not only continuing their own meditations or whatever their contemplative practices may be, but they're also out there engaged in the world. Traditionally, this has often been understood as helping other people wake up. But I think we can see now how the situation we're in is really calling upon us to find ways to address the kind of problems that we're looking at here, especially climate change.

Just a moment ago I mentioned that this is a double path, but it really seems to me that it's not a double path. It's actually two sides of the same path.

In the vast landscape of awakening, we find that beginning to wake up—to let go of ourselves, as we say in

Zen, to forget ourselves and open up to the realization that we are not separate from the world—does not automatically eliminate our basic self-centered tendencies. These patterns remain within us, requiring careful attention and skillful engagement.

This is precisely where bodhisattva activity becomes essential. If waking up means realizing our fundamental non-separation from others, then how do we learn to live in ways that actually embody this understanding? This is the heart of the bodhisattva path.

Nisargadatta expressed this beautifully when he said, "When I look inside and see that I am nothing, that's wisdom. When I look outside and see that I am everything, that's love. Between these two, my life turns." Here we find the two pillars of the Buddha's practice: wisdom and compassion. The compassion of the bodhisattva working in the world to create positive change is simply the actualization of the growing wisdom that we are not truly separate from it.

There is something particularly profound about the bodhisattva that deserves emphasis. In my Zen tradition, we recite daily the four Bodhisattva vows, the first being: "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all." This vow calls for liberation from dukkha for all beings—a project so vast that one could never expect to fulfill it completely. Yet this impossibility is precisely the point. The vow calls for a fundamental reorientation of our entire stance toward existence. Instead of asking, "What can I get from this situation?" we learn to ask, "What can I do to make this situation better?"

This reorientation becomes essential when facing the overwhelming magnitude of our current challenges and the strength of forces resisting necessary transformation. The bodhisattva, having taken such a vow, will not be overawed by the scale of the problem. The nature of the challenge calls us to do our very best without knowing whether our actions make any difference whatsoever—a profound test of faith and commitment.

What makes this possible is the bodhisattva's integrated practice. Through meditation, we touch that place of equanimity, or as we say in Zen, emptiness—the place where there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose. Even when bodhisattva activities bring incredible frustration, we can return to this place of equanimity and be recharged.

This combination seems crucial for our time. For activists, it offers protection from the burnout that comes from getting caught in anger and frustration when hoped-for results don't materialize as expected. The meditation practice provides a way to recharge our batteries. But it works both ways—the bodhisattva knows it is not enough to simply find stillness, equanimity, or emptiness and dwell there. We are called to emerge from that place and engage fully with the world of form, the world of dukkha, the world where suffering requires our active response.

As we pause here to reflect on this beautiful balance—Nisargadatta's wisdom of compassionate response in the world informed by deep wisdom, that unified place we reach through both inner reflection and

outer action—we can appreciate how the bodhisattva template challenges us to rework and understand anew our relationship to Buddhism and the dharma.

Building upon these foundations, we must consider what concrete actions this bodhisattva presence can take in our world. We need to examine how we can build what might be called a Buddhist movement—not from a desire to gather for its own sake, but because our leadership has lost its moral compass.

At the corporate level, if executives and shareholders were truly committed to ethical conduct, they would never hide the harmful effects of their products. The tobacco industry wouldn't have spread disinformation about health impacts—they would have said, "We don't want to harm anyone," and removed dangerous products from shelves. This is the ethical stance our world desperately needs: business that refuses to engage in lying, stealing, or killing, but instead takes responsibility for actions that are wholesome and beneficial to the earth, the biosphere, and human populations.

The question becomes: who ensures that business acts ethically? Rather than speaking of corporations as though they were autonomous decision-making entities with inherent power, we must recognize the human responsibility within these structures.

It's the people who are running the corporations that make decisions and take action. I want to be clear about this—I think we need to remember that every decision we make creates karma. If we really understand karma and take that in, then we don't want to have any investments in fossil fuels. We don't want to be encouraging the use of fossil fuels. We want to try as quickly as we can to move away from them, even though we still have to use them at the moment because we don't have sufficient alternatives. We want to create those alternatives as rapidly as possible.

But really, what we all want is governments that protect the people rather than exploit the people—government that keeps business in check when they've lost their moral compass. But now it seems our government leadership has also lost its moral compass. So when that happens, any time throughout human history, the people need to get together and make their voices heard. We need to rise up. We need to talk about this openly and band together. When thousands of people, hundreds of thousands of people, millions of people come out and say we want to protect people, animals, life, the biosphere—we want ethical leadership—then people start to pay attention and things begin to change.

Right now, we're dealing with an enormous amount of unclear information. There was an elder woman the other day who said, "Well, our government's doing everything it can to prevent climate change." And of course, it's not—not at all. If we were doing everything we could, then there would be a ban on extreme extraction methods, there would be a ban on further fossil fuel exploration. There would be a high tax on carbon emissions. We wouldn't be worried about what the governments would come together and do in Paris in 2015. We would be sure that there would be a binding, effective treaty. But that's not the case, and that's why we have to get involved.

So one of the ways that we can get involved that I'm excited about and interested in is coming out of our experience in organizing for the People's Climate March. A number of us were involved in the People of Faith organizing for the People's Climate March. We had weekly conference calls on a national level about what we were doing in our local areas and what we were doing in each of our faith communities. It was inspiring to hear that there were forty mosques that were going to be represented at the People's Climate March, and it made me feel like, wow, the Buddhists—we really need to start to reach out to each other, get involved, make sure we get to the march and make our voices heard, our presence known, our wishes clear.

Those groups that were working during the People's Climate March are still continuing because we know there's still much more that we can do and need to do. One of the things that we're going to put into action soon—and we're beginning discussions about how to do it—is a Buddhist team on the national level that has periodic conversations, conference call conversations, where we check in and discuss what's happening in different areas. This can be done in the United States, but it can also be done anywhere. The same model. Have a national conversation among the Buddhists. It doesn't have to be limited to the Buddhists—anybody can hang out with us. But to really try to reach out to different Buddhist groups. There are many, many different Buddhist groups that have never connected to each other.

Right now we have a thriving group in the New York City area. People from different sanghas came together to work to host the People's Climate March, and they're continuing their work. So they're intending to have a representative call into this national team on a regular basis and report what they're doing locally. We want to have those same kinds of groups in Portland, Seattle, San Francisco Bay Area, Dallas, and anywhere else in the country and anywhere else in the world to talk about what it is that we're doing on our local levels and organize the local Buddhist sanghas.

This is really a powerful way to connect. It's a powerful way to inspire each other. It's an excellent way to share information and to be ready for mass mobilization when it's needed—like the People's Climate March, like what we want to do to really make sure that the climate treaty in Paris in 2015 is solid, effective, and more than sufficient to put a stall on climate change.

So the intention behind this gathering together and really making our best efforts in all different kinds of areas, depending on what is needed in various districts... For example, in California, there are efforts to try to convince Governor Jerry Brown to put a moratorium on fracking. There are efforts to resist the transportation of the tar sands oil into Richmond, California to be processed, and other like efforts—trying to get the University of California to divest from fossil fuels. All of these efforts can be joined by coming together as Buddhists and getting involved.

So if you're interested in participating in this, I would invite you to send me an email to santussika—that's S-A-N-T-U-S-S-I-K-A—at gmail.com. In the subject line, put "Buddhist action" and then we'll add you to a mailing list and get you involved. We can help each other with outreach, and we'll be connecting with the

larger movement through the people of faith, connecting with what's happening with other faith-based groups and also with the general activists.

We still have a webpage on the People's Climate March hub, and we are now going to have a Buddhist page on the hub for Our Voices. This is an effort coming through Green Faith, which was organizing the people of faith for the People's Climate March.

Our Voices is an organizing group with the goal for millions of people of faith and moral belief to sign on and pray in their own tradition for the Paris 2015 UN Climate Summit to succeed where all past talks have failed. By signing on, we are expressing our love and concern for all our children, for vulnerable people, and our precious planet.

So this effort is focused on three things: spreading awareness of what spiritual groups are doing, helping spiritual groups with their own call to action and outreach, and organizing days of prayer and action. One that's coming up is a vigil on December 7th, using solar lamps instead of candles. That's called the Light for Lima. It'll be in the midst of the conference in Lima.

When many, many people take an action like this, then the people who are in those negotiations are encouraged, inspired, and pressured. That's what we need to really try to stand up to the pressure of the billions of dollars that are behind the industries that are furthering the destruction and leading us into disaster and catastrophe.

Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, talked about a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. But we don't have that anymore. We have a government of the billionaires, by the billionaires, and for the billionaires. This is what we need to stand up to. And we do that from a place of practice and depth and the bodhisattva vow. And we do it from a place of connection, connecting together. And it's joyful. It's a happy thing to do.

So I want to encourage everyone in America to get out and vote on Tuesday. Make sure we're voting for people who are going to really actually take action on climate. Put pressure on the ones who are on the fence. And put pressure on the ones who have denied it. I want to encourage everyone to participate in talking with everybody you know about getting involved. There's a great tool called the Pledge to Mobilize that you can look for at www.climatemobilization.com and see if that fits as a support for how to talk to each other.

We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change, and we're the last generation that's going to be able to do anything about it. This is so imperative. We can bring all of our love and our joy. Coming together is a happy experience. And making a difference to do the right thing and encourage our brothers and sisters everywhere to do the right thing is the best we can do.

Thank you so much, Ayya. Beautiful. And I also just want to add that in the movement of the people of faith and our Buddhist engagement with that and contribution to that, we've also been hooking up with

AVAS and 350.org and Idle No More, First Nation Indigenous Movement, so that we can bring the faith voice to inform and connect with and collaborate with the activists on the front lines. So more about this later. As I said at the beginning of the call, this is an ongoing process of gathering our energy and forces together and our focus.

So thank you so much, Ayya Santussika, for such clarity. Ayya Santacita, who is also a dear friend and great practitioner over so many years, and also involved in the People's Climate March, People's Climate Train—this is a discussion we've been having together. So I'd also like to invite you to bring your words into this forum for us today. And thank you again, Ayya, so much for being with us today.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today with all of you. I just want to invite us to just take a moment and connect with ourselves and also with how it feels when we hear all of this information coming to us from a Buddhist nun who is so very clearly outspoken about the fact that we need to act on what is happening.

We can no longer just be with our own experience and stop there. We really need to see what holds us back from wholeheartedly engaging in the conversation and wholeheartedly engaging in stepping out into the world and making a difference. However, wherever we are, we have to just start where we are. And if we are feeling a sense of threat, a sense of despair, a sense of confusion, resistance, not really wanting to step out, then we have to start with that.

But it's really important that we do start and that we see that the whole world is holding up a very big mirror for us, wanting to wake us up to the fact that the way we are living is no longer sustainable. Our worldview we have been living in for a long time now is clearly not working any longer. And our worldview, which is in many, many ways based on fossil fuels—we are dressing ourselves in fossil fuels, we are eating fossil fuels.

We are living inside of fossil fuels. We are transporting ourselves with fossil fuels. They are woven into all corners of our lives, everywhere we turn.

And yet we also know that if we want to stay within the so-called safe limit of two degrees of warming, we can burn only another 550 gigatons of fossil fuel. Our industries have identified about 2,800 gigatons of fossil fuel reserves—about five times as much as we can burn if we don't want to exceed those two degrees of warming.

The situation is very dire, and we need to organize ourselves to pressure our government officials to make clear limits, clear commitments, and strong decisions. We don't have much time left, and we have the opportunity to decide whether this passage into a new way of living will be difficult, very difficult, or impossible. We can no longer take this lightly because we have already gone much too far. We really need to wake up to the fact that if we don't take action, it will be impossible for civilization as we know it to continue. It simply will not be possible.

To take in that truth—all of the suffering and strife, the horror of imagining such a reality—is difficult. But I think it is necessary that we open our minds to the fact that if we do not act, this is what will happen, because it will not change by itself.

I like to think about contemplating the old age, sickness, and death of a worldview that no longer serves us and that truly needs to change. We need to speak about it. We need to demand action from our politicians and support those politicians who are willing to make change. We need to be very clear about this, and for that, we need to work together.

I feel very inspired by what Ayya Santacitta mentioned about this national network, where we can support each other, inform each other, and learn what we can do. Even right now, you might not know exactly what to do, but as soon as you step out and meet with others, you will hear what they are doing. You can join in and grow together.

In order to make this process possible, we need a framework of teaching, and the Buddha has left us with a very strong framework, starting with the five precepts, especially the first two. They are completely relevant to the question of climate change—it's all about harmlessness and not taking what is not given freely. This connects directly with how our systems are treating the planet. We are completely out of touch with what is needed. We are destroying our biosphere, and we have known this for quite some time.

It's heartening to hear that more and more people are willing to speak up about it. This call is such an encouragement—to see that Buddhists are stepping out and wanting to organize themselves to make their voices heard.

I also want to connect with what David said about transcendence being so long favored in the Buddhist world as the way to embody the Buddha's teaching. But I really think it's transcendence of the ego, not transcendence of the planet itself. We don't need to let go of our planet. We don't need to let go of the beautiful species living here with us. But we do need to let go of our egos—the ways we think we need to live, what we think we need to have, what we need to throw away. All of these things we must reconsider. Is this really true? Do we really need all of these things? Or is this just a worldview we can outgrow and must outgrow? Because the planet cannot support this worldview.

I felt very inspired by what Penny Opal Plant, one of the First Nation leaders, said: "We are the immune system of the planet. We have to speak out. We have to ring the alarm bells. We have to increase the numbers of those who want to act on behalf of our Mother Earth, who is sick right now."

If we all act together as the immune system, if we speak out, we need only be 7% to 10% of the population to establish this different worldview in the mainstream. We can do this. If we work together, if we establish systems of communication and mutual encouragement, then we will make a difference. We don't know what the result will be—we can't know that. But we can do our best and then let go. Not before we have done everything within our power to make a difference, but after we have truly tried.

There's a beautiful slogan that was heard often on the march: "The people united will never be defeated." It's about working with all those obstacles that prevent us from uniting and working together—both the internal and external obstacles. We have to attend to both.

And they are both of equal importance because we cannot be truly effective externally if internally we are completely caught up in our own reactivity and confusion. We also cannot wait forever to step out, to do something, to say something, and to act.

We must remember what the Buddha was doing on the night of his enlightenment. He was sitting under the Bodhi tree, and he was touching the earth. He was calling the earth to witness because we belong here. Simply because we are here, we have the authority to speak on behalf of the earth.

In order to do that skillfully, we can remember also the fearlessness mudra, which the Buddha used in his way of teaching people and encouraging them to have the courage to act on what they value, act on what they care for, what they want to protect. These two mudras can really help us stay on the path: touching the earth, and the fearlessness mudra.

Both of these mudras help me personally to stay present with my own experience and to have the courage to step out and say, "Yes, I want to practice. I want to be fully here and embody the truth for as long as I can." I want to end with this encouragement: connect with each other and live the Buddha's teaching fully. Thank you.

"Beautiful words. Thank you, Ayya."

While listening, I'm hearing the trajectory of today's call—from David's teaching helping us re-understand how we practice and bringing in bodhicitta, the bodhisattva paradigm, to Ayya Santacitta's clear call encouraging us to connect together, to become a strong force and engage on every level: engage politically, engage for systemic change. Ayya Santacitta is really bringing and empowering that vision for us.

As I'm listening, what's arising for me is this sense of the robe, of being in the robes. I'm sitting here at Aloka Vihara near Placerville, the new monastery for bhikkunis. I was at the bhikkuni ordination yesterday of Ayya Jayati Bhikkuni. The robes, the robed ones, are those who help guide us. To hear such clear guidance coming through from the ayyas—I feel very moved and very energized.

This brings to mind our call very early on when we were putting together our teachers' statement about climate change. Kumi Naidoo, the executive director of Greenpeace International, came from South Africa where he was in the anti-apartheid struggle. He reminded us that the people of faith and the voice of ethics brings such important energy to activism—it was that energy that helped topple the apartheid government, helped overcome segregation in the U.S. through the civil rights movement, and enabled Gandhi's satyagraha to overcome British colonial domination in India.

I think we have very important work to do. We have our map laid out, and now we should move into our breakout groups to allow space and time for your discussion and questions.

"Well, thank you, and hello everyone. We've heard wonderful wisdom from teachers on this and all our calls, and it's clear that wisdom lies not just with teachers but throughout the sangha. The breakout groups provide a lovely opportunity to hear and connect with others around the world, creating this connection of sangha in the midst of this incredible challenge. We consider this an important part of cultivating sangha. If you're not comfortable going into breakout groups, you might instead do your own meditation on what you've heard and where it's landing in your heart, mind, and body."

"Welcome back, everyone. We're all here together in one big sangha conversation. We'd like to hear from you now—any reflections from the breakout rooms, your meditation, or questions you might have. With so many of us on the call, please share from the heart and keep it relatively brief so we can hear from as many people as possible."

"Thank you so much. I was deeply impressed and moved by both David's talk and Ayya Santacitta's. David's talk was incredible in how it looked at our own tradition, going deep and showing how we can truly be bodhisattvas. And the dynamism of Ayya Santacitta's talk—all the options and possibilities she offered are incredible resources.

"Yet so many things she mentioned today, I had no way to capture that information. There was so much I'd really like to have—even her email address, the different organizations she mentioned like Our Voices, the Climate Change Mobilization. I'm sure I missed many that I would really like to connect with and be involved in.

"I'm a community dharma leader here in Tucson, Arizona, and I'm just starting my first experiment in classes on what I'm calling 'Climate Justice: How to Live Courageously in This World.' I want to bring this to as many people in my sangha as I can, and in that way keep touching other people. So how can I get that information?"

"I completely hear you, and thank you for your leadership and what you're stepping into where you are. It's beautiful."

And I'll say that we will share these resources with you. If you go to the Conversation Archives on the Wonder Sangha website, all the resources mentioned during these calls will be delineated there, including email addresses. We'll make sure that information is available to you.

Great. So let's go to Jeffrey. Jeffrey, what is your question and what would you like to offer?

Well, the main thing is that we are extremely excited and fulfilled by this series of five meetings, and we want more. We want to know what's next. We hope this isn't the end of what you're doing. This has been an amazing, enlightening experience and has left me feeling very hopeful. I don't feel hopeless now at all

because of all the possibilities. It's more a question of where am I going to put my energy among all these incredible possibilities. So we appreciate the leadership you've provided and please continue.

What a wonderful segue. Actually, we are going to talk a little bit about that later in the call, but I will say that we hear you. We have heard from many that they have been really nourished by these conversations, and so we're not going to leave you out there by yourself. We're going to keep finding ways to connect, so we will be following up. I'll say a little bit more about that towards the end of the call.

Okay, Jeffrey?

I knew you would. That's great.

So I'm going to go to Anandabodi Bhikkhuni. You are on the public mic. Go ahead.

Hi, this is Aya Sudama. I'm on Aya Anandabodi's telephone, so it might be my pressing the button that you've seen there. Is that correct, Aya Anandabodi? Are you there?

She's not there, okay. So I just wanted to say—oh, I'm from Charlotte, North Carolina, but here in California with these friends at Aloka Vihara, listening in with much appreciation, much mudita, much admiration.

I want to say I grew up in a household led by an executive from Duke Power Company. I had no idea until recently that Duke Power is one of the worst polluters in the world. I read that 500 mountaintops have been decimated by Duke Power in its search for energy and coal, doing so much harm in this world. I had no idea, just no idea. I have felt very helpless. Especially as a bhikkhuni, a Buddhist nun—I'm a little tiny one all by myself. I just started a new little center in my hometown a year ago and feel sort of fragile and alone, not like I'm someone who could or should speak up. These things are bigger than me. Besides, a good Buddhist shouldn't get involved in these things—that's been my thought.

And I heard something in our conversation about transcending the ego, not the world. Just a light bulb went off. I feel like, oh, I can participate in this conversation.

I'm getting tears now. Just recently, I got the paperwork from my city, Charlotte, North Carolina, to start a neighborhood group. My neighborhood doesn't actively have a group. So I'm seeing possibilities. The wheels are turning as I've been listening. I'm very interested in this and will pursue it.

And I also registered to vote within about 48 hours, just in time to register. I'm going to vote for the first time in years. I'll get back to Charlotte just in time to do that. I was determined to vote in this election.

Thank you so much, John. It's so wonderful to hear from you and the group in Totnes. What a beautiful spot in the world—one of the places that started the transition town movement, which we should add to our list of resources.

We are getting very close to wrapping up our conversation, but Ayasudama and Geeta, John mentioned

joy, which feels like such an essential thread running through everything we've shared today.

The question of how to find and sustain joy within Buddhist practice while facing something as overwhelming as climate change is profound. Without that positive, life-affirming energy, it becomes nearly impossible to keep going, to keep acting, to keep communicating about these urgent matters.

This speaks to something fundamental about the dharma path—that even in the face of suffering, even when we're looking directly at the most challenging aspects of our world, there's still space for joy. Not a superficial happiness that denies reality, but the deeper joy that comes from connection, from meaning, from taking right action together.

When we act from love rather than fear, when we connect with others who share our values and commitment, when we remember that our efforts are part of something much larger than ourselves—this is where joy naturally arises. It's the joy of the bodhisattva path, the joy of serving something greater than our small self.

And as we've heard today, this joy is contagious. When one person steps into inspired action, it moves others. When we gather in community—whether here on this call or in your sitting group in Totnes—we kindle and sustain each other's light.

Do you have a minute just to say something about joy in response to John's call and question?

I want to share with everyone that every time I've participated in climate action, knowing that the government recognizes we are here wanting this change—that we are putting our bodies on the line, putting our hearts on the line—it's been a joyful experience. I think this stems from the fact that everyone I've been in contact with, when we come out for actions whether it's the People's Climate March or other more local gatherings, people are coming from a place of love. They're coming from a place of really wanting to give something—this precious planet, this precious environment, this ability to live and to practice—to the generations to come. They genuinely want the frontline communities, the people who are struggling most, to be supported. It's inspiring to come together. There's tremendous joy involved in that.

Thank you so much, Geeta. Kristen, please tell us something about what you and Lou have in mind for carrying on.

It's so wonderful to be carrying this energy forward, and I can feel everyone wanting to bring that energy into what comes next. As co-founders of One Earth Sangha, I can speak for Lou and myself in saying that we sincerely thank each of you for joining these calls—whether this is your first call, your fifth, somewhere in between, or if you're just listening to the recordings afterwards. Your presence is deeply nourishing to all of us and to all who are coming together in service of the continuance of life.

We have heard from many of you that you have felt helped, encouraged, supported, and inspired by these calls and would like to retain that live connection in some way. We are exploring the possibility of

monthly calls to keep our community connected and to share leadership around the globe, letting us offer into a collective space what we can do, very much as was mentioned by the teachers earlier. We will be emailing you with information as it becomes available. Stay tuned—we will continue.

Taking a final breath, Ayaz, would you please share the blessings and the good energy from our series as we conclude our conversation today?

Focus on your wish to make a difference. We're going to share a Buddhist blessing to keep us all connected and encouraged in this time of great challenge, as we step out and act for the benefit of all sentient beings.

May you have every good blessing
May all the Devas protect you
By the power of all the Buddhas
May you ever be well

May you have every good blessing
May all the Devas protect you
By the power of all the Dhamma
May you ever be well

May you have every good blessing
May all the Devas protect you
By the power of all the Sangha
May you ever be well

Thank you for those blessings. I feel them resonating out into the world around us. Again, my thanks to all for your participation. It's wonderful that we're going to carry on the conversation and come together to offer what we can into the suffering world and the climate emergency.

I'd like to thank each of you for your donations—they've been very supportive. Thank you to Maestro Conference for their amazing support, and to One Earth Sangha. Thank Kristen and Lou for initiating this great platform for us to find a home within. Thank you to our entire team, including Yong and Barry working behind the scenes.

We'll continue. Take care, and go well. Stay well.

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