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Stories of Inspiring Women

Ayya Khema

Diana Clark:

Okay, welcome, to our second class in the second series of the stories of inspiring Buddhist women. So happy that you're here to join me and I guess we, I don't know, discover these women, some of these women that I didn't know about before when I've been, I'm talking about them and some of them I did know, but didn't know a lot. And it's been a lot of fun for me to do some poking around and to share with you all.

And again, I just want to state, you know, this class is not meant to be like, you know, the definitive biography of these individuals. Instead, it's an opportunity to, I don't know, just acknowledge and respect and honor these women as well as allow ourselves to be touched by them to be touched by like, wow, you know, even though that's maybe not the stories that we hear the most in Dharma talks or in books doesn't mean that there aren't these amazing women around. And then this is how we'll start getting these stories out there is by sharing it all with you. We'll be starting that way.

And then also, I feel like I also want to say some of these things that just the all these different women that I don't want to suggest that we have to be like them, or that what they're doing is the only way or anything like that, or that they are, you know, the epitome and somebody that we should emulate. Again, just this idea that allow yourself to be touched by what we're learning here. And is it a way that it can support your practice? Is it a way that maybe I know sometimes I know for me, sometimes I feel like, wow, they found a way maybe I can find a way through this little rough patch here to the way that can support us, maybe kind of a abstract way or something like this.

So today, we're going to do something a little bit different, that we're going to be talking about an amazing woman. Many of you have heard of this woman, and through books, and maybe even some of her teachings, just an amazing person. And we have the great good fortune to have a student of this woman who's going to be sharing about her with us. And it also happens in my view that this student, this person is a student is also a fantastic storyteller. So I think this will be great. We're gonna have this a way that we can learn about this woman.

So we're going to be talking about, or I don't know. Yeah, I'll say Ayya Khema, who we'll be talking about, Ayya Khema, this wonderful woman, amazing woman. And Leigh Brasington, who is I believe, Leigh, you're the senior student of is in the United States, right? Maybe in the world. Senior in terms of more teaching in her style.

Leigh Brasington:

Not in the world, because she has a number of students in Germany. But I'm the only one that she authorized in the States is actually doing it. So if that makes me senior, I guess.

Diana Clark:

And I'll turn it over to you, Leigh, where you can share about Ayya Khema.

Leigh Brasington:

Thank you, Diana.

This is a great privilege for me to be able to talk about my teacher. Ayya Khema was my very first meditation teacher. She taught me to meditate. And I reconnected with her five years later.



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And she told me that Janice and I then started sitting with her regularly. And then she told me to be a Dharma teacher. Completely transformed my life. I mean, yeah, I don't know what my life would have been like if I hadn't met her. I don't even want to think about that because it was so powerful. Ilse Liedermann, which was her name before she became Ayya Khema was born in Berlin in 1923, the daughter of a Jewish banker. So she was 10 when Hitler came to power. When she was 15, she was sent on one of the kinder transports, the refugee ships for Jewish children to flee Germany. And I've heard that it was the last of the kinder ships, I can't vouch for that.

And she went to Scotland, I believe they were relatives in Scotland that she stayed with her parents managed to escape to Shanghai before the war broke out. And then in 1941, Pearl Harbor, so she was 18. She took a Japanese freighter from Scotland around Africa to India, and then on to Shanghai where she was reunited with her parents. And she actually totally enjoyed being in Shanghai. When I reconnected with her after five years, she found out I had been in Shanghai fairly recently, and she wanted to know all about it and what was like and so forth. And I was really good until 1944. When the Japanese threw all Westerners in a concentration camp. Her father died there. And she was liberated by the Americans in 45 at the end of the war. But she didn't get out of China until 49. There were just so many refugees and she had married and had a daughter and took a ship. Again, I've heard it was the last ship out before the Chinese communists took Shanghai, but you know, right before they did. And she came to California, you know, sailed under the Golden Gate. And she and her husband and daughter settled in LA. She was a teller in the Bank of America. Eventually she got divorced and remarried, had a son and her new husband and she actually moved to Mexico to an organic farm.

Her husband was an engineer and he got a posting to Pakistan for an engineering project. I don't remember whether it was an aqueduct or a bridge or something like that. And so they went to Pakistan and they did the project. And then they drove to London in their Land Rover. And we're talking 1959. That used to be the hippie trail, you know, to go India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, all the way to England one way or the other. But yeah, she was one of the people blazing that trail. On the way, she had heard about the Hunza people. And so they drove up to the Hunza people and she became friends with the King of the Hunza and also discovered you weren't allowed to go there unless you had a special permit. But yeah, they didn't know that. She was friends with the King of the Hunza.

After they got to London, they decided to drive back to India. And so they moved back in their Land Rover. She and her husband and her son. And when they got to India, Ilse was interested in learning to meditate. And so she found a Hindu teacher. I don't remember the name of who it was. Anything I don't remember, you can find it very easily. She has an autobiography that is fantastic. It's an adventure story filled with nuggets of Dharma along the way. And so if you want to look up her teacher's name, the name of the book is I Give You My Life. And so you can look all of this up. But anyhow, she learned to meditate in a Hindu form.

And then she and her husband and son, the daughter was with the daughter's father back in San Diego, as it turned out. But the three of them went to Queensland, Australia, and settled on an organic farm. And after six years of doing this Hindu meditation, one of their neighbors came over one night, one afternoon and said, Oh, there's a Buddhist monk going to be giving a talk at my house. Would you like to come along and hear what he has to say? And so Ilse went to hear this Buddhist monk who is Venerable Khantipalo. And she said that she knew immediately she was home. She'd been doing this Hindu meditation very religiously. And it didn't make any sense. And she didn't know what was going on. But immediately she connected with what Khantipalo was teaching. And so she began practicing in the Theravadan tradition going on retreats with him because he was teaching in Australia.



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And eventually, on one of the retreat, well on the retreats, she apparently was stumbling into the Jhanas. And she didn't know what was going on. And she was a voracious reader. And so she started looking through the suttas. Now the translation she had aren't the good ones we have now by Bhikkhu Bodhi and crew. These are the ones from like 1905. Not quite as good and easy to read. But she figured out what was happening based on the suttas and the good translation of the Visuddhimagga that we have, that these were the Jhanas. And she talks about how one night, after she'd learned the first four, she's on retreat and she thinks, I'm going to find the fifth Jhana now. And she did. And she wound up teaching herself all eight of the Jhanas. And to me, this is absolutely remarkable. I stumbled into the first Jhana, I had no idea what was going on. I didn't bother to find out what was going on. I mean, I tried, I asked a few teachers, but she did her own research and figured it out and taught herself all the rest of them. Truly amazing.

She began assisting Khantipalo and, you know, becoming a Dharma teacher. She came back from one retreat and her son met her at the railway station with a note from her husband that basically said, you're more interested in this meditation stuff than me. I'm out of here. Ayya said she was pretty upset by that. But when she calmed down, she realized that yeah, he was correct. She was more into the meditation than the relationship. So she began teaching more on her own. And eventually she went to Sri Lanka. While she was there, she began to wonder now, I found the Jhanas I think, but am I doing it right? She said to the people that she knew there that she wanted to find a Jhana master. Who was a Jhana master? And the word came that the Venerable Nānarāma was the real deal. So she said to the lady she was staying with, I need to go to the Venerable Nānarāma's monastery. And they said, well, you can't go there. It's two days ride in a Jeep back in the jungle. Then you got to walk in. But I really need to go to the monastery. Well, you really can't go. But I need to speak to the Venerable Nānarāma Nānarāma. Oh, if you want to speak to him, he's come into town for some medical treatment. He's staying at the monastery around the corner.

So they leave the place, the house where she's staying. They walk to the closest monastery. She goes in, she has an interview with the Venerable Nānarāma. She explains what she's doing. And at the end, she says, am I doing it right? And he says, yes. And furthermore, you must teach these. They are in danger of becoming a lost art. And so she did. Venerable Nānarāma, being a monk, wasn't particularly comfortable teaching women, nuns or lay women. And so he basically assigned all the women students he had to Ayya Khema. Well, she wasn't Ayya Khema at that point. But shortly after that, she became a nun. Now in Sri Lanka at that time, you could only be a ten precept nun. You couldn't get full ordination. But Ayya Khema was not going to let anything stand in her way. Certainly not 2,500 years of patriarchy. So she came back to visit her daughter in San Diego. And while she was on that trip, she went to the Chan temple in LA, the Chinese Zen temple in LA, and got the full ordination, because the fully ordained lineage of nuns has not died out in China. And in fact, they got their ordination from Sri Lanka. So she was, you know, just reconnecting a little further down the line. And then she went back to being a fully ordained Theravada nun, perhaps the first one in a thousand years, the lineage of fully ordained nuns in Theravada had died out about 1000 years ago.

And yeah, so this was Ayya Khema, you know, you can't do that. No, I'm going to go do that. And she did. She also managed to pull together the first international Buddhist women's conference and got the Dalai Lama to be the keynote speaker. So she brought in nuns from all over and laywomen from all over. And they had a conference and they continued to have those conferences. One of her students was very influential in forming Sakyadhita, which is a group dedicated to helping women in Buddhism, particularly the nuns and giving them support. She was, she was amazing.



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To go on retreat with her was a very interesting experience. Ayya Khema was, she was as German as you could possibly imagine. And she was as Jewish as you could possibly imagine. She was your favorite Jewish grandmother. And yet she had the strictness and, you know, the German drive and so forth. We lost a lot of really good people, unfortunately, in the Second World War. But you go on retreat with her and she would tell you at the beginning of the retreat, okay, I'm going to give you instructions on what to do. I don't care what you've been doing in the past. You're on retreat with me and you should do what I'm teaching. You know, learn what I'm teaching you. If you, when you want to go home, you want to go back to doing whatever, you know, feel free to do that. But while you're on retreat with me, you'll do what I teach. And she was the sort of person that you would go, oh, yes, ma'am, right away. Either that, or if you had trouble with authority figures, maybe she wasn't the best teacher for you, because she was definitely coming off as an authority figure. Her retreats were usually based around a sutta. She would take a sutta, maybe something from, say, the Middle-Length sayings, Middle-Length discourses, that you could read in 20 minutes. And it would be the theme for a 10-day retreat. And she would go into each thing in that sutta in great detail. And you got a really in-depth teaching on what the Buddha was actually teaching about.

The first retreat I went on, well, I thought I had meditated before, but I quickly learned that what Ayya Khema thought was meditation was not what I had been doing. And yeah. But the following the breath thing, that was too boring for me. I'd just, I'd sit there, and it's 45 minutes of excruciating boredom, and I'm not supposed to think, and I'm just supposed to watch myself breathe.

Well, luckily, seven days in, she showed us the body scan, if you know about the body scan from say Goenka's teachings. Ayya Khema was a student, when she was a laywoman, of Robert Hover, who was a student of U Ba Khin, who was Goenka's teacher. And so she would show the body scan during every one of the retreats. And I could do that because, well, it gave me something to do, not just sit there and be bored. And it was a good thing it was a 10-day retreat, because I feel like it was the ninth day before I actually understood enough that I could take the practice home.

One of the other things that was so important on that retreat, when I went on the retreat, I was a pothead. I was stoned like five nights a week, and had been for 14 years. Of course, I wasn't going to smoke on the retreat. Yeah, no, that was no problem. I could give it up occasionally. And then at the end of the retreat, she would do a precept ceremony. Unlike most teachers who do the precepts at the beginning of a retreat, she would do a really sweet precept ceremony at the end of the retreat. Well, yeah, that was a religion thing. And I'm a Presbyterian preacher's kid, and I wasn't interested in the religion stuff. So I wasn't going to do the ceremony. But she gave a really brilliant talk on the precepts. And when she got to the fifth precept, she said, "We are confused enough already. We don't need to ingest anything. It makes us more confused." That really struck home with me. I mean, I was curious about the meditation, because I'm curious about what's really going on in the world. And if I really want to understand what's going on, she's right, I need a clear mind. And I quit smoking pot right at that instant.

So the two things I took away from that retreat were, well, one was this woman is a brilliant teacher. She speaks really clearly, she lays it out there. It's quite amazing. And the body scan and quitting pot. So three years later, I stumbled into the first jhana when I'm on a retreat. Nobody tells me it's a jhana. I get the word *pīti*. And yeah, for the next two years, I'm going around getting to *pīti* and asking teachers, what's going on with this? Nobody told me anything that made any sense to me. I don't remember what they told me because it didn't fit my experience. And then I reconnected with Ayya Khema. And her interviews were basically, tell me what happens when you meditate. And so when she asked me that, I said, I can get to *pīti*.



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And she said, "Oh, good. That's the first jhana. Here's how you do the second." Somebody knew, and furthermore knew what came next, which was really good. And during that retreat, she taught me jhanas two, three, four, five. And then a year later, I was back and she taught me six, seven, and eight. But that retreat was five and a half weeks long.

So I had time to practice the jhanas. And then I had time to learn what the jhanas were for. They're a warm up exercise for your insight practice. She had me step through the jhanas and then step out of number eight, and start doing an insight practice. And the insight practices I was doing post jhana were so much more profound and powerful than anything I had ever experienced before. She had the Buddha's gradual training, which actually was what she was teaching on that retreat. Just nailed. Okay, keep your precepts. Now, guard your senses, be mindful, etc. Abandon the hindrances, do your jhana practice, and now start investigating reality. It was transformative. My friends could see I was different when Ayya Khema back. And she's doing all this teaching. She has the sutta in front of us, in front of her. She reads a little bit of it and then talks off the top of her head for the next hour on the paragraph she just read. And the next day, she reads the next paragraph and talks off the top of her head for an hour on what she's just read and goes through this whole sutta, explaining everything that's going on. Some of the stuff took a couple of days to really explain the paragraph or two that she had read. She had a phenomenal memory. She knew the suttas really, really well. And she was an inspiration with anybody that studied with her because of the clarity of what she taught and the ability she had to make the Buddha's teachings come alive in the 20th century, such that, yeah, you could read a sutta if you'd heard it from her and it made sense. And then you could read another sutta along the same lines and it made a lot more sense than when you read it before. And that's how I learned what I know about the suttas was basically her giving me the background necessary so that I could begin to read suttas.

She had an island in Sri Lanka where she was living when I first met her, where she had a monastery, a nunnery for Western women that wanted to come and practice for three months or longer. But with the civil war in Sri Lanka, she wasn't in any danger, but the infrastructure of the country had broken down. And so her German students convinced her to come back to Germany to live. The first time she went to Germany to teach a retreat, she had to spend the whole plane ride with a German Pāli dictionary, learning what the German words were for the Pāli. She only knew the English words, you know, "sati" that's mindfulness. So what's the German word for "sati?" And she had to get all that. But she had good students in Germany. And so eventually they got an old inn founded in I think 1600s and fixed it up as a retreat center. And she lived there until she died in November of 1997. She would come to the US and teach a retreat and visit her daughter in San Diego and she would come to Australia and teach a retreat and visit her son in Brisbane, Australia. And the rest of the time she would teach in Europe. And she was still teaching right up to the very end. She was the most remarkable person I've ever met. You've probably heard it said of some people, they broke the mold when they made that person. Well, there was no mold for Ayya Khema. She was hand carved.

So it's time for our breakout groups now. So Deanna is going to put everybody in a breakout group. And yeah, what is inspiring about Ayya Khema? What's inspiring about this German Jewish refugee, who, yeah, turned out to be one of the most amazing Dharma teachers of the 20th century.

So any comments from your breakout groups? Any questions that came up? Anything? Well, there'll be a time for some more Q&A, but is anything come up you want to talk about right away? Raise your hand. Yeah, Rachel.

Questioner:



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In our group, we wondered, I wondered, you never definitively stated that she had achieved enlightenment. We assumed that was true. But I just wondered if she ever said, you know, I am enlightened or made any, gave that impression, just out of curiosity.

Leigh:

So two things to say. One, she said, it takes one to know one. Okay. So, you know, you can't really tell if somebody is fully awakened, enlightened, unless you are because yeah, you don't know. The other thing I would say she has a book on the ninth discourse in the long discourses, Dīgha Nikāya number nine, the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta, called Who is Myself? And she talks about the jhanas in the first part, and she talks about not self in the second part. Read the last chapter. In the last chapter, it's not about the Sutta. She discusses the four stages of awakening. You could also listen to the talk. I think I can quickly give you the link to that talk. Okay, I'm going to stick the link to the talk in the chat. If you can copy it, you can copy it down, you know, with using your thing, or you get a piece of paper and copy it down. And so she talks about the four stages of awakening. And so this will give you probably your best sense of Ayya Khema and her relationship to the stages of awakening. But I'm going to leave it up to you to draw your own conclusions. Because I'm quite certain for myself, I'm not awakened. So I can't really say about her. But she was definitely ahead of me. She Yeah, she was very spiritually advanced to do what she did. Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you.

So how many languages did she speak? She spoke German as her native language. And she learned English in Scotland. And she knew a lot of Pāli, but I wouldn't say she spoke Pāli. So it was mostly German and English. One of her students was German and said to me, actually, I can understand her English better than her German because she speaks with a pre war German dialect. So she had a she had a unique way of speaking. If you listen to her Dharma talks, you get a sense of her English speaking voice. And she just had her own unique way of speaking. But I think it was mostly German and English.

Questioner:

I have a second question. What became of her children? Did they follow her into Buddhism? Or did they find their own different paths?

Leigh:

So neither of the children followed her into Buddhism. But her favorite grandson went on retreat with her. And so I don't know if he's still practicing, but he followed her in. And I heard about, I think it was another granddaughter, who really didn't know Ayya Khema was really trying to find out some information. And I tried to put myself in touch with her. But she was apparently interested in Buddhism and her grandmother and what all that was about. So I don't know exactly what happened if she found perhaps some of the German students, because there's Buddha house in Germany, it's at the retreat center, there is still going and teaching retreats. So she might have found that and connected. So I don't really know. But neither of her children followed. I mean, you know, people don't follow their parents religion. That's for parents.

Thank you. Right, Nancy.

Questioner:

Is anything in her teaching that relates to being a woman? About being a woman in a tradition, in that in her traditions, or any of any of the traditions that she was a part of? Did she speak to or have any? What was it?

Leigh:



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Yeah, when she was teaching a retreat, there was almost nothing about her. I learned about her because some of her students finally on the month first month long I did with her insisted that she tell us something about her life. And so on the last night she did. But there was nothing else. It's not like you go to Spirit Rock and you hear about you know, the person was driving down Highway One and all. No, she didn't have any stories at all like that. But she did teach about women in Buddhism to a certain extent. I don't remember details or anything like that. I can't point you to some, there's like 400 talks of hers on Dharma seed and I can't point you, oh, go look at these. They're recorded from retreats. But she certainly in other things that she did from retreats was talking about, you know, being a nun being a woman in Buddhism, and so forth. So she definitely talked about it. But on retreat, it was pretty much, this is the sutta. And this is what it means. And this is how you should practice it. It was pretty much straight that.

Questioner:

So is there a sense though of her, she kind of ignored her. I'm not so interested in her personal life, but speaking to anything about the existence of women or the position of women. There's someone who's very eager to speak, I think maybe as a contribution.

Leigh:

So, yes, Lucinda probably can tell us a lot more because Lucinda was on nun's Island. So Lucinda tell us.

Speaker:

Her actions, her actions. She was seminal in organizing women and organizing women to be in a position and opening up ordination for women. So she was an advocate of women. She taught everyone, but she was an activist on behalf of women, specifically internationally. And she was a founder and started many, many organizations. That was the way she expressed her concern for women.

Leigh:

In Sri Lanka today, there are over a thousand fully ordained nuns. And basically they're all from Ayya Khema. She started the movement and convinced enough other women. No, this is what we've got to do. And then there was a core of those that then started ordaining more nuns. And so all of the fully ordained nuns in the Theravadan tradition probably can pretty much either directly or indirectly trace their lineage back to Ayya Khema. That's how she did it. She was very much an activist as Lucinda said.

Questioner:

Thank you. That's what I was inquiring about. Thank you so much.

Leigh:

Yeah. So Diana, when we were together during the breakout groups, you had some questions that I thought were really great.

Diana:

Well, one question was, I mean, here's a person who has this extraordinary life story, right? Escaping Germany, Nazis, and then finding her way to China and then escape, being able to escape kind of what happened there and with the Japanese came. And for me, that's just amazing. Finding her way to Australia, to Scotland, do you think that there's a way in which some of these hardships or the, I don't know, difficulties that she witnessed, how that like influenced her and being with her practice or the way that she taught or anything like that? What impact do you think that that had on?



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Leigh:

I think it had a huge impact.

So the three doorways to awakening, Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not self. And Ayya Khema went through the Dukkha door because she knew Dukkha. So the Hindu practice she was doing wasn't addressing her experience of Dukkha from all the stuff that had happened earlier in her life. She goes to the first Buddhist teaching. I don't know what it was about, but Buddhism addresses Dukkha pretty early on and pretty directly and says, and yeah, we have a way to deal with that. So she went through the Dukkha doorway to her spiritual advancement, just like the Buddha did. I mean, it's pretty obvious when you read the suttas that the Buddha went through the Dukkha doorway, right? Mahamoggallana went through the not self doorway. There's Kandanya went through the impermanence doorway, so forth. But the Buddha, I mean, he's first thing he's talking about is Dukkha happens, you know, that's the first thing that's going on.

So yeah, Ayya Khema followed the Buddha through the Dukkha doorway because she had experienced quite intense Dukkha. And, you know, one of her favorite sayings was Dukkha is our best teacher, which makes total sense. If everything's going perfect, you don't change anything. You're just basically stuck where you are. It's when things are going wrong. It's like, okay, I got to find some way out of this. And you start learning new stuff. Yeah. So the hardships had a great influence on her, her quest, and her dedication to looking at what was going on. But her innate brilliance was there to share it with everyone.

I have some more questions I can ask or I don't know if you want to share the better teachings, what would you like? Go ahead and ask your other questions.

Yeah. So you talked about jhanas. And it may be worthwhile to say just a few words about like jhanas just to make sure everybody understands. And then my question is, was she like always teaching about the jhanas? Was this like the primary thing that she taught? Or is it she noteworthy because nobody else was teaching about jhanas at this time? So with or maybe it's a little bit of both or something like this.

Yeah. So the jhanas are eight altered states of consciousness that are brought on by concentration and yield even more concentration. This allows you to step stair step your way down to deeper and deeper levels of concentration. With a supremely concentrated mind, whatever insight practice you do in the last half of that sitting is going to go much more efficiently. Just like if you want to cut something with a knife, it helps to sharpen it up. Yeah, same thing for your mind. Sharpen your mind up by getting concentrated.

When I first sat with her in 1985, she did not mention the jhanas in the public talks, so forth. She mentioned them once. She said she was surprised at how many of the women that came to Nun's Island in Sri Lanka could get into the jhanas. That gave me the impression of whatever these jhanas are, they're difficult to get into, but I had no idea. Okay. And then in I guess my first interview with her, I was I couldn't follow my breath. That was too boring, but I could do the walking meditation. And I asked, could I just do walking meditation? She said, no, it won't give you enough concentration to get into the jhanas. Okay, so the jhanas were something that was hard to get to and you need a concentration. That's all I knew from that. And there was nothing else about them at all in the whole retreat.

Five years later when I reconnected with her, she was giving dharma talks on the jhanas as part of the retreat. So early, if someone came to an interview and they had access concentration, enough concentration to be able to access the first jhana, she would then start teaching them



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the jhanas in the interviews. But she wasn't publicly teaching them. By the time five years later, she was publicly teaching them. And that's what she became known for because the jhanas are so, I don't know, whatever they, whatever gets projected on them. But I would say that she was a dharma teacher, not a jhana teacher. She taught the dharma as found in the suttas. As I said, she would take a sutta and really go into the depths of what it meant.

And on my website, I have a page that links directly to all of these dharma talks that are available on Dharma Seed. I'll stick that in the chat as well. And at the top of that page, there's some of the talks that are in bold. And those would be the ones I would recommend you start with if you really want to, you know, explore what Ayya Khema was teaching. And the retreat that I mentioned, the Samāññaphala Sutta talking about the gradual training that had such an impact on me, yeah, that's one that she taught in July of 1991. And there's like 28, 30 talks from that sutta, from that course.

Diana:

And you talked a little bit about her books. And I wonder if you could say, well, I also know that you just edited and published, right, maybe a year or two ago, about her loving kindness teachings. Is that right? So she did loving kindness and jhanas. And I don't know, I kind of like this idea. There's this woman, she's pretty diminutive, right? I think you said she's like 4'11", right? 4'11", yes. But just this powerhouse, right? This authority. I don't know, I kind of like this, the jhanas that have this, you know, there's a certain power maybe associated with them. And this loving kindness, and these books or something like this. Do you want to say about, I don't know, this, the warmth and the strength and something like that?

So, you know, I'm over six feet tall. And yet I thought of Ayya Khema as taller than me. Because, okay, I'm sitting on a cushion at that time I could, and she's sitting on a little raised platform. So yeah, I'm looking slightly up to her. But she projected as someone over six feet tall, that was, that was the aura that came off of her. She wasn't a tiny person. She was much bigger than she physically appeared. And she was, stern, and she was the authority. And she was very loving. She has these brilliant, loving kindness, guided meditations, that are visualizations. Visualize a flower garden in your heart. Now take the flowers and give them out to everybody you know. I mean, that, that's, she takes 10 minutes to go through with all the categories and everything. Beautiful stuff. Again, this is, this is stuff on my website. I can give you the link to those as well. But even better, she did three evening talks on the 15 qualities at the beginning of the metta sutta, that you are to cultivate on the spiritual path. So that you can do your metta practice correctly. And so if you read the metta sutta, this is what should be done by one who's skilled in goodness, and who seeks the path of peace. Let them be able, upright, etc. in the 15 qualities. And so one of her students asked me, if I transcribe those talks, will you convert it into a book? So I took the transcriptions of those talks, and another talk that she'd given on metta, and put that all into a book. And it's a beautiful book on metta. It's, it's, yeah, you want to know about metta from the suttas? Yeah, go read that book, because that's where Ayya Khema is coming from, is from the suttas.

So yeah, she was very stern, and she was very loving, you know, it was both at the same time.

Diana:

So Leigh, I feel by this, like, what a beautiful way to kind of honor your teacher is to help publish a book, you know, some of their teachings. It's that, I don't know, just a, seems like a beautiful gesture and making her teachings available to even more people.

So thank you, Leigh. Thank you for doing that.



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Leigh:

Yeah, right. So I think we've run out of time.

Diana:

Yeah. I don't know, I just feel excited. I remember when I first heard about Ayya Khema, I think it was through one of her books and being really touched by it. So I'm so happy, Leigh, that you agreed to be here and talk about her that with your firsthand experience. It's just really great. Really great. I appreciate it so much.

Leigh:

Thank you so much for inviting me. I love reminiscing about this person that so changed my life. You know, she was amazing. Read her autobiography and read any of her other books. There's a ton of them.

Diana:

Do you want to say again, the title of her autobiography?

Leigh:

I give you my life.

Diana:

Nice. Nice. I give you my life. Beautiful.

Yeah. Okay, so we'll have one more class next week. We'll talk about a third woman. And until then, I don't know, may you be safe. May you be well. May you take care of yourself, take care of each other. And we'll see you next week.