Buddha Nature
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I said I'd talk on Buddha Nature, because today we are celebrating the Buddha's own complete realisation of it. The Buddha Sakyamuni completely realised his Buddha Nature. This is something really worth celebrating.

My talk today is about what that means. I'd like us to think more about the concept of Buddha Nature. It is basically just a way of expressing the fact that Enlightenment is somehow in our nature as human beings. That it's wired in somehow, that it's somehow in our genes. It doesn't mean we're somehow already Enlightened. But it does mean that Buddhist awakening isn't something alien, or added on. I think that to feel that Enlightenment is part of our potential as human beings is incredibly important for our whole attitude to our Dharma life.

It means that in a certain sense, Enlightenment is something natural. Even, in a way, that it's is the most natural thing of all. Being genuinely natural, being truly ourselves, is not at all easy for us. In this way of thinking, if only we could be completely natural, we'd be Enlightened. To understand this properly, we have to go into what Buddhism means by 'natural'. That is a whole discussion which I hope I'll be able to address a bit later.

Generally it seems to me that to see the goal of our practice as a kind of naturalness would be very helpful for us, simply because we in the west very easily think of Enlightenment as something unnatural. It is sometimes actually expressed in that way. It's sometimes said that in practising Dharma we're going 'against nature'. Nature can be identified with samsara. Nature can be seen solely in terms of plants and animals. That idea of nature then gets contrasted with the world of spiritual attainment. It is seen as something we all need to get beyond, something to be transcended.

Well of course there is a certain truth in that way of looking at the issue, but there's something very false in it as well. Words and concepts are tricky. We have to use them, but we need also to watch out, because they can tie us in knots!

The Tibetan Wheel of Life illustrates this problem quite well. In case you don't know it, the Wheel of Life is a graphical image of the Buddha's realisation, a kind of picture of what he saw on the night of his Enlightenment. It's a great circular image, a bit like a wheel, and a bit like a mirror. It's not a pleasant sight – it's in the grip of a demon, and it's a picture of our imprisonment in samsara.

Round the outside of this 'mirror' is a circle of images like a filmstrip, showing the progression of all the unsatisfactoriness in life. It shows our body and mind conditioned by our past. It shows body and mind emerging into a present reality of pleasure and pain. It shows us reacting with emotions. It then shows these emotions conditioning how our mind and body manifest in the future. The strip goes round and round. It's a cycle of

reaction. Then inside the filmstrip, round the hub of the wheel, you see all the different worlds that all the different kinds of beings inhabit. There are human and nonhuman worlds, heavenly worlds, hell worlds, and it shows them in detail. Then inside that, close to the hub of the Wheel, you see the raw essence of every world: see beings going up, getting high, getting happy; or going down, getting unhappier and unhappier. Life in the raw is either black or white, its down or up. Then finally, right in the centre, at the hub of the wheel, you see images of a cock, a snake and a pig. Greed, hatred and delusion: the basic reactions to pleasure and pain. And it's this reactivity at the hub that's continually making unenlightened existence so dissatisfying.

It's not hard to see life like that, is it? To have quite a dark view of existence. But the Buddha sees a bigger picture. He's shown standing outside the wheel, and he's pointing to something else. He's pointing to the Dharma. The Dharma is depicted symbolically as the full moon. Just like the full Wesak moon we've been experiencing the last few days.

And this is really what the Buddha saw on the night when his awakening happened. He certainly saw the wheel of Samsara, but he also saw, very clearly, the full moon of Dharma. And there's such a difference between these two images. The Wheel held by the demon is a dark, complex, unhappy image. The full moon is something simple, joyful, abundant, brimming over with light and positive energy.

But we sometimes think that the dark Wheel represents Nature. It seems just to go round and round, there seems no way out. You're born and you react, you get more and more deeply enmeshed in samsaric reactions, then you die and are reborn even more enmeshed. Whereas Buddhist insight offers escape from samsara. It offers escape from Nature, it seems. Certainly, if we look at it in that way, Enlightenment has no connection with nature.

But it seems to me this idea chimes too much with our Christian inheritance that Nature is bad and that the Good is somehow outside nature. When this is not the case in Buddhism. For Buddhism, nature is not the same as samsara. Nature includes what is beyond samsara. Nature includes Enlightenment. in other words the Buddha did not transcend Nature – he completed it, he fulfilled it. After his Enlightenment the Earth goddess bore witness to his attainment of Enlightenment. She'd been there all along, she'd seen his efforts and she'd supported them.

So the Wheel of Life represents nature only in a very limited sense. The full Moon represents nature in the sense of complete fulfilment of our nature. The full moon represents the spiral, progressive aspect of nature. The wheel represents the cyclical aspect of nature.

Because Nature is not just the birds, the bees, the flowers and the trees. Nature is not just the outer form of things. It is also what is unseen. Nature is also the way of action, the behaviour, the attitude, the thought, the hidden inner life of things. It's in everyone's nature to act in certain ways. The earth supports, water flows, fire consumes, and wind moves. So flowers, trees, you and me all have our ways, we all have a nature of our own.

And that nature, essentially, is Buddha Nature. Because if one's nature is completely fulfilled, it will be Enlightened. No doubt that nature can only fully be fulfilled under certain circumstances. But where there's motivation and will, there's potential to fulfil the Buddha Nature to some degree. And as human beings, we have the power to fulfil it completely.

So when we celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment, it's the Buddha Nature within us all that we are essentially rejoicing in.

However, the idea that wisdom, or Enlightenment, is already within us in some way, so that what we have to do is to uncover it, is like the proverbial water snake. It's difficult to grasp correctly. In fact it's quite easy to grasp it incorrectly – to mean that we are literally already enlightened. We naturally like the idea that there's something already there in us, just waiting to be woken up. It rings true in a certain kind of way. It also makes the spiritual path appear an easy, simple matter: relax, let go the hindrances, and just let the Buddha nature shine forth!

Well, *doesn't* the idea have a certain ring of truth? Isn't it so that when we manage to relinquish an obstacle, something positive arises? When we're in a tricky philosophical mood we can start wondering if that 'something' was there already. And if it was indeed already there, what need could there have been to let anything go? Why did we need to make that effort in the first place?

We can get rather knotted up in logical problems like these, and it's important that we recognise that they arise because we are trying to describe something that cannot adequately be described. This is why we have the perfection of wisdom teachings which insist that reality cannot be described AT ALL. So when we get to these illogicalities, these antinomies of reason, we have to meditate on the perfection of wisdom, let go into the Buddha Nature – trust the Buddha Nature – in other words go for refuge to the Buddha.

Of course the Buddha nature wasn't there already in a literal sense. Yet nonetheless, the Buddha nature is there in all beings, all the time.

It's easier to understand this issue if we apply it something other than Buddhahood. Because you get just the same semantic problem when trying to describe anything that exists in potential. For example, an entire oak tree is potential in an acorn, isn't it? Now obviously the great big oak tree isn't literally there, in the seed, which is a widdly little thing. Nice, but not actually a tree. But at the same time it's obvious that the entire tree is there in the seed. Because in the right conditions we know that an entire oak tree will definitely grow from the tiny acorn. We don't fully understand how it happens, but we know it will. The nature of an acorn is to grow into an oak tree. That's very simple to understand.

Now is it helpful to have that example because we know so much more about plants than human beings? Well I don't know, it seems to me we know just as much about people

actually, and I reckon we could understand the notion of Buddha Nature quite easily if we wanted. What the tradition calls 'Buddha Nature' is just the unfolding of human potential, especially as it relates to deeper seeing into things. We just need to ask what's involved in bringing about that unfolding.

Spiritual realisation involves some kind of relaxation. We focus on some crucial issues, and we see into it more deeply, and it's as though the insight was there before, but previously we hadn't somehow allowed space for it to break through our normal mindset.

The spiritual path requires that we relinquish and relax certain traits and activities. Unskilful tendencies. Many people like us are holding in masses of anxiety and uptightness – we're a minefield of tension, it seems, with danger spots everywhere just waiting to be triggered into something destructive. We try all kinds of tricks to alleviate this suffering. For example drink or drugs... holidays... relationships... gadgets... entertainment. But these never work for long.

It's only when we come across some form of Dharma, which gets us to meet our experience with mindfulness, that we discover how really to relax. We start to realise that our endless anxiety and tension is actually a moral issue. Tension comes from our endless cravings, hatreds and delusions. It comes along with our attitude and our behaviour. And it becomes clear from our Buddhist practice that we can actually change it, that we can deliberately let go some of those habits and unskilful attitudes. It will take ages, the rest of our life, but it's still true that when we have completely let go our craving, hatred and delusion, we'll be Enlightened.

So it is in this sense that Buddhahood is within us all. All beings have the potential to relinquish their attachment to craving, hatred, and delusion. This is basic Buddhism; if it were not the case that all beings could gain Enlightenment, then there would be no Buddhism, and the Buddha would not have taken the trouble to teach us.

So I have Buddha nature, and so do you. Even a dog has it, according to the famous koan. I suppose that the process is most likely to develop in a human existence, but in principle, it can start in anyone. We are learning these days just how little we really know about animals' minds. But without going there, the basic point is that anyone can actualise their potential – if they want to. If they *can* want to.

And if they consider deeply enough what it is they're doing. To grasp correctly the idea of the Buddha nature, we need to understand what actualising potential really involves. I mean, you and I both have some potential to become a Buddha. But you and I also have some potential to become an air traffic controller, a stand-up comedian, or an expert on mediaeval history. Does it sound easier to gain Enlightenment? Well, it's not. I'd say it's more difficult.

Actualising potential is hard work: blood, sweat, tears, toil, and struggle. Yet struggle is how we build our character. Struggle is important for our becoming strong in the Dharma; it's an important part of our development. And strange though it may seem, the

struggles we face in our spiritual lives relate directly to the issue of relaxation: usually, they are about our inability to relinquish habitual patterns of behaviour. Letting go sounds so easy, but the reality is quite different if we don't want to let go of whatever it is. And at the same time, making an effort sounds difficult, but the reality is quite different. Making an effort isn't difficult at all when it's something we really want to do! So effort is not necessarily difficult; relaxation is not necessarily easy. The issue essentially is one of desire.

Though our wanting is often experienced as something very conscious – as in, I'd like a cool computer, or I'd like to be a good person – the reality is that our conscious wanting is greatly overlapped by stuff that is very very unconscious. As in – I need love... and attention... and food... and security... and to have my way in all things at any price. In a nutshell, the spiritual urge, the urge to go for Refuge as we call it, is about making conscious this continual wanting, and from there, transforming it out of its basis in ego grasping. That transformation is a life time project. The result of engaging in that project, at any level, is that not only do we want to be a good person in the limited and unimaginative sense, but that we start realising the full scope of the far broader and deeper energies that are available to us when we start loosening our fixed ideas of who we are. This is the path to awakening to which the going for Refuge gives us access – when we actually do it.

Once you start applying it, there's a lot of significance to Buddha Nature thought. The Three Jewels, for example, are all aspects of the Buddha Nature. This reflection helps us get deeper into what going for refuge really means. To celebrate the Buddha is to celebrate how the Buddha Nature is fundamental to all Buddhist practice. For if it wasn't for the fact that Buddhahood was part of our nature as human beings, it wouldn't be possible for anyone to gain any kind of insight.

In conclusion, let me spend a few minutes in appreciation of what the Buddha Sakyamuni has bequeathed to the human tradition through his great awakening. Sakyamuni is of course the main flowering, in our time, of the Buddha Nature. He is the one in whom we take refuge as the greatest source of teaching, apart of course from our own insights into the Dharma. I say that because in the end, obviously, we have to take refuge in the Buddha within, in the one we are becoming through our practice. The whole point of the Buddha without, in whatever form, is to introduce us to that unfoldment of insight and compassion.

The Buddha was fully awakened, so he is the main example of the Buddha Jewel. Though the Sangha we take refuge in, that is the Arya or Noble Sangha, are also fully Enlightened beings. Their teachings are also very important for practising the Dharma. However, they are important only in varying degrees. It's the Buddha's teaching that is most useful.

I think we can see this from the scriptures that record his teaching. Sakyamuni's teaching seem to speak more universally, at least to me, and I presume this is because Sakyamuni discovered the Dharma for himself. He not only discovered it, but he had to articulate and

work it out for himself. What he achieved is such an incredibly accomplished piece of work that one can feel not only appreciative when one looks at the sheer scope of it, but gobsmacked, amazed, totally in awe.

So in our age, the Buddha was the first Dharma teacher, as well as the one who first fully realised the Dharma. And his work in crafting the teaching shines out, I think, when we compare his teaching even with that of the very greatest of those teachers who came later in the tradition. These teachers we tend to think of as Sangha rather than Buddhas – even though they may have been no less enlightened and so, in that sense, they are also Buddha.

Take the example, say, of Nagarjuna or Padmasambhava. Though Nagarjuna's elucidation of the Perfection of Wisdom, and Padmasambhava's teachings of Maha Ati or Dzogchen are amazingly profound – perhaps in certain respects even more profound than what we know of the Buddha's teachings – these teachings definitely do not speak to everyone. Whereas the Buddha's material does. It is genuinely universal. From what we can glean from the Pali Canon, his teaching is on the one hand really basic and accessible, and on the other, it's movingly profound.

So this is the tradition we inherit from Shakyamuni and those who followed his example down the years. It's now ours to explore and use. This amazing collection of methods of liberation which seem to be unique in this world. Certainly we find overlappings with certain philosophies, bits of this religion, bits of that – say – shamanic practice, or secular custom, or world view. But for pure unadulterated liberation methods, you just don't seem to get the stuff so concentrated elsewhere. That's my take anyway. When you see all this for yourself – and you have to go into it for yourself, or you don't see it at all – you see how utterly, utterly mind-blowing the Buddhist tradition is.

And appreciating this is of the very essence of practice. It's reflecting in this way that we get that good feeling of inspiration about what we're getting into as Buddhist practitioners. This might at first sight seem a bit self congratulatory and cult like, but it isn't really. In fact we don't get a particularly warm sense of security from our practice. No, it actually gives us rather a terrible shock sometimes. There's that lovely quote from Reginald Ray from Vajradhatu. When he was asked what the Dharma has done for him, he said 'it has completely ruined my life'. But he was glad it had. So the sense of inspiration we get from real Dharma is joyful, but it's also pretty hair raising. It's when we feel that, that this is something very real, we start to feel that we take refuge in the Buddha. We start to feel a new kind of openness to the Buddha's teachings.

When we look at the Buddha, look at an image of the Buddha, or read about him in the scriptures, especially in the Pali scriptures, what impression do we get? I suppose one of wisdom and compassion, friendliness, concern for others, dedication to his work... you could probably put your own list together. But I think there's something behind all that, underlying all that, something very fundamental to his whole manner and approach. What I'm thinking of is his amazing practice of mindfulness. Whatever our own mindfulness practice is like, it's a good way we can link in directly to the Buddha's

experience. Because what he needed to be mindful of, we need to be mindful of too. Our practice is exactly the same. We have exactly the same struggles. Because the Buddha was a human being like us. He had a body just like us – so he had to eat and sleep, and he got sick as well. He'd grown up a rich kid and had a wife and a child before he left home. He had feelings and emotions like we do. He had thoughts and perceptions just like we do. So his awareness had basically the same objects as ours. The only differences are that the Buddha knew his body, feelings, emotions and perceptions to an amazing degree; and knowing that profoundly affected his experience. So for this reason it's good having a Buddha as one's example. You know it's only a matter of degree of practice and experience. You know there's more, and the Buddha shows you what that 'more' is about. The more you do it, the more your experience is the same as the Buddha's. The Buddha without and the Buddha within gradually come together.

Mindfulness is not a special practice for the ideal conditions enjoyed by monastics, but is a core practice. Some kinds of meditation may depend on conditions, and experience of good conditions help everyone to get a start, but mindfulness is not dependent on conditions.

Mindfulness is always applicable, it's always useful. It's the most central Buddhist practice. It's effective even in the very worst conditions. Indeed, especially there. It's essential, as we know, for doing shamatha and vipashyana meditation – but it's also essential for the practice of ethics in the real world. You can't do any spiritual practice without some level of mindfulness. It's the awareness that makes it a spiritual practice, and the more awareness that's in it, the more spiritual it is.

Yet we often do try to do spiritual practice without awareness. We so easily go through the motions of practice without really doing it. We all do this. I do it all the time. I just don't catch it. Because the way I do it's often pretty subtle. In fact I design it that way.

Going through the motions, or merely formal practice, practice as a formality, is one of the three fundamental obstacles to Dharma practice, which are known as the three basic fetters. The other two fetters are, first, a closed view of our self, of what we are – when essentially we don't know what we are, and that's OK. And second, the tendency to hold back, to not throw ourselves into the practice, due to unresolved doubts and fears.

The fetter of formalistic practice is known, in sanskrit, as shila-vrata-paramarsha. Often it's translated as 'attachment to ethical rules (*shila*) and external customs (*vrata*) as ends in themselves'.

Sangharakshita slipped the word shila into my name when he ordained me, I think as an ironic pointer towards what I need most to practice. That was when I was 24. I remember in those far off days there was a senior Order member who had been given the name Suvrata. Vrata being the second aspect of the fetter. It means an observance, a formal custom. On some occasions, for example, it might be expected of us that we wear a particular kind of dress, or a tie. Now this Suvrata was a research scientist, I believe a

member of the Royal Society, but I don't recall any ties. All I ever remember him wearing was a beard, a caftan, sandals, and a set of very large beads.

That's because during the 1960s and 1970s formality became unfashionable. We tended to think formality was superficial. And we were right. The mechanised handshake, the formal enquiry after someone's wellbeing. People do very often just go through the motions in their treatment of others. Nonetheless, formality still fulfils an important social function.

Because we cannot always be in touch with our feelings about others. When we meet them, we may well be flustered, confused, distracted, anxious or extremely angry about something quite outside the situation. We don't want to express that negative feeling. Hello, interesting to meet you, I'm feeling incredibly angry, how are you? So we have social forms to protect others from misunderstandings. Certainly that can easily lead to problems, but still, formality is often useful.

But when this tendency appears in our practice of the Dharma, there is a serious problem. That's shilavrataparamarsha. We do all the correct things, the things one would reasonably expect of a Buddhist practitioner, but without awareness and feeling. Outwardly we are a good Buddhist, but inside our heart is not involved. We have lost touch with our essential motivation for practising. So it amounts almost to hypocrisy. I know that sounds terrible, but we just have to try to understand it, because we're all doing it. Because it's very hard for us to avoid as we get more established on the path. After a few years, we've probably undertaken all kinds of responsibilities as a Sangha member. Perhaps we work or even live with other Buddhists; perhaps we teach meditation. We do all the things we'd expect a Buddhist to do. We meditate, we attend retreats regularly, we study Buddhism, we discuss it. Perhaps we even teach it and write books about it. Maybe we are very, very experienced, a senior and respected practitioner – an indispensable pillar of the Sangha with an international following. Yet amazing though it might seem, after all these years, we often merely go through the motions of our Buddhist practice, rather than actually doing it.

On the other hand, we may not be at all prominent or distinguished in the Sangha. No, we're not busy, busy, busy. We are quite happy maintaining a back seat, thank you, giving a little service to others. We're just humbly getting on with our Buddhist life. However, whatever comfy little groove we may have settled into, we're still going through the motions a lot of the time. We are in fact always sliding back in our Dharma practice. We in fact don't have a continuous, inspired interest in realising of the nature of things. We'd sincerely like to have such a thing, but our interest gets caught up in all kinds of moods and emotional reactions.

And this is us. It's all of us. Yes, each of us has made a substantial commitment to spiritual development. And it has introduced a major source of conflict in our life. It's as though we sewed on a large badge that says 'look – I am a Dharma practitioner', and we have somehow to live up to that. I think that conflict is something good, perhaps indispensable. But it really does test us; the conflict can be very hard to handle. As our

self awareness deepens, there's bound to be something of a split between the parts of ourselves which definitely want to make a spiritual effort, and those which totally, totally do not.

In that conflict there arises a kind of hesitancy, a wobbling, which makes us cling on for shelter to outward forms of religious practice. To shila and vrata in fact. So we 'do the right thing', but our interest is not really engaged, so our approach becomes rigid. Isn't it amazing that practice itself can obstruct real practice. We manage to replace it with a frozen replica of itself.

I don't mean to lay any guilt trips on anyone here. This really is something everyone does who isn't a stream entrant. Even they probably do it a bit. What we need is to think positive – think about what we can *do* about it.

An example that I imagine many of you will recognise this in, is devotional practices like puja. One finds one is just mouthing the words, and not relating at all to the actual meaning. We lose our openness to what the words are saying. So naturally we get bored and impatient. Our attention eventually cuts off and engages with something we find more interesting.

When dharma practice is formalistic, the solution is not necessarily to stop. The real solution is mindfulness and awareness. The way forward is to give more attention to what is going on. We need to look and experience the actual feelings and thoughts and body sensations. We need to accept and feel the difficulty. Only then will we see how to move on from it. Going through the motions happens when something is not being acknowledged.

That's a bit different from practising with reluctance. Sometimes there's no elephants being swept beneath our carpet. It's just hard living with them. When a lot of negative emotion comes up, enthusiasm can wane quite a lot. In that situation we need to reflect on why we practice. We can then see that even though we feel reluctant, our heart is actually involved. If we just keep re-committing ourselves to what we know we want to become, sooner or later our emotions will catch up and it will be easy again. I think in that kind of situation it's important to give as much time as possible to meditation practice. Sometimes the mind needs space to relax and open up into something new.

It seems inevitable that we'll lose touch with our motivation sometimes, because the Dharma changes us. The ways we are changing may be more or less invisible to us. Often we do not notice what has happened, so we don't adjust. There's a gap in our mindfulness. When we don't catch up with ourselves, we can start to practice rigidly.

Let me put this a slightly different way. Let's say we find that we no longer find it so easy to concentrate in meditation. In the last decade or so we have actually gone a lot deeper as a person. We experience ourselves a lot more deeply. But this depth itself has aroused new emotional issues which mean we can no longer be the bliss bunny we were when we first used to do the mindfulness of breathing. We feel confused about those

uncomfortable thoughts that nowadays start poking themselves into our awareness when we meditate. So almost as a kind of protection, we start clinging on just to the form of a practice. We just do it. We don't let it take us anywhere. And then, at once, it stops providing any inspiration. We no longer find it inspiring, but we still cling on, just because we feel there is nothing else to hold on to. It seems to be better than nothing. This is not a very good idea, because but after a while this can get habitual, and then unconscious. And sooner or later, we will stop even the formalistic practice.

How are we to get out of formalism? We need somehow to rediscover a freshness of approach. The antidote is of course mindfulness. I mean, awareness is always the answer. But that is also the boring answer, isn't it? We are so not attracted to some kind of dead, formalistic application of mindfulness. We need to get into it more spontaneously somehow. Well actually I think the so called pure awareness style of meditation is a fun kind of training in being more spontaneous. It's also serious, strong and rewarding. Because you have to face your experience, whatever it is.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche once wrote about how you do this. I have quoted this a few times before... but here some of it is again.

"*...There is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of the mind, there are no "bad" meditation sessions and no need to judge thoughts as good or evil. Therefore, one should not sit down to meditate with various hopes or fears about the outcome; one just does it, with no self-conscious feeling of "I am meditating," and without attempting to control or force the mind, and without trying to become peaceful.*

If one finds that one is going astray in any of these ways, one should stop meditating and simply rest and relax for a while before resuming.

If, either during or after meditation, one has experiences that one interprets as results, they should not be made into anything special; recognize that they are just phenomena and simply observe them. Above all, do not attempt to recreate them as this opposes the natural spontaneity of the mind.

All phenomena are completely new and fresh and absolutely unique, entirely free from all concepts of past, present, and future – as if experienced in another dimension of time; this is absolute spontaneity.

The continual stream of new discovery and fresh revelation and inspiration that arises at every moment is the manifestation of the eternal youth of the living dharma and its wonders; splendour and spontaneity is the play or dance aspect of the universe as guru. One should learn to see everyday life as a mandala in which one is at the centre, and free of the bias and prejudice of past conditioning, present desires, and hopes and expectations
about the future.

The figures of the mandala are the day-to-day objects of one's life experiences moving in

the great dance of the play of the universe, the symbolism by which the guru reveals profound and ultimate meaning and significance.

Therefore, be natural and spontaneous; accept and learn from everything."

I think that is a wonderful set of admonishments. Our experience can be our teacher, if we let it. And if we strive too hard for particular results, we will stop learning and our practice will become our prison.

Well, I hope what I've said tonight illustrates something of what is involved in our feeling for the Buddha, who first discovered what we now practice. That feeling also reveals something about ourselves, too, since we partake in that same Buddha nature. In fact exploring our feelings about Sakyamuni helps us understand who we really are. Or who we could really be, if only we could be fully ourselves. Sakyamuni's spiritual urge, his going for Refuge, has produced an amazing harvest, one that includes our own going for refuge. Probably the most concrete expression of Sakyamuni's aspiration is going to be in our daily practice of mindfulness, the practice of waking up to what is happening, and not ignoring it. The practice of naturalness free from pretence or contrivance. That true openness to experience is what lies at the very heart of the Buddha's awakening, whether the Buddha we're talking about is Sakyamuni, or ourselves.

http://www.kamalashila.co.uk/

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