

Creating and Discovering the Way-

Session 6 - Adam Lobel

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2025-26 Video

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Session Profile

Session Six: Creating and Discovering the Way

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Speakers in this video

- Kristin Barker
- Adam Lobel

Transcript

Kristin Barker: Hi everyone. I am so delighted to invite into session six with us, Adam Lobel. Adam has been a guiding teacher for One Earth Sangha now for several years, a colleague and a friend, and exactly the right person I think, to help us in this moment of emergence from the bottom of the “U.” Adam, as you all know, was actually interviewing Lama Willa Blythe Baker for session five, and we’re going to be carrying forward now some of those themes here in our conversation, second in session six. Welcome, Adam. Is there anything that you want to say as we bring people into this really tender space of gentle and careful and mindful, hopefully hurtful emergence?



Adam Lobel: Yeah, thank you, Kristen. Thanks to One Earth Sangha for having me. I do really love this moment in the EcoSattva journey. I think this is a really, really precious, fragile, potent, beautiful, challenging moment. So I'm happy to be situated right here and really enjoyed the conversation that I had with Lama Willa, and I do think it'd be great to pick up right there and see what we want to touch back on before moving into this moment of emergence.

Kristin Barker: Yeah, let's do that because with her, you all were speaking quite beautifully to how challenging that practice itself can be of holding uncertainty and maybe using some titration practices. So maybe we can just begin by affirming and saying that's not over. We really want to carry that spirit through actually and develop, if you will, the knack, the sense of what it can be to reside with the not knowing. Maybe you can speak more to that.

Adam Lobel: Well, I would say from a Buddhist perspective, this bottom of the U before the emergence, it's uncertainty. It's not knowing, and I associate that directly with emptiness, with selflessness, with the complete falling away of body mind. And I know that that can sound like too extreme. Nobody ever experiences that or kind of too far out. But I think it's important to really open ourself to the possibility of the conceptual fear-based small mind completely letting go. That is a charge within Buddhism and how powerful that is in the context of climate mutation, ecological loss, civilizational change, fear of collapse, what a resource to open to the possibility of really, really releasing all of those habituated parts that want to grasp, that want ground, that want security, that want to weave a little habitual cocoon around ourself and just hide. And at the bottom of the U, we're really in this place of that's dissolving, that's opening into space into a radical uncertainty or groundlessness, no ground, no foundation, nothing to hold onto, no reference points. And from a conventional perspective, that can be terrifying. And as Lama Willa was saying, we are exploring what does it mean to take refuge in that uncertainty? And that is where the uncertainty, the not knowing shifts from something to be terrified about and it becomes freedom. It becomes the greatest relief possible, not just something to be terrified about, but the very spaciousness that we have been longing for this whole time.

Kristin Barker: Yeah, it reminds me a little bit of these archetypal stories of the moment in the pursuing of the holy grail. When the knights have to step over into the void and they find that the sort of bridge emerges from underneath, it's like that much willingness, that much. And then we find actually to our shock, to our surprise, to the



actual countering of the constructed self. No, it's like I am not annihilated in that moment. There's something still so here and something cannot be forgotten in that taking of that step. Well, we do forget it, but at a certain level we know something we didn't know before

That I am not just this sort of egoic construct. There is so much more. And that seems to me to be very much the stuff of freedom that can help us in the EcoSattva journey to be sure. But is also, as we say all the time in One Earth Sangha this whole phenomena that we're inside of is of course teaching the dharma itself in a really profound way. So you also talked about in that, and I just want to pick up and just remind us, and we might carry it through now or in other places, the kind of notion of the linear self, the self that gets better and better and wiser and wiser, or just this sort of pressure to evolve. It's something beautiful in that, but there's also something constraining in a notion of a self that gets better and better.

Adam Lobel: Yeah, there's I think the personal spiritual dimension of this, of self-development, linear self-improvement project that dharma can get mapped onto. And there's elements of that that are potentially helpful. But as long as we are individually oriented towards building our story, our narrative, and always improving upon it, that is the activity of an ego. When we say ego, when we say self, that's often a narrativizing process that somehow is watching our life as if it's this movie or this afterschool special, and we hope it works out well. We don't want to suffer. We're doing what we can to control, manipulate, and improve upon that protagonist who's living their little story. And is true that dharma threatens that the teaching of no self is a threat to that narrativizing addiction.

But we have to remember that's meant to be a liberating process because what we start to notice is the extent to which that fear-based approach of always wanting to grasp, improve, fix, it's endless. It's exhausting. At the end of the day, how often do we feel the deep satisfaction of accomplishment or how often do we feel now there's more tasks, more to improve, more to be productive, and it really is endless. There's that sense that from a traditional perspective, we die. And it's that pattern of more self-improvement and narrativizing and grasping. That's what continues. That's what propels itself. So when do we actually get to rest? When does that process finally let go of its control? And here in the second register this more ecological dimension, I think a lot of us are experiencing this around climate change and biodiversity loss and toxicity and the domination of the fossil fuel industry.



How many decades have brilliant, wonderful people been screaming out, please stop. We have to protect the rainforests. We have to protect our remaining fresh water. We cannot cut down more boreal forests. We have to stop torturing animals. We are part of an entangled with something so wondrous and beautiful, and yet the violence continues, the carbon emissions continue. And at some point, if we're approaching all of this as a small, frightened, conceptual self that just wants it to all work out, we're going to burn out. We'll be utterly exhausted. There is a need for that to fall away and to open up into space. And yes, in a moment we'll talk about emergence. We'll talk about maybe a more positive side, but right now we really have to linger with the shaky uncertainty of nothing to hold onto, no self-improvement plan, no ecological improvement plan, no established path for a regenerative world, no certainty and expectation that falling away of that way of being and thinking is the bottom of the U. And as you hinted at, it's one thing when we see this as a kind of spiritual or meditation teaching, it's another thing when the very geophysical karma of the planet is teaching us when the stability of the holocene is collapsing, when whole current systems are collapsing, when it's that direct, when the world system that we're part of is also giving us that teaching of groundlessness, we really have to listen and not fight it. And not fight it.

Kristin Barker: Yeah. Not fight the phenomena and yet try to find the fight within us actually that does want to take a stand and I'm going to be, I want to get there eventually. There's sort of paradoxical ways that we can be in swimming and not knowing, and yet find that fire for ethical response that isn't attached to like, oh, we need to get it back to the beautiful story that I thought I deserved. And the afterschool special or however it is you put it right version. So what is that? So we'll get to that too, but I just want to invite if there's anything else. I mean, it feels to me like, and I know this from my own practice and from supporting others in this place of not knowing that it needs a certain kind of support. So what can we bring in that might be really helpful to respond to that terror, to that sense of dissolving that, all that letting go, what are the skillful means? What do we want to elicit and invite in at that point of real vulnerability?

Adam Lobel: Yeah. Well, two or three things come to mind. First is as Lama Willa was saying, titrating, taking this slow, giving yourself a little taste of this freedom, a little taste of the groundlessness, and then maybe coming back to good ground, making sure your nervous system is not crossing threshold into dysregulation. We're not talking about pushing ourselves off of a cliff, we're talking about the capacity to tolerate and relax into the uncertainty. And that feels really different from a muscular pushing or aggressive like



force. And trauma is really important here. Being trauma informed for ourself, for anyone we're working with, and for an understanding of collective trauma that these are huge existential uncertainties we're dealing with, and we have to be very skillful and gentle. So that also reminds me of the simplicity of this. Every time we're practicing mindfulness and awareness and we notice a thought pattern arise and we let it go, that's all we're talking about.

Those are little micro moments of releasing into this spacious bottom of the U uncertainty that we know this as meditators, we train in this every day or whenever we practice or we go on retreat every time thought pattern is there in its formative process. That's the becoming of the habitation and the ego, and we're just letting that go so we don't take out a big bat and beat it away. It's a gentle release. And what happens? Do we panic? Does it feel horrible? Maybe sometimes. But a lot of the time it's like, oh, right, that was this tiny little whirlpool or Eddie that I was stuck in, or she said, and he said, and then I'm going to do this and I should plan this and I need to practice more. And when am I going to go on a retreat and I don't practice enough and I'm a terrible person and I'm too lazy and blah, blah, blah. It says, and then at some point it just evaporates and it's like a whole universe of karma, self liberates. That's where we are here. We're becoming familiar with and relaxing into that possibility.

Kristin Barker: And I love, you're using the word gentle there too. There's something that has a sense of wanting to be very close with and honoring and not dismissing that one that is maybe really quite terrified in that moment, but like, oh, there you are. I've got you. And there's more to me than this, right? This isn't the only thing going on. There's another part of me that's actually really excited me about this journey and the potential of what can be known, what can be experienced a different kind of self, a different sense of self, truly.

Adam Lobel: And what you're saying there is so important because that gentleness is not like a weaker version or a less effective way. It's the most powerful way that when we think we have to fight ourself to drop the ego, that's the ego's own activity. When we're trying to push ourself to be uncertain, that's a kind of grasping at certainty. So this gentleness in my experience is much more penetrating, much more lasting and much more threatening to the ego. Because what we're saying is no more game playing, even the game playing of pushing yourself. And so again, on the ecological level as EcoSattva, we are really training in a very soft, open uncertainty. And actually maybe we'd be helpful to do this with everyone listening together right now, which is just place our



hands on our heart center. You can kind of do it like a butterfly hug or just placing the hands on the heart and closing our eyes for a moment and feeling the gentle support to allow our heart, our nervous system, our thinking mind, to allow all of that to actually let go, to release in a gentle and unforced way in the simple touch of our hands and our heart makes that more palpable. So for me, this is what the bottom of the U feels like.

Kristin Barker: Beautiful. So we're in a way letting our eyes adjust to the dark. I think of it in that way. And this moment of emergence is when we recognize that it was really hard to see, but there is a little bit, I can detect some of the shapes in the room and it looks very unfamiliar because I'm not used to being in this. I'm used to the lights are always on and I know everything that's happening and I'm trying to master my world as opposed to being in it in a very different way without that sense of needing control. And so what are the things, ways that we might practice this, that actually facilitate that emergence, that detecting of shapes in the dark that very much aren't going like, what is that? And trying to name it so quickly out of anxiety, but that just lets me see maybe entirely surprising beings. The mycelium or the ancestors or the ones who are calling me forward, I can't even recognize or just not even things that lend themselves to language and naming.

Adam Lobel: The Buddhist tradition that I was trained in. The Mahayana and Vajrayana especially is just filled with analogies and path stages and practices that support this emergence. And to just touch on a few, there's a typology of the five paths, and one of the paths is the path of seeing. And it's said that that's when you have a direct non-conceptual experience of emptiness. Your first glimpse not mediated through philosophy or even meditative practice, but just a direct bare naked like, oh, shit, that's what is real. It's that, okay. And then after that, the rest of the path is about stabilizing that glimpse, but before having the glimpse, they map out this stage that's called tolerating. It's the best translation of the term. It's like you have to allow this being to be able to tolerate that glimpse.

Then there's the complexity, what we mean by emergence altogether and why the Buddhist teachings talk about it or play with it, because it's problematic in ways that I think from a Buddhist perspective, it's not always clear. So there's these famous images of the wheel of Samsara that you often see of Yama, the God of death holding this depiction of the various links in the chain of dependent origination, the six realms in the center of it. It's being kind of motivated by attachment, aggression, ignorance, the root cliches. So this is the wheel of samsara that we're stuck within. It's being held by death because



impermanence and death mark the arising of any phenomena, whatever arises, whatever becomes, it will fade and die. And so this whole thing is called the wheel line, the bhavachakra is to become.

So becoming is here may be the closest, one of the closest terms we have for emergence. So becoming, emergence is always problematized in dharma. And in Tibetan, the word *sipa*, which means to become to exist, but it also means possibility, potentiality, and it even means collective society actually. So there's this very fragile moment here. We're at the bottom of the U, we're in this uncertainty, this selflessness, this exhaustion, and yet there's this potential for becoming, for something emerging like the dawn, like this bare bit of light that's starting to emerge on the horizon. And so the Buddhist question here is, is it possible for there to be emergence or becoming that is not just habitual, not just ego, not just samsara. Is there the possibility of a kind of existence, a dawning and arising that isn't just confused? I think it's fair to say that the Orthodox main position of Buddhism is no, if we're honest, probably not.

That to exist is a kind of confusion. But there are outliers and there are different traditions that focus in on this emergence. And one that feels really helpful to me, that is actually in the visualization theory in tantric practice, in Vajrayana Buddhist practice. And I think this is really spot on. So I want to walk through these three stages because it really describes this kind of emergence possibility potential. So this is from the Nyingma school's understanding of how you do visualization practice, and it's called the generation stage. When we say visualization practice, it means generating an image, generating a fully sensual world in your practice. And they break it up into these three different stages. They're called three *sumati* or three meditative. So the first is called the *samati* of suchness, and that's where we've already been in our discussion, Kristen, because that's the part where we totally dissolve the self, the senses you would close your eyes, you would imagine imaginatively sense of everything dissolving like mist into the sky or light dimming and then dissipating and turning off. So it's this total mythical archetypal darkness not knowing and emptiness. So that's the first *samati*. So if you ever are visualizing according to this theory, the first thing is everything goes. You don't layer the visualization on top of the ego or on top of the perceived dualistic world first. That whole world dissolves. That's the first *samati*, the *samati* of suchness.

But the second *samati* is called the all illuminating. And this means a subtle light begins to pervade the darkness, and it's the light of wisdom and compassion that precisely because the small frightened self has released. Now there's room, now there's space for a



selfless wisdom and compassion to arise. And the compassion here is key in maana understandings. Emptiness is inseparable from compassion that we might lose our certainty about ourself or how we're going to save the world or the future or our expectations for the climate. All of that might go, but the heart, the longing, the awakened heart that remains that is in its own way, this kind of throbbing, pulsing presence that is not rooted in ego. It's not little Adam that wants to make sure that the forest that I like are okay. It's the longing and heart within that, the quivering heart as some would say. And that kind of fullness is what dawns as this all illuminating like heartlight to go full age. It's a light of luminosity unleashed from love, and that's what happens when the self and the frightened mind releases through the first samati. Then the light arises.

Kristin Barker: Can I just interject here on that? I really love that articulation because at that point in the emergence, it feels possible to discern the wisdom and the compassion that can be seized upon by ego that says, oh, now I'm the wise and the compassionate one. I'm the one who heroically loves all forests. Pretty easy to detect it at that stage. It's like, oh, there you are again, lovely ego. Thank you. Please step aside, right? That's not what we're doing here and more that one that comes from the ache comes from in a way that maybe philosophical or maybe even visceral embodied sensing of we are in the fabric, we are kin, we are the earth, and the earth is undergoing this huge collapse of life. I mean, we're inside the great six extinction. We are losing a lot of our kin. And it's that says that I am part of that kin.

I am inseparable from that kin, and I love that kin. It is gorgeous, it's beautiful, the stuff. It is the very stuff of onward leading and I can give my heart to that and that there is something both wise and compassionate about that impulse that is trustworthy in that moment. So I'm with you so far. I feel like we might get into trouble as we continue to emerge, but at that point, I just want to support myself and others who are tracking what Adam is offering here, is to invite that sense of what can arise in that moment and how we might in that break of dawn be able to discern that which the ego seizes upon as a conjuring of a really great self and one that is much more humble and strong at the same time, confident in its alignment with what is wise and compassionate, but that isn't itself sort of creating a heroic self.

Adam Lobel: That's right on. I think that's exactly it, right? Is that simple discernment that we can trust whether this is just another self making self narrativizing moment or have we opened to something much more vast, our love of the more than human world



and even beyond our words, our stories, our concepts, but just that arising. And I do think that's the key, right? And for sure you're right to name the danger here. This is the danger in Buddhist perspective, and this is the danger in the theory, you perspective, right? Otto Sharmer, when we're talking about the, you calls this the most dangerous moment because there's the greatest risk of going back and downloading all the habitual thoughts that we already had instead of really letting them go and then letting something fresh emerge. And it's that letting come from the theory U perspective where we are to go back to the three, this is exactly the moment where that light of compassion, the all illuminating samati, then eventually it actually takes on a really concrete form and shape.

It doesn't just stay abstract, but it becomes what's called the causal or seed samati. And I love that seed quality because it's very ecological. It's very much a metaphor of earth processes that we're talking about, A seed, A seed that in its own intelligence, in its own richness, in the kind of genetic coating of a seed, it has this vastness in it and all this potential. So out of the emptiness of the first samati, the light and compassion of the second samati, it actually starts to take the form of a seed, which in Tibetan visualization is often a seed, syllable, a letter, or it can be a symbol like a ra. And this becomes the heart essence of what you then arise as an enlightened meditative presence, a manifestation of pure compassion or pure power or pure rage, pure potency.

But now ego's gone. The self has been obliterated theoretically, right? Theoretically that's dissolved in the first moment. The first samati, the only thing that remains is pure compassion, which arises as the seed. And then this whole visualization, of course, it doesn't always work like that. And we carry the ego with us. But that's the theory, and I think it's a beautiful encapsulation of how Buddhist traditions using art, using contemplative ritual, different meditation, all are interested in, oh, is it possible? Can I actually make a gesture? Can I say a word? Can I act in this world that is not just ego? And the answer is yes. It's theorizing this in many other ways.

Kristin Barker: Oops, I lost my So. Alright. So we've been in this first stage of, in this unfolding process of the three samati, this dissolving into the unabated, really letting ourselves and supporting, and I love, I actually love the pre-stage. I want to name, I love the tolerating part of that that really resonates. It can be a quite terrifying process or agitating process. And again, I love your sort of bringing in the trauma informed, the need to really take care there of ourselves, have necessary support, but support for tolerating actually feels like something that is both individual and collective in this moment. We need to help each other tolerate what's underway. I'm in Washington DC right now as the



federal troops are showing up more and more. And I'm really finding with my community how we lead to learn to stay with each other and support each other.

But that doesn't mean shutting down or escape. That means really staying with and trusting this place of dissolving that is the only place from which wholesome response can ultimately come is from that kind of non-reactive place. So I love that. And then that moment of dawn where we actually then in that dissolved state, kind of let that dawn become part of what's in the space of the dissolving. So I am maybe undifferentiated myself from that light that's coming in that wise, compassionate presence and really embracing that and then saying, okay, it's going to take form. It's going to become the seed of wisdom and compassion that has a maybe is itself situated now as opposed to completely dissolved in space and time. It has a space, a shape, a time that it arises, and that's part of the becoming. So how can we support that, what we've sometimes referred to in conversations together as this kind of sense of maybe a sacred emergence.

How can we stay with that and support that, which maybe it is tied to this as I have known myself to be, right? I'm not going to emerge as a dolphin, probably not, right? I'm probably going to have the familiar shape. So how can I play with this? The ways that of course my patterns, my ways of knowing and being in the world, certainly my social location, my circumstances are all going to get brought to the fore here. And it seems like very much a practice with how to hold those as almost gifts of what's already extant, what's already exists that can then be used and summoned in the direction of that calling towards that loving calling, the want for wise response.

Adam Lobel: Well, bringing tolerating back is helpful because we are in a moment now this period of history on this planet where the capacity to tolerate, to widen our hearts capacity to work with our nervous system, to work with our conceptuality, to constantly be massaging, opening, expanding, softening our being into these times. That's huge work and it's work that Buddhist centers and teachings can be really helpful for. I would like to see every Dharma center change its title and its plaque to say something like a sanctuary for the poly crises and ecological training. I mean, I'm being a little bit sarcastic, but really taking up this work of tolerating the rise of authoritarianism, the collapse of what we thought of as democratic nation states, the immense level of catastrophic climate change that is we're well within and is not being averted. We call this overshoot, which is a kind of unofficial tacit commitment on the part of our dominant systems to just go full speed ahead towards 1.5, 2.53 degree Celsius warming and hope that maybe there'll be a



technological solution down the road that can walk us back down in the rising temperatures. We don't have those technologies. So we really are on a runaway train. And on the one hand, of course the self continues our ego, when we don't turn into a dolphin, we don't become something totally different. But on the other hand, the level of change that's happening on our planet, it actually might be more accurate to think of us becoming dolphins in the sense that think most of us are still operating as if it's 1990 or 1972 and it's not–

Kristin Barker: Or even 2005

Adam Lobel: Or even 2005. We are really in an ethical period of kairos, of destabilization and a critical moment that is forming itself. And I've done this talk with you and the EcoSattva training in previous iterations in the past, and it feels very different to do this now because I used to think, okay, we're in this moment of a gap, a liminal moment of possibility where something new could emerge. I actually think we already have crossed that and we're already in the beginning of a very different new chapter that looks like techno authoritarianism or fascism, this union of a kind of popular right populism with the Silicon Valley technological optimism. That merger is creating a very different political and ecological reality with huge new data centers, new nuclear power generation, a full commitment to fossil fuels, at least in the United States. So what I'm pointing at here is that the assumptions that we have about who we are and what is normal and what it's going to be like tomorrow or in three weeks, they're really starting to change. So to tolerate, it's one thing to tolerate an IPCC report, it's another thing to tolerate turning on the news and hearing that millions of people just died in a heat wave.

Kristin Barker: Can you clarify too, I can hear two ways of receiving the word tolerate. So let's unpack that a little bit. It feels like there's some really interesting nuance that is very much the stuff of bypass, of withdrawal or it can be, I can hear it also as remaining steady and present and connected.

Adam Lobel: That's much more how I mean it.

Just so people hear, there can be a real heart and openness as opposed to the kind of tolerating that's just standing and kind of pushing away or almost tuning out. There can be a way that tolerating tunes out and just kind of does this. So I just want to support that heartfelt, embodied, mindful, almost a cultivation of that what we sometimes call as



potential in the training, an unshakeable response, something that is really rooted that knows that it can't fix it, that is not grasping for a fixing or rolling back to 2005 or before. But neither is it upsetting the scene, right? It's like waiting, watching, responding where it can active, maybe weaving connections underground. It could be that all these things that you were just talking about manifesting right now, there also is something underground manifesting. There's something growing here. And I sense that too in my world of it's not just happening in these overt places. There's something being cultivated within us that is noticing that and saying, okay, I'm willing to find a different way. I'm willing to connect and be with that in a different way.

Adam Lobel: Yeah, so exactly. If tolerating is forceful or bypassing or just holding on for dear life, what happens there? There's no room for that heart. There's no room for the Bodhi, and it's the heart that is the generative force of the emergence of the becoming. It's the longing, it's the love. Otherwise we just would whatever, just either ignore or implode, but that heart that loves this earth, that knows that we can be part of a more beautiful world. That's what emerges. That's what continues and needs support. Just like the seed needs to be watered, it needs sunlight, it needs certain soil to be planted in. We need collectives, we need shared stories. We need people to say, oh, you also trust that this can be a flourishing and beautiful world. You haven't given up me too. And so then that starts to weave and grow into the analogy of the full visualization in the Tibetan tradition would be collectives of EcoSattva that are working together a really a kind of green radical upsurging up swelling from the earth.

Kristin Barker: Need not be going by that name. It doesn't mean that it's only people who have gone through the EcoSattva training. It can be all people of shared value and religion and all ways of holding and looking at the earth. I just want to say right, we're in fact, there's so few of us really who might be inside have these kinds of languages for that. But I think there is something to say that we have given ourselves to love that we who are really giving ourselves to love in this moment and saying, okay, there's so much that is around us falling apart.

Adam Lobel: And it's even flipping it. It's not just that, okay, there's a lot of us or small group of us, or it's seeing that the emergence of life, of the growth of a tree, the emergence of a coral reef, we're participating in that. So becoming the emergence is ecological becoming from this perspective. I think that's where a real kind of EcoDharma steps—



Kristin Barker: Right. It's a mindful enjoining ourselves with that is to say that I am choosing this. It is uncertain. I'm not looking for the happy ending. I don't know where this goes, but this is the side of life that I am going to be following, and I am in great company.

Adam Lobel: And it's such a relief and it's fun, it's playful, it's joyous. And by that I mean something very specific. Like play is a big deal in Tibetan Buddhism. In the Dzogchen tradition we talk about play, *ropa*, that we're participating in the dynamism of reality, a dancing emerging. And when you catch that wave, when you're part of that playful, loving action or gesturing, then it's not motivated by the small, willful, frightened self that really has dissolved. And there can be a lot of challenge with this moment. There can be a lot of self-doubt. Who am I to think that I could be showing up for the earth in a way that's not coming from my ego? There can be a lot of self aggression that we need to work with. We can even feel judged by others. And of course, we need to be humble and honest and discerning and see if that's true. See, if we are really motivated a kind of self that's lodged in a lot of fear and habituation, but we can trust that it's possible to act, to engage, to become, to emerge on this side of the U as that light of compassion and wisdom and not just that it's possible that that's actually easier. It's actually a kind of relief

Kristin Barker: And maybe necessary, maybe even necessary to be able to feel that natural joy of being. And I would also say that it is also natural that I find myself really needing to revisit grief to really make space for grief in my own life, to grieve the kinds of losses that are happening right now as a practice that again, that doesn't say, oh, I'm the grieving one. But it's almost to keep the way clear to my heart, to not have that be compartmentalized and pushed underground to make space for anger, to make space for fear, and to certainly make space and nourish joy and gratitude and these kinds of things. So there's a sense of it being open and available and that I can trust that quivering heart, that one it goes through, its various is it encounters various aspects of the world and resonates with them that of course, I'm going to give lots of space for that resonance, but that's part of being in this place where I haven't collapsed into a narrative of we're going to make it okay, it's all going to be great, or it's too late, or I'm just going to get out of here and stand on the sidelines and let this thing play out.



I have no role to play. I don't matter in the grand scheme of things, none of those. None of those, right? It's too wildly uncertain for that. I don't know if there's a tension there with your story and what I'm just saying there.

Adam Lobel: No, no, no. I think we're catching the same wave.

Kristin Barker: Great. Great. Alright. So we've been talking about these stages and the sensing into emergence and the welcoming of these various experiences that really holds this knowing of that dissolved state and ego certainly reemerges again and again. It's like, oh, there you are, of course. And then to invite it to recede again is certainly a big part of my own practice. So I just wonder if you could speak to how do we find, let's just talk about that the ways that especially when we decide we're going to take action in this world, we're going to organize something, we're going to come together, we're going to have some purpose that really does feel like it is coming from these places that we can really trust. And then sure enough, there's a lot more room for conflict for self. The contracted clinging self is going to show up there as we try to work together to make something that might be a real, really skillful action in the world or direction or organizing. How do we work with this place as we kind of look forward in that further emergence up the u Otto Sharmer, I think is exactly right. This is a very dangerous place that will set the course for what happens as we continue up the U. So what would you advise in terms of holding that really deeply wise place that is bringing forward maybe the best of what the Buddhist traditions have to offer in that rising

Adam Lobel: Well think first, very practical perspective is our ongoing meditation practice and training in the Buddhist path matters here. It really takes on a whole different level. If you're involved with some direct environmental action or organizing, if you're working in groups, if you're trying to support a local bioregional or watershed practice of protecting some forest or a river, if you're protecting land from the petrochemical industry, it's going to get nasty. It's going to get challenging. There's going to be people involved and they're not going to agree with everything you think, and there's going to be struggles and there's going to be so much disappointment. And so within all of that, continuing our meditation practice, feeling the resourcing from the teachings and the dharma and checking to see to what degree is a very familiar ego pattern arising and work with that. So it's like the volume is turned up on what it means to be a practitioner because the stakes are more intense than simply your state of mind or maybe how you are in your household now.



You're really working on behalf of the earth and your love for life. So our practice matters, our training matters. And on the other side of that, it's not like we have to have some kind of perfection before we move into this place of emergence and action. It's not that there needs to be some massive breakthrough in our path, and a teacher comes and presents you with a special ribbon that says, now you're free of ego and you've done your personal inner work. Now you can go out in the world and apply what you've learned. I don't think that ever happens, but rather the work in the world deepens the inner work of awakening. This is formalized in the Mayhana tradition with the notion of the six perfections or six paramitas, that when we enact generosity, ethical discipline, patience, exertion and meditation, when we're enacting those in our life, in order to be perfections, they have to be infused with prajna, with insight into selflessness and emptiness. And then when we're generous or patient, that is a way to deepen our experience of that openness, that non fabricated relaxation and openness and uncertainty. So they work together. I don't think there's awakening without this engagement and action.

And it is so disappointing, and there are so many setbacks. Just the other day, I work with people in the environmental world, and I had an hour long session with someone who sought me out because she had worked for 15 years to protect thousands of acres of old growth forest in Oregon and or maybe Washington state actually. And they had passed a bill. They had this real breakthrough. It looked like that old growth force was going to be protected. And then a quick flip happened, someone left their position, the timber industry came in and it was all cut down within a few months, and she was just devastated. Of course she was. We will meet those moments probably more than we would want. If our mind is only attached to expectation, we'll give up almost immediately. But if we're in touch with this quivering heart, this awakened heart, if our action is infused with a recognition of emptiness and selflessness, it's like an infinite resource.

There's sadness, there's loss. We still feel the pain of that forest being cut down, but that almost gathers and builds up more of the longing to say, well, where else is left that I can protect? What systems could be changed politically so that this couldn't happen again? How do I seed a new forest so that in a few thousand years it too is ancient? What can I do? And that sense is I think what we're talking about as emergence. Can it be co-opted by ego? Yeah. Is there doubt involved? Yeah. Is it hard? Yeah. But first of all, what else are you going to do? Because I think a lot of us come into this EcoSattva training because



our heart is saying, I want to help. I want fullness. I want confidence and strength to not just be powerless and beaten down. So there are sources of that power.

It's just they don't come from the small mind, they come from earth, they come from depth, they come from awakening. And when you're around people that have that power and potency, you can feel it. For me, it's often been indigenous elders that have been leading the climate movement since standing rock. And the feeling I get when I'm at often indigenous led movement work, it's a very different kind of power. There's a lot more energy in my experience, and we want to grow into that. The maturity, the depth, and the potency to not just not give up, but to feel this emergence and this becoming as the expression of our own, awakening, their own fullness of our heart.

Kristin Barker: What a great note to end on. I think that's exquisite, Adam. I think that that sense of that is what I feel is possible here is a kind of robust spirit that can act and make mistakes and get caught up and the ego shows up, but just is it welcomes that and says, of course, of course. And yet, and yet, I will incorporate that into my wisdom. I will fold that in, and I am here as long as I'm here, and let me give myself to this fully. And really, we recently lost Joanna Macy. She would talk a lot about that spirit of, look, what else are you going to do love?

This is what's on offer. And in fact, the way she would put it to me is, and to others that I was with in both private conversations and group conversations, is we are so powerful relative to those who haven't been born relative to those who have died. It's us who are entrusted at this incredible time on planet earth. So to cultivate those sensibilities at this critical juncture in the training and let it set the trajectory for how we will be as we continue to emerge through this training, as we discover ways to emerge and participate in our worlds right now, I think you've given us some of the guideposts that some of the watch signs we can be aware of and look for and say, of course these things are going to show up. And let me remind myself what my resources are, what I am charged with, what am I?

Adam Lobel: There's a desire in it, right? There's like we want this desire is often a bad word in dharma, but here it's a positive. There's an aeros or a longing really to show up as best we can. And then it becomes a question of what's your ecological niche? What are the unique capacities, styles of being gifts, superpowers that you have? What are the possibilities you can offer? And it doesn't mean each of us becomes a certain kind of



activist. It doesn't mean we become a political thinker or run for office. It doesn't mean that we necessarily are protesting on the streets or doing fundraising calls or webinars or canvassing or tabling at the organic farmer's market. But someone has to do all of those. Part of the ecosystem, the movement ecology here is some of us have to be doing some really fierce direct action. Some of us have to be working within the current systems.

Some of us have to be telling stories and making art that galvanize and support other beautiful ways forward. Some of us have to be directly protecting land as in a land trust or urban agriculture and so on and so on. The scientific dimension, the contemplative dimension, the supporting families dimension, the justice, the environmental justice dimension of working across northern and southern hemisphere, working across race and redlining. Someone has to be engaged in all of those areas. So if you're listening to this and you're thinking, well, what can I do? What's the thing? That's the question. Exactly. What can you do? What do you love? What are you good at? What can you take a step towards? And it's only when it becomes real concrete practiced that this emergence starts to really help.

Kristin Barker: And that lens on of the six paramis is right there that it is through the embodiment that those things are really understood as it would, right? Yeah. So that's really great, and we will get more into that in session seven. But as I think there's a practice here that we're offering that Adam has offered here as part of this session. So really encourage you to use that or to the other practices that can help you in this place of setting the course for your own heart and really experimenting with playing with the ways that ego can show up, either with a really good affirming message or like, oh, I'm the one and I'm going to be the one that does, or it's going to be us because we're the most awesome. Or it's the terrible messages. No, who am I? I don't know. And I've made so many mistakes and I'm too young, I'm too old, I'm too this, I'm too that.

So just to watch those and say, oh, yeah, this is the risk of becoming and how can I nonetheless, really support the kind of sense of what Adam was talking about here, that wholesome desire that says, oh yeah, of course that's going to happen. And what is possible here that I can trust? So really, thank you, Adam. Really, this was so good to hang out in this really tender course setting kind of place and get the knack of how this really can become part of our practices, EcoSattva in training, but also just part of our Buddhist practice, part of our understanding of what it means to play with various levels of fabrication, of construction, of egos coming into form and dissolving. It's so wonderful



to get to know that in our own experience. And I think so important for us to be able to find our way forward in this really, really intense time. So thank you again, Adam. Yeah. Is there anything else that you want to offer here in closing?

Adam Lobel: I mean, we have been born in really, really interesting times, and these next decades are going to be immensely challenging it seems. And within that we can't give up. We have to find this heart. And there is also so much possibility because the structures and systems around, they haven't been working for a long time for so many people and for this planet. So as things break, as things congeal, there's also this incredible possibility. So yeah, my last thoughts are just to feel a sense of solidarity with everyone out there who are trying to discover this way of the dharma, the earth really needs us.

Kristin Barker: Great. Thank you, Adam. Thank you. Thank you.

Dana

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