

Reckoning with Entangled Structures - Session 4 - Kritee Kanko

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2025-26 Video

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Session Profile

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Speakers in this video

- Kristin Barker
- Kritee Kanko

Transcript

Kristin Barker: Here we are in session four. Welcome everyone. This is where we really open up wide. We broaden the lens from session three where we were really quite legitimately and critically examining our own struggles, our own heartbreak, the scope of concern. Absolutely. Starting with this one first, so that we know what it is we're connecting with and what's alive and driving us right now, maybe really needs to be part



of the conversation before we move on for that. But then we don't want to stop there, we don't want to stop there. We want to broaden the lens to include the interpersonal, the collective, the cultural, the historical, the even the global. So that's hard work. That is no small thing, easy for me to say, very difficult to do. So I want to name this before I welcome my dear beloved friend and colleague Kali into this conversation.

I just said Kali. Isn't that great? Yeah, yeah. Let's welcome Kali into the conversation. She's here.

Kritee Kanko: Kristen, she's here already.

Yes, she's already arrived. Before I formally welcome Kritee into the conversation, I want to name some of the aspirations that I have just to be so transparent about what it is that we're trying to do here in this session. And so some of those are how do we talk about this thing called poly crisis, which we will get into even the definitions of that in a way that really connects in a way that allows you to stay with your heart and not just go to the sort of cerebral assessments of atmospheric dynamics and exchanges, which are amazing and beautiful and fantastic and so much there to understand. But we don't want to leave the heart behind. We don't want to leave the body behind as we talk about the relationship, the various things that inform and are the stuff of polycrisis. So that's one thing that I have an aspiration for us to do in this conversation. Another is how do we see our various locations within this and our locations within polycrisis can be so different as human beings, different from our ecological kin and within the human family, so different from one another. How do we see those with compassion but also a sober eye to the undeniably differential impacts. How do we hold that, stay with that trouble?

And then third, how do we support ourselves and each other in being with that discomfort, that unanswerable, that place of wild uncertainty? This is where we are in the journey, heading towards making a home. Oh my goodness. Making a home in uncertainty and watching those reactive tendencies, not to prevent them, but to be with them and say, oh, of course my love. And yet come back. How can I support you? What do I need? So that's the particularity of staying with ourselves. All right. Now I want to name some of the bigger challenges given the ways that Sangha has come into this world. Started by two white people who have deep love and devotion to the earth, Lou and I have, and building from there. And with our Insight tradition, predominantly white, most of the mainstream, not all, but most of the mainstream environmentalism, especially in the US being white, a lot of convert Buddhism in the west being white.



We've got white on white. Oh wow, that's a lot of whiteness. So that's where we come from. Whiteness is here. How do we speak to these issues with our friend Kritee in a way that don't center whiteness, that don't speak just to white as if we are all white and then don't speak about everything as in its relationship to whiteness, but really ensures that the challenges of awakening in this moment are available to all who come here, to all who come here. And that necessarily speak to those of us who have white bodies and white conditioning in a way that brings challenge to that necessary challenge to that. But then doesn't, again, in a way, through its intention of usurping and undermining white privilege, white supremacy end up centering it indirectly. Huge challenge, right? Not an easy task.

So those are the big ones and I'm really excited to do these, to explore this territory. Here we are in session four at the nearing the bottom of the U on our journey opening up to more and more difficulty, hopefully staying with that tender heart, staying with the trouble. We open up to reckoning with entangle entangled structures, grappling with the common roots of all the various dimensions of polycrisis, metacrisis with our dear friend Kritee. So welcome, welcome Kritee. It is so good for you. I can't finish that sentence. I can't recover the problematic structure. Lemme start over. It is so good to be with you in this conversation. You have been such a great teacher and friend and beloved one in my life. I am who I am in part because of critique. So I am just, once again, you've been part of the EcoSattva Training in various ways, a number of years. Here you are again. And I just want to say thank you and welcome and ask you how do you like to introduce yourself these days? How should we get a sense of you speaking about this great phenomenon that is critique?

Kritee Kanko: Thank you so much, dear, dear friend. It's good to be with you again. And yeah, our friendship has been, I think, foundational to those times when EcoDharma movement was birthed. And you've shaped me and I'm glad we've shaped each other and polished each other. And these days I'm trying to lose myself enough that forest and soils can speak through me. I'm trying to attune myself to this deity behind me called Kali. Some of the participants of the training might know her already, but she's wild, she's naked, she's authentic, she's courageous, she has as much love as guanine who's the beloved deity for many western Buddhists. Very loving but not afraid to show her fierce form, which cuts through bullshit, which is not afraid to pick up. It's not violent sword, but a sword that cuts through delusion just like Manjushri, which might be familiar to some folks here. And there is scientific training in my background, climate science, and I



do grief and rage work. I talk about polycrisis and reindigenizing. But what really matters is emptying myself enough that I can hear her.

Kristin Barker: Well then welcome Kali and welcome these flowers and welcome the Buddha. And can you share with us this exquisite smoke? What is giving us this smoke right now?

Kritee Kanko: This smoke is called samani. It's made of a lot of different Indian herbs and I find it extremely grounding and my understanding is that Cali loves red. That's why the red. And she likes flowers and smoke. So it's all for her.

Kristin Barker: It's all for her. Okay. May this whole session be a prayer? A prayer or an ask for guidance, an appreciation of Kali energy? I love it. Yeah. Awesome. Thank you. Excellent. Alright, so much of your work you just named it speaks to helping those of us who maybe are dharma curious or maybe beyond the curiosity deeply in love with dharma, ways of looking and practicing and being those aspirations, bringing that together with polycrisis. What is even this concept of polycrisis that we're inside of? Can you kind of flesh that out, open it up, name some of its dimensions for us?

Kritee Kanko: Yes, I am a climate scientist. So when I first started thinking of what would be engaged Buddhism, for me, the first thought was, well, let's bring Buddhist together to consider climate crisis. And you can define climate crisis like several people here might have done in their journey at some point or maybe are starting there now. Well, planet is collapsing because of increasing carbon dioxide on the planet. And if you only look at one crisis, climate crisis, you can say solution lies in reducing our carbon footprint. But when we dig deeper, we find, well there are interconnected crises. In late 1990s, Europeans defined for themselves, right? It's a very Eurocentric term when it was first coined defined by Europeans, for Europeans to say, we have a nested set of globally interactive social, economic, ecological and cultural crises. And when you look at it from point of view of Europe, you are saying, oh, we have internal inflation. Our economies might have issues. We are getting refugees. It's refugee crisis. Is there Ukraine, Russia War is going on for us, and this is stabilizing markets. It's all from the point of view of European reality. And may I say the richer class, right? The ruling class.

Now other people started taking this term in two thousands and late two thousands and said, oh yes, polycrisis. We are facing multiple crises. But when a person of color looks at this term, it says, wait, the definition of polycrisis doesn't involve just transport issues and



energy issues and water and soil issues. Let's name some fundamental things that are going on here, which is our mental health crises. Our trauma burden is a huge part of where we are. And it says there is increasing racial inequality increasing, not just inequality in general, which Europeans named. And third most importantly, let's name one of the roots of polycrisis, which is colonialism, the ongoing racism and white supremacy. So did I paint a picture for you interacting crisis and when we define them, when we can stay with the enormity of it, which is what I heard you inviting Kristen, it's breaking, but it also invites us to look when we have a systemic problem which is infecting all parts of our body, you don't look for just one surgery, one carbon footprint to be changed. You look at a systemic answer, a systems level answer, maybe I'll stop there and see what comes up for you.

Kristin Barker: Yeah, beautiful, beautiful. And so I can hear already the invitation to in what already feels complex and overwhelming to widen the lens and go, oh, there's so much more here where even the way that that problem has been defined is leaving out in a way that isn't just about, well, we're just going to talk about this one thing that yeah, sometimes we need to talk about just one thing, that's fine. But if that is considered to be the whole problem that's in front of us, then that's repeating a pattern is what I hear you saying that even in the way that the problem is being kind of taught to us like, Hey, by the way, hope you got your ground. This is really hard what I'm about to say, but we kind of need to know this inside of it. And then again, it should be hopefully interesting, not the stuff of judgment but interesting to us.

Oh, that's defined as the problem and then what that's playing into. So what are the implications then for the way we think about responding to maybe for many here, maybe it's not climate, maybe it's species loss or the degradation, the desecration of lands and waters. That is the thing that is breaking the heart that has them showing up for something like the EcoSattva Training, but even to widen the lens and go, oh, actually we do need to understand the context and the dynamics here. What are the implications for one whose heart is pulled in that direction?

Kritee Kanko: Well, if you look at two things that I named in my definition of polycrisis, these are the two things that I added to the definition of polycrisis, which is one, our trauma loads are a huge part of the polycrisis, right? And second, we named colonialism. If we really accept that as our definition of polycrisis, everyone is defining it differently. Please understand one person's definition of polycrisis doesn't match another person's and our social racial geographic location on this beautiful planet matters because that informs



how we define it if we include our trauma in it. What it does for me, Kristen, is that it makes my heart so tender, it makes my heart so tender. I used to feel so mad. Why aren't caring Buddhist, those who talk about compassion and meth all the time, cannot work on systemic issues, cannot decrease our own footprint for example, at a small level, but also question the bigger structures which are causing so much harm and species loss and water degradation. But the moment, and you have explored this in EcoSattva Training, the moment we acknowledge that a given person listening to this session for example, is struggling with our education system for their kids feeling stress around that they might have mortgage to pay, but there is economies stumbling, right? They might have aging parents who have their health issues, they might have what I call childhood experiences where they were, this is heavy, so let me take a breath.

When it starts getting really real, it's tender to even name it. People were abused as children in their own household. 60% of kids growing up in America were either beaten up to the point they have marks on their bodies or they were sexually abused or they have alcoholic parents. 60% is a huge number and that's a general number, not even taking into account racial trauma, trauma from the gender violence that happens around us. I don't mean to make anyone a statistic, please stay with your tender heart here. The moment we acknowledge that trauma is here in every room, every group of people, small group, big group congregation, thousands of people has 60% of people who have put up makeup on their faces, but inside they are dealing with that pain, primal pain. Then we can understand why we are behaving the way we are behaving. A person who's trying to manage their trauma and shame from whatever happened in their childhood, teenager, young adulthood cannot hear the cries of the earth crying or cannot hear the pain of someone else who's unhoused or suffering from racial prejudices. We are just managing ourselves.

So that's one set implications just how much tenderness is needed to do this work on our own selves and our friends. We want to tell people the truth of climate crisis and we want all of us to act, but if we are not trauma informed, we just keep causing more and more shaming and blaming and injury. So that's one. The second huge part is understanding what colonialism did to our collective ability to respond to a systems level crisis in a systems level way. Okay, so what do I mean by that? If I go back to indigenous cultures that existed before colonialism stole land and all of, maybe I should pause, do you want to respond to just this first set of implications? Because I know you've thought so much about trauma yourself. Is there something that you want to name quickly?



Kristin Barker: I guess I'll just play back and affirm like the necessity of what you're saying. I think that's what I want to do. I want to just say like, oh, can I just, when I step into these places where yeah, we're going to respond, we're going to figure out how to work together on some of these really hard problems. Can I remember that it is that there are wounds in the room that are being managed already. There's so much woundedness, and that's not to coddle that, but it is to know it. It is to know that we are, this isn't some idealized version of a great new climate organization or a great climate organization that's doing some basic work on itself and going to be better or a sangha that's going to step into engagement. Those are really noble, beautiful intentions and be ready. Be ready is kind of how I hear be ready with Ian and the need to attend to the compassion that's necessary for us to remain in that room wholeheartedly is kind of what I hear.

Kritee Kanko: It's not just tenderness. Sometimes the trauma in the room is so heavy and high level is so high that we have to put loving boundaries, which say we are not ready to handle it, but each step of the way, we cannot let trauma get perpetuated. So we need skills around it, not just compassion as you said that cuddles, but sometimes we need to slow down our meetings and take time to hug each other and allow tears and get mess. I guess one of the things that goes back to an earlier conversation you and I were having, Kristen acknowledging trauma means that we are ready for messiness of it all. How can we get it right? How could we possibly get that right? Just between two people having a conversation, there are layers of trauma, like layers of onion, right? And they are interacting with each other, so can we be ready for messiness of it all?

Sometimes we'll have to slow things down and sometimes we'd say boundary, we need to get you therapy. We need to get you EMDR and we need to do grief ceremony for this aspect of your life, but we cannot stop everything for these needs. So it's a huge implication is what I'm trying to say. Okay. However, trauma healing by itself is not enough. Where are we headed? How do we handle the polycrisis on a systems level? And the clue there lies in what was the reality before colonialism assert and took over the systems that were in place for thousands of years? One of my favorite things to ask people these days is how did Amazon Rainforest, which is the lung of the planet, came to be? And if folks haven't heard this before, maybe it'll surprise you. I will give you the answer. Amazon rainforest is not a natural phenomena. It's not like Tectonics place shifted and Amazon came into being over a few thousand, a hundred thousand years, Amazon was created with deep care, almost precision in some way by hundreds of indigenous tribes spread across Latin America.



First, these tribes created a highly fertile soil by barring pottery, barring organic material. Amazon soil is in some parts some of the most fertile soil on entire planet. Then they planted hundreds of tree species, which were not at the time in that region, right? The agroforestry is what led to the speed tree composition that exists in Amazon today, and they did all kinds of fire management, landscape engineering. There are scientific studies published in best of journals in the world. The main point I'm trying to make here is when colonialism hit different parts of the world, we took away agency and power of tribes to be listening to land deeply so deeply that they know what kind of things to buddy in this land to create this kind of soil.

When indigenous tribes have power, when they are empowered, please stay with me as I explain this logic, I'm coming back to colonialism in a second. An indigenous teenager in their empowered community gets systems level education. In modern education system, we hear about the science of wind and river and fire and soil and plants and trees and bees in separate courses. There is a master's and PhD degree for each of these things. And we might do research on different parts of the world and learn about these different segments. It's very reductionist, what I call reductionist, but an indigenous empowered system is teaching their kid, their teenager, about so many different things in the context of their backyard, their local watershed. Its integrated systems, level thinking.

When we acknowledge colonialism as a part of polycrisis, if we are open to it, we see what colonialism stole from all of us. It took away our ability to be rooted in one ecosystem, to belong to one ecosystem and to listen to the cries and joy of trees and waters and rivers of that ecosystem that communion, the spiritual communion that led them to steward the land in particular ways. And when we see that, then we begin to find our longer term solution pathway. Otherwise, we are trying to decrease our carbon footprint and manage the water quality and manage the soil quality in a very narrow way. It's like we can ask ChatGPT, what are the five ways to make soil quality better? But in the process we might mess up water quality and hurt bees and butterflies. It's like, let me stop there and see if you want to reflect on this, Kristen.

Kristin Barker: Yeah. Wonderful, wonderful. I want to lift up one point that you made there about the separative power of colonialism and how it separates land from people and people from land, including the colonizer. I will just add in the sense of it's a mental move, it's a separation of consciousness that has, is already interrupting the entanglement, the embedded nature of all life, including the life that doesn't know that it's embedded and entangled in place in its very guts and the beings inside of its intestines. And so that move of separation I see in your answer and the way that it has, it



continues to play and then it becomes what was sort of a horizontal separation also becomes vertical. This issue, that issue all the isolated pursuits outside of that hole. No, you don't take it all on at once, but you don't pretend that those connections aren't there.

Kritee Kanko: Beautifully said, beautifully said. And I want to pick back up on colonialism harmed people of color and indigenous communities all over the world, but it also harmed the colonizer so-called white colonizers so much too, right before they colonized others or had the heart to colonize others how broken and ruptured and separated that heart was from its own human communities, from its own land, from its own ancestors. So I always so love to point out, yes, stay with the heartbreak. One of the biggest heartbreak for white people might be how separated they are from their own ancestors. Everyone fucking everyone at some point had indigenous ancestors who were deeply embedded in their local watersheds. And Lyla June has written some beautiful articles on this work saying millions of witches were brutalized and murdered in Europe, and I would call so many of them indigenous. They knew their plants, they knew how to bring healing. So when we begin to acknowledge that poly crisis has these layers of trauma that are active in different ways for all of us, then we can look at our own pain and others' pain as part of the larger pain of the earth and we don't end up doing, hopefully not always doing this linear trauma Olympics.

Kristin Barker: So Crucial. And I want to pick up one more thing here before we leave the framing that you're offering here, because it also is an evidence counter to the notion of human community and nature as themselves separate and gives us the sense of this isn't the only way to be a human community in and with in collaboration with ecosystems. And so we can hear with tenderness with compassion, but here with clarity, when someone says humans are a cancer upon the earth, she will just shrug us off as some past. Can we hear the self-hatred in that and also the delusion in it. The delusion that again, in a way it does the opposite of what I was hoping we would do here, which is it centers a certain way of being human, a certain history of what it means to be human, a history of what it means to be frankly at the pinnacle of humanity. And through that ignorance criticizes itself as humanity. Well that's interesting, that little thing you just did there, love, let me help you understand a different way is kind of how I want to respond to that

Kritee Kanko: One time. Maybe we do end up repeating the pattern you are pointing to Kristen one time Robin Wall Kimmer explained this in her book, Braiding Sweetgrass, she asked a bunch of undergraduate students give me examples of when human beings did something good for the earth and other species and they couldn't come up with examples,



right? So that points to the pain you're talking about. But please, there are people all over the world alive today. We are tending to local ecosystems like they were our extended garden spread across thousands of miles and we have intimacy with those lands and we can hear the Lyla June at one point said, different tribes have treaties with bear nation, an oyster nation.

We are not just tending to other tribes or just trees. We have agreements that bear Nation will leave this much water for you, this much of the ecosystem for your attending. So what I want to lift up here is when we look at poly crisis and we work through the pain poly crisis brings to our own individual body, please, let's also see that there is a lot of juiciness and joy and hope when we acknowledge what colonialism took away from us and that we humans have the potential to go back to heal those wounds of separation. And this is not just separation from our Buddha nature, it's separation from our own hearts, separation from human communities, separation from natural ecosystems and separation from the spirit world, which is not another huge topic which is not talked enough in Western Buddhism.

Kristin Barker: So let's go there. So let's go there. Let's talk about what western Buddhism, let's talk about Buddhism in the context of modernity because here you and I sit in this context of mindfulness and meditation and Buddhist wisdom, Buddhist practices, which were not part of my upbringing. They came to me later in life. I call myself a convert Buddhist and there is something that I am so in love with. I absolutely love the Buddha for what he has brought to my life as I understand it through countless transmissions and probably misunderstandings and recoveries of understandings and still incomplete. But the way that it has come to me through countless teachers, including exquisite holding through Asian countries, Asian communities, Asian movements to arrive in my life here and Buddhism is inside of the poly crisis. Here we are. How can we not be taking up through our ways of manifesting and actualizing these Buddhist practices?

So let's start first on the we are entangled with polycrisis is what I'm trying to say. And so let's take, first, let's do a two part thing where we look first at what are the gifts, what are the ways that this tradition can deeply inform our ability to stay with settle, see clearly not fall away into despair or rage or overwhelming grief or Netflix or whatever it is, but to actually remain with this and find some skillful response. What to you does this tradition, your gorgeous zen robes that you're wearing today, what does that mean for us at this time? Living amid the rise of polycrisis?



Kritee Kanko: My teacher, my root teacher, Kurt Spellmayer wrote a book called Buddha at the Apocalypse and the image that rises for me now in the midst of this polycrisis, whatever else is happening in our governments nationally, internationally, the wars that's so many times the images are apocalyptic and my teacher was, the image he was evoking with this kind of title was that Buddhism, even in its westernized version, which I can offer criticism of later, critique of later, has given us enough tools to be the eye of the hurricane. You know how in a hurricane everything is maddening and chaotic and collapsing, but the eye is very still and grounded.

I think the teachings that have been transmitted to these western shores, they have basic heart, they have given us skills, can give us skills if we patiently stick to our practices with some regularity to give us that inner ground to not just be, I'm doing this with my body. You know what I'm saying? Always be just always in the swirl and that is just beautiful. That's fundamental. How will we face the swirl of emotions, the messiness without some practices that keep us grounded, that give us access to equanimity, which help us accept that things are always changing and so on. The trouble is can I move to the trouble or do you want to make a comment?

Kristin Barker: Yeah, I'll only add to what you beautifully described. I love that image and the necessity of it. The interesting thing for me in this is that what we come to for relief from samsara, from just so much at all these different levels of our being, our personal, our trauma, our interpersonal struggles, our community struggles, and now polycrisis, wow, we come for relief and there is so much more on offer.

There is a possibility of seeing deeply into the nature of the constructed nature of experience and the possibility of choicefulness of not being dragged around in all kinds of ways by various hurricanes, a kind of sense of freedom and staying in the awe and love and the blessing of the earth, the blessing of relatedness, all of that. That can remain a starting point for the whole conversation as opposed to how I was conditioned at least into like, oh, what my life is supposed to be about. Buddhism has said, oh no, no, no, my love not that. And so I just want to, before we move into this like oh, so much there that I did not see coming.

Kritee Kanko: You are pointing to the ability of Buddhist paths. I'm calling them paths because there is plurality there. Buddhist paths do give us access to view reality, no reality as it is, as we say. And then we see the papañca, we see how things pile up each other and how we construct our psychological realities, political realities, and we see that



it has no basis, yes to all of that. And it's very powerful. The critique that I have is that we are now facing the consequences of organizations and corporations, which are huge systems in themselves, and Buddhism in the west is not creating systems that can face these systems. I always say if our friend David Loy often says, you can change the CEO of weapon manufacturing company and they will install another one. It's a system at work. Even if you change heart of one CEO, it doesn't change our reality, our physical reality.

And so how do buddhists become a system, and with this institution in the West are somehow working within the hyper individualistic paradigm of my liberation, my enlightenment, my \$200 cushion, my incense, my mala, and my enlightenment. Fuck no to that. How do we create sangha where there is real mutuality and care what we call mutual aid in activist circle where I'm going to show up for you day in and day out when your parents are sick, your children are sick, I'll cook for you, I'll clean for you. And not only that, we are going to look at systemic problems together in the context of our local ecosystem. We are going to connect with the land and most importantly, we are not going to shove aside the invisible realms because modern science reductionist western science cannot document or record or do research on it. One of my biggest critique, and I've written an article on it, which is on your website as well now, how to appeal to the Western modern mind, the early teachers, Asian teachers who came to America carrying the message of Zen and the bean Buddhism and the whole gamut purposely consciously took out all references to ancestors and spirit of the trees and spirit of the rivers and invisible realms, even when so many of Theravada, Mahayana sutras are full of description of these invisible realms.

And I think the version of Buddhism that has come to the west is stunted except in a few lineages, maybe it's stunted. And the impact of that is that we feel spiritually lonely when we look at something like polycrisis. I cannot tell you how much courage, clarity, peace I derive from knowing that Kali is with me to even get these shreds of guidance from her in dreams and visions.

And I would say I would go, I have never framed it this way, but what's coming to mind me now is that our spiritual loneliness is a part of our poly crisis, right? That if genocides and wars and all of this is happening, we humans are here alone to deal with all of this and we don't have communion and connection with these energy fields which want human evolution, which want us to work in specific ways. So Buddhism was quite different in different parts of Asia, and we stripped some of these components to appeal to the reductionist western hyper individualistic mind. And I want to reclaim that because



I don't know if we can keep facing polycrisis without doing that. One last thing, I'll say, Kristin, that it is a messy process because there is a lot of harm that has been done sometimes in the name of invisible realms, right? It's like, yeah, so discernment is necessity, but we cannot throw baby out with the bathwater.

Kristin Barker: Yeah, beautifully said. I'm so glad you brought that last part in there because I, myself, being a queer person have been harmed by spiritual traditions which have a view that the nature that I am a horrid in some, I am an aberration or whatever. Oh, I'm sorry. You're supposed to love the sinner, but hate the sin. This is a lot of gymnastics that go on. And so yeah, things that name the sacred, we have to ask very, I think Buddhist questions about what do they condition, what do they lead to? Is that wholesome? What kinds of hierarchies and diminishments and harm come from this or that view of which Buddhism itself, even in Asia was guilty of, oh yes, practice very, very, very, very hard. And you too, even if you're a woman, can become enlightened by becoming a man in the next life, right?

Kritee Kanko: Well, patriarchy, don't even get me started on that.

Women practitioners had a hundred more vinaya rules to follow than men. Forget about queer folks. I don't know what binary systems they thought with. Yeah, so it's not that everything ancient, everything, indigenous, everything asian is wholesome. I'm not at all saying that. What I'm trying to say is that we left out something beautiful and important, not that all criticism of old system are misplaced. No they're not. But the colonialism and modernity stripped us away from our sacred relationships with earth itself, with rocks, with fire. I was talking to an amazing woman yesterday who was saying how at a retreat that did for women and queer people from around the world, they kept fire going for five days people took turns to honor the grandmother, grandfather, fire, and how that fire fed them for that during duration of that retreat. I don't know. For me that's so beautiful, sweetheart, to treat elements as if to know them as beings. I'm talking about that quality of heart.

Kristin Barker: And there is something about that I personally, I have a lot of, not just respect, but honest excitement and thrill around science, around cosmology, quantum physics. It absolutely thrills me. My undergrad minor was in astronomy and I was studying M 81 with Frank Bash as his research assistant looking at the nature of how spiral arms are formed through his theory, which was density waves, fricking awesome, it's astounding and exquisite. And he was the head of the department of astronomy, but



his colleague, at the department of physics, Steven Weinberg, famous physicist, it was a lecture with him and he said, if you think the universe cares about you, you are a child.

And my response even at the time I'm happy to say was, stay in your lane. Good for you. Stay in your lane. Love. Yeah, it's great what you do. Please keep telling us the nature of corks and electron spin and entanglement. There it is right there. Entangled particles, right? The mysteries of 11 dimensions and string theory. Talk to us about that. But love, don't talk to me about what is sacred and not sacred because you can't prove it. And what I think the result of that is a profound alienation. We are alienated and lonely world.

I mean alien to each other, alien to our ecological kin, alien to the cosmo. We are all aliens in that point of view. We are utterly alone just from that point of view. We're just a bunch of atoms banging around against each other. And so what is there that to even say is important? None of it matters. And so I want to be queer, that I want to be queer. I want to be clear that I'm not bashing science. I really love science. It is through my system and to this day it thrills me and I read and I take it in and I read the light eaters and let's talk about braiding sweetgrass. Let's talk about how these things can actually inform each other as opposed to be in opposition. They can. They can, and I would argue they must. It is part of grappling with the poly crisis is to grapple with the way that we are objectifying and extracting our own minds. And yes to that last point or to this last section here, Buddhism can actually collude in that project of the self extraction through optimization techniques, right? I become a robot at my best.

Kritee Kanko:

I also love, thank you for bringing that part. I love equations. I so love them. I could speak for hours about stabilize isotope fractionation and the study of geology and microbes and soil that I have done and if it's just like signs can become a servant to modernity corporation. So Buddhism has left out some things now there's so much I could say. The part I want to go back to though is polycrisis. And when we do see that colonialism is a fundamental wound for all people, not just black and brown people or people who identify as indigenous today, then what are we going to do about it?

What I have seen to work is first step is being so tender with our hearts when we are by ourselves and then when we are with human community, we take the time to be with that grief. I'm not saying let's stay stuck in grief for despair, but what I am saying is let's not just meditate in equanimity and groundedness and compassion. Let's take the time,



and I know you are a champion of that too. Our beloved Joanna Macy has taught us that we need spaces to honor our precious, raw, wild grief and rage and fear and uncertainty.

So that's the first step naming the reality of where we are in terms of our emotions. But then what I often see happens magically after we do our grief and rage rituals and ceremonies is people will suddenly say, I heard the voice of my grandmother giving me instructions. I don't know if you see the connection when we get unstuck, when the drama and grief that was clogging us, it's like I tell people when we have done the colonoscopy, what was stuck has found some release. It's never fully done because new trauma, new pain keeps coming. But if you have done some cleansing of your system, then we can see clearly how much we belong. People have encounters with their ancestors at our retreats. People feel they can watch rocks and trees for hours and receive messages there. So that's one part what can happen after grieving and raging, we begin to belong more deeply and with that work we can form communities and do the work of undoing the harms of colonization, whether it's in form of reparations or land back. Because what happens is when we hear the pain of a forest, when we can commune, I think sooner or later people will hear that the forest wants to be reunited with its original stewards.

Kristin Barker: And that among many instructions, Many can come through, right? I know for me there has been so much offered in those signals and also I actually feel so much requested of me. So it's not just what I receive, it's what I am called to give and remain in relationship in fidelity with here we are, we we're entering in the deepest part, the most tender part of the journey. Is there anything in closing here, this rich conversation that I'm so grateful for? Anything in closing that wants to be said to support that staying with the trouble, that home and uncertainty, is there anything maybe in particular from your zen tradition of that place of groundlessness that can feel sometimes unfamiliar, even frightening, destabilizing? What is it that you would offer in the context of poly crisis with these tender, traumatized often hearts as we enter that space.

Kritee Kanko: In zen, we often talk about form and emptiness. We talk about that fundamental zero or emptiness, and it's like we say that getting in touch with that, allowing ourselves to settle and get in touch with this formlessness is accessing wisdom of the tradition. And I think that the teachings that have come to this show, we do get that. I see that happening, retreat after retreat, we slow down and we can drop into that space. We begin to taste shunyata. The invitation then also is how to be in right relationship with form. And this is where I feel that we could do some innovation.



It's not just the form, the visible form of my and your body. I think Kali is also a form. Hanuman and Shiva are a form and we can be in relationship with them. And the second thing I want to say about form is none of us can do this alone. Please be in groups, especially small groups. I hope this theme will come up later. It's so important to see each other in our grief around polycrisis. Let's do simple things like doing parts work again and again every two weeks, getting slow downs, getting tender with each other and then seeing how can we decolonize and how can we reindigenize, right? The basic fundamental teachings are here in terms of coming into right relationship with form and emptiness, seeing the relationship between form and emptiness. But we can keep doing more creative work on how will we move together to face polycrisis. It cannot be done just by being on cushion and just talking to person and teachers role. I see a lot of potential in working as a collective. And it said it right, that our next Buddha is going to be Sangha. May that be so.

Kristin Barker: May that be so yes. Yeah, practice, be with, carry this through. Don't forget about session three and your own tender heart and all that was offered there. Carry that throughline. It's not that that doesn't matter, but it's widened. It's widened here in session four. And then we carry that and trust and reach out and listen deeply for your ancestors and for the beyonds that maybe the relationship has been denied in one way or another by that which has informed you and stay with that, my beloved ones. I'm so glad that you're with us through this journey and I wish you every blessing as you open up into the depths of the EcoSattvaA training and then to you, my dear friend Kritee, thank you for this rich, excellent conversation. I'm so glad we did this and I'm so grateful for you and your parents and all the causes and conditions that have led to you, dear one to Kali, absolutely to Kali, to the flowers, to the incense, which are no longer burning, but have hopefully lingering in your space.

Kritee Kanko: Yeah, thank you so much, dear one. Thank you. Thank you, dear one, this was beautiful and may it serve all beings, as we say.



Dana

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