

After Enlightenment? Love Deeply & Act Effectively ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Speaking of motivation, why do this practice, if someone asks you?

00:00:15 If you had to summarize and sort of like simplify, if you had to just say one thing, why do this

00:00:25 practice? I would say so as to be of optimal service to others, if I had to just say one thing.

00:00:37 There is this series of pictures from China, but it's also found in Japan, Korea, Vietnam,

00:00:52 called the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures. The first YouTube that we ever put up was a talk that

00:01:01 I gave on the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures here, God only knows how long ago, maybe Steph knows.

00:01:09 I can look it up.

00:01:11 My teachers used them. It's a metaphor that sort of lost probably North Americans, but

00:01:24 anyone from Asia that grew up, particularly the southern parts of Asia, would know what

00:01:32 the metaphor was. Young boys go off into the forest and they look for a young water buffalo.

00:01:44 It said ox, but it's actually a water buffalo. They have these very big horns. They find

00:01:51 a juvenile water buffalo and they catch it and they make a relationship with it and tame

00:02:03 it. It's a lifelong relationship. Then as the boy grows up, often they're peasants,

00:02:13 so they're going to be a farmer and the ox grows up and the ox is used for tilling the

00:02:21 fields and also to ride on into town or for pulling carts and things like that. It's a

00:02:33 metaphor for the process of enlightenment. It starts out that you're completely clueless.

00:02:47 You're just this kid wandering around without a clue, which is where everyone starts pretty

00:02:59 much. Then you get a clue. The clue is you see the footprints of the ox. You haven't

00:03:11 seen the ox, but there's an indirect indication that this critter exists. That would be maybe

00:03:21 you read a book or you heard a dharma talk or maybe something in your life sort of told

00:03:28 you that there's more to life than what most people think there is in terms of what's possible.

00:03:38 So you see the footprints. Then it builds on that. You follow the footprints until you

00:03:47 see the tail. All of you have reached the point where you've seen the tail. If you had

00:03:56 a good meditation, and we've all had good meditations, right? That's sort of seeing

00:04:04 the tail. It's not really the same as seeing the ox, though. That's a little different.

00:04:13 Then you see just sort of the rear end of the ox, but you are seeing the ox. Those are

00:04:24 those glimpses that many of you have had of, oh, it's not a stream entry, but it's sort

00:04:34 of like in that direction, but it evaporates. Now you've actually seen the ox, at least

00:04:44 part of it. Then there is seeing the whole ox, and it's like there for you. Now that

00:04:55 could happen suddenly. Often that happens rather gradually over a period of many years.

00:05:03 So that's really wonderful. So the ox represents the nature of nature, the nature of consciousness.

00:05:13 There's a word in East Asian languages, in Mandarin Chinese, it's shin. In Japanese,

00:05:20 it's almost identical, shin, without a tone. Korean is shim. Vietnamese is tam, which sounds

00:05:29 more like the Cantonese sam, as in dim sum, actually, which means to warm your heart or

00:05:36 touch your heart, literally. So it means heart, but it also means consciousness, sensory experience,

00:05:51 motor experience, broadly, translates cheetah in Sanskrit. So this is the shin-yo. This

00:06:00 is the ox that represents the nature of consciousness, aka sensory and motor experience. So now you've

00:06:13 seen the ox, you've seen the nature of consciousness, but you're not done by any means. In fact,

00:06:26 you've just begun the challenge. As wonderful as it is to have actually seen the nature

00:06:33 of consciousness, which is sometimes called the Buddha nature, or the activity of the

00:06:46 Dharmakaya, the body of the absolute, but it could also be called the activity of impermanence,
00:06:57 aka expansion and contraction. That's the paradigm that I like to use. So once you've
00:07:05 seen it, good, but now you've got to get on it. You've got to rope it, and then you've
00:07:12 got to learn to ride it. And that's very challenging because that ox can buck very intensely. In
00:07:23 other words, stuff happens in your life, in the world, and the ability to stay on that
00:07:34 ox, no matter how intensely it bucks, is a long, long training. But at some point, you
00:07:48 can stay on. And then you ride it home. It just carries you home. Now, that takes you
00:08:05 to the eighth of the pictures. So there's an oral tradition, not a written tradition,
00:08:18 but an oral tradition in Soto Zen. And the only reason I know about it is that a Soto
00:08:26 Zen master told me. So on the internet, you can see one of my YouTubes where I actually
00:08:43 do something that most people in the Buddhist world don't do. I actually describe the moment
00:08:51 that I saw the whole ox. But there's a tradition in Zen that you're supposed to go to a senior
00:09:03 master and sort of describe the experience you've had and then see what they have to
00:09:16 say about it. So I was in the US at that time, so I wasn't in contact with my teachers in
00:09:23 Japan. And the only person that I actually personally knew that was like a Zen master
00:09:37 of great stature and great seniority relative to me at the time was Mayuzumi Roshi. Some
00:09:45 of you may have heard of him. His lineage is very prominent in US Buddhism, Zen at this
00:09:53 point. So he was the only Roshi that I knew. But I didn't know him very well. I talked
00:10:03 occasionally because I was living in the Buddhist ghetto, what we used to call the Buddhist
00:10:09 ghetto, is in Koreatown. It's like where New Hampshire and Vermont and Olympic, that area
00:10:18 there. A lot of Buddhist centers. There was a Korean center, Talma Sa, where Sun Tzu-Nim

00:10:26 was, Sun Tzu-Nim, Master Sung San. There was Zen Center of LA where Mayuzumi Roshi was.

00:10:33 There was the International Buddhist Meditation Center where I was living. So Zen Center of

00:10:42 LA was sort of down the street and over the years, you know, we've done things together.

00:10:47 But I didn't really know Mayuzumi Roshi very well. But he was the only person that I could

00:10:53 think to go to. I had a bit of trepidation because I didn't really know him that well

00:11:06 and I'm going to like talk about this thing. You know, a lot of times some of those Zen

00:11:14 masters are sort of ferocious. I mean, I knew what I experienced. I wasn't really nervous

00:11:25 about that, but I thought there's a pretty good probability, you know, the general style

00:11:31 in Zen is no matter what it is, you're wrong. That is a general style. That may or may not

00:11:42 be the best pedagogical approach. You'll notice that is not the approach I use, sort

00:11:50 of the opposite of that. But I had come to expect, you know, whatever it is, you're wrong.

00:11:59 So I was fully expecting him to say, you're full of shit, kid, get out of here. But I

00:12:08 don't think it would have bothered me a lot, but it would have been a little embarrassing.

00:12:14 But he did not say that at all. He said the very opposite of that. So yeah, that's it.

00:12:22 But you're just starting. And that was a long, that was decades ago. And he was right, just

00:12:29 starting. So because you see the asuna, you got to get on it and then all this stuff is

00:12:35 going to happen and you got to stay on it. So I asked him, is it okay to tell people?

00:12:50 And he said, well, if you think that it will help inspire people, yeah, you can actually

00:12:59 tell people. And he told me about the oral transmission in the Soto Zen school about

00:13:17 the oxforning pictures, as we were talking about that as a metaphor. So he said that

00:13:25 in this oral tradition, which I don't know if it's written down anywhere, but I know

00:13:30 I heard it directly from him. The last three pictures are not actually stages. The path
00:13:41 ends at eight, wait, seven, eight, nine, ten, yeah, at seven. So what is eight, nine, and
00:13:55 ten? So eight is just a blank page with absolutely nothing on it. Nine is a picture of trees
00:14:03 and mountains, just like ordinary stuff, the natural world. And ten is a picture of this
00:14:14 sort of Santa Claus-like guy named Hotei in Japanese, walking into the marketplace with
00:14:31 a bag full of goodies and just passing them out to people. And the caption in Chinese
00:14:39 says entering the marketplace with hand outstretched, four characters. And he said that those last
00:14:54 three represent the tai so yu, that's Japanese, ti shan, yong in Mandarin Chinese. They represent
00:15:06 the substance, the appearance, and the ultimate use of enlightenment. So the substance is
00:15:18 the blank page, the appearance is everything, and the ultimate use, the ultimate motivation,
00:15:27 why we do this in the end, is to be a sort of approachable ordinary person who has this
00:15:40 secret bag of goodies that you can pass out to anyone who realizes what you have. And
00:15:53 you're in the marketplace. Well, let me just say this, the word for marketplace in Persian,
00:16:08 you know the word. It's bazaar, which is also where our word bazaar comes from. So in many
00:16:16 parts of the world, of the pre-modern world, the marketplace is pretty wild. It's like
00:16:26 all of life is just sort of hanging out there. So you're walking into the bazaar, the bizarreness
00:16:36 of the world, completely looking like you belong there, and anyone can approach you
00:16:47 and you have these goodies to give out. So that is the yu, or the yu in Japanese, which
00:16:53 means the purpose, the goal, the ultimate activity. Why you did all the other things,
00:17:02 why you did all that work with the ox, is so that you could be of significant service
00:17:11 to the world. And my first teacher emphasized this a lot. He was a tea master, and when

00:17:21 I would go to talk about practice, I'd go to his house. Now when you think of a house,
00:17:29 you're thinking of an American house, okay? You've got to think of a Japanese house, which
00:17:33 is like about one-tenth the size of an American house. So it was just a couple little rooms,
00:17:44 so I was, we didn't be in this room, and he'd make tea for me. And he'd always point out
00:17:50 that he had this picture of the Buddha on the wall, a painting, monochrome. And it wasn't
00:17:57 the usual sort of pictures of the Buddha. The Buddha is walking, and he's walking down
00:18:03 the mountain. He's leaving the monastery, so to speak, the ashram, and he's coming down
00:18:13 into the city. And he would always say, that's your image, that's the icon that I want you
00:18:24 to remember why I'm teaching you all of these things. It's called in Japanese, shussan no
00:18:30 shaka, Chushan, leaving the mountain. So if I had to sum it all up, it's to live, to serve
00:18:52 from love. So where does that come from? How does that come about for a practitioner? Because
00:19:05 I can assure you that that wasn't the kind of person I was early in life. I was early
00:19:18 in life, the very antithesis of that person. I didn't like being around people at all.
00:19:27 I just wanted to be left alone. And I was always uncomfortable around people in general.
00:19:36 And I was particularly uncomfortable around people who were uncomfortable themselves,
00:19:43 who would be going through something bad in their life or whatever. I just could not handle
00:19:52 being around that kind of thing. So what happened? Well, four things happened. I took on this
00:20:10 practice and it was really hard and I failed over and over and over and over again. Couldn't
00:20:18 concentrate, couldn't handle the retreats. First two retreats I ever did, I bailed out
00:20:27 in the middle. So I got to get the hell out of here. Probably shouldn't tell you that.
00:20:34 I'm a good role model. But it's true. I mean, halfway through, I just knew for sure that

00:20:45 the best thing that I could do to nurture my spiritual essence is get the hell out of
00:20:49 here now. And then I'd leave and it's like all the pressure was off and it's like, why
00:20:56 did I do that? You know, it happened once and you'd think you'd learn, but then it
00:21:03 happened again. The next retreat, halfway through, it's like, I'm out of here. So I
00:21:15 would say my early experiences were experiences of being miserable and of not being able to
00:21:25 implement a technique. Basically, experiences of failing with the practice. At the time,
00:21:35 my interpretation was, of course, I can't do this and I'm no good at this. I'm a failure.
00:21:44 I'm a screw up. At the time, that was the impression. It was only years later, years
00:21:55 later, looking back, that I realized that those initial experiences of misery and frustration
00:22:08 were hugely important for the big picture of my growth. Hugely important. I did not
00:22:19 know it at the time, but the seeds of compassion were being planted. Because the first noble
00:22:37 truth of Buddhism, the truth of suffering, was so much in my face that it left this impression
00:22:56 regarding the importance of not suffering. So that I would say that one of the important
00:23:15 factors for me personally in changing, becoming a very different kind of person, was failing
00:23:25 with this practice and finding this practice difficult and just being miserable. It was
00:23:33 Japan, it was zero tolerance policy. We tell you the first day, it's okay to move after
00:23:43 the bell. Well, not in Zen, not in Japan. You move a muscle and they yell at you or
00:23:52 hit you. It would be like in the morning, I can still remember, even though this is
00:23:59 almost 50 years ago, I can still remember sitting there and it's like cold and my nose
00:24:10 is running, but you can't move and you definitely cannot sniffle. It's like this
00:24:22 festoons of snot just dripping down, like moistening my clothes and I'm sitting there

00:24:32 with this mudra and I'm just miserable. But in retrospect, I realize I was growing

00:24:45 and changing in really important ways, just didn't realize it at the time. So I would

00:24:55 say that one of the main factors that leads one to the ultimate goal of this practice

00:25:06 is the difficulty that we experience early on with this practice. Okay, what other factors?

00:25:20 Well I mentioned my teacher. I was indoctrinated in the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. I

00:25:32 was told as a concept, in the end this is why you do it. I think that that indoctrination

00:25:43 was a good thing. I'm glad I was told. And guess what? Now you've been told. So I hope

00:25:59 you will accept that point of view. So another reason was, well, people told me and I believe

00:26:09 them. That's the Bodhisattva spirit. It's Mahayana. So that's a factor, just playing

00:26:18 up indoctrination in a certain philosophy about practice. What else? Role models. I

00:26:33 saw the same pattern over and over and over again. Different countries, teachers of different

00:26:42 race. But it was always the same pattern, which is years of intense practice. And then

00:26:54 they're just in the office all day, available to the world. The first time I saw that pattern

00:27:03 was with someone that some of you know. She's passed away, but her name was Nicola Geiger.

00:27:11 How many of you remember Nicola? Well, that's quite a few. Yeah, that was quite a while

00:27:15 ago. So how can I put it? If you saw the movie Schindler's List, well, that's what her

00:27:31 world at the age of 20 was. But not because she was Jewish, actually. She was the opposite.

00:27:39 She was from a German aristocratic family. When she was very little, she joined the Deutsche

00:27:52 Mädchenbund, the Hitler Youth for the girls, the women, the girls. Because she's just a

00:28:01 little girl. She doesn't know any better. It's like all earth and Volksgeist and seemed

00:28:10 very appealing. But then when she grew up, she realized the evil of the Nazis. She was

00:28:18 part of this group that there was actually, there was the French resistance. That's called

00:28:32 the self arising. Okay. I need to see you fully manifest. Okay. That's pretty good.

00:28:49 I didn't mean to humiliate itself. I mean, I'm so happy that everyone is paying attention.

00:28:56 See, now she passed her koan. Say what? I turned off the recording, so I want to put

00:29:07 the recording back on. Okay. That was good. You passed the koan. Okay. Okay. We'll just

00:29:19 wait. I want to see if you can really pass the koan. Everybody watch Betsy, you fuck.

00:29:37 Very intrusive device. There we go. I'm so proud of you. So from the sublime to the ridiculous

00:30:00 and now back to the sublime. So yeah, there was the, you know, about the French resistance

00:30:10 and whatever, but there were actually people in Germany that were fighting the Nazis secretly

00:30:17 when they were in full power during World War II and she was part of that group. They

00:30:25 made a movie about them called The White Rose and if you see what happens in that movie,

00:30:31 well that's what happened to her and her friends. So just horrible, horrible, horrible. But

00:30:41 fortunately she had been taught how to meditate by her father from the time she could crawl.

00:30:53 They were associated with the writer Hermann Hesse and you may know the League of Journeymen

00:31:01 to the East. There's this classic book called The Journey to the East. This is oral history.

00:31:08 I haven't confirmed it, but apparently that actually existed and Nikola's father was part

00:31:15 of it and they were Christian, but they were Buddhist influenced during the Weimar Republic

00:31:22 between the wars in Germany. Anyway, so she had been taught how to meditate, which is

00:31:30 the only reason that she was able to not be completely destroyed by the things that happened.

00:31:45 So when I met her, the way I met her is I'd been a Zen monk in Kyoto and you go on begging

00:31:54 rounds, I mentioned about that. So there are these rules, very strict rules. You can't

00:32:05 go places where you know you're going to get good Dana. You have to go evenly to all places.

00:32:14 So you can't like, you know, try to farm the places where it's known that you get good

00:32:21 Dana, but still all the Zen monks in Kyoto knew where the good Dana was, even though

00:32:28 you weren't allowed because the roots are set. So you have to follow a set route. But

00:32:34 if on that particular day, your route takes you by one of the good Dana locations, well,

00:32:41 that's good. Why is that good? Well, you don't keep that money. Okay. That goes into a common

00:32:46 pot. But the good thing about scoring with good Dana is that you're only allowed to collect

00:32:55 to a certain amount. And if someone gives you a big amount, you're done with your Dana

00:33:04 rounds. So what you do is you go find a bridge someplace where no one can see you. You go

00:33:13 out in groups of three on these begging rounds. So the three people will like find some place

00:33:22 out of sight. And you know what you do? You sleep. Because you're always sleep deprived,

00:33:30 right? So good Dana means you're going to get like an hour of sleep if you get score

00:33:35 good. But you're not, like I say, you're not allowed to go seek that. But there was this

00:33:41 one house where when you would go by it, clearly a foreigner lived there because it said Nikora

00:33:50 in Kana on the front door. But a maid would come out and like give you like a big Dana

00:34:01 thing. Okay. And so all the monks knew Nikora. So I always thought it was a Russian man because

00:34:09 of the name, you know, Nikolai, it's a common. So anyway, I get this letter that signed Nikola.

00:34:21 And it says, this is when I'm back at Mount Koya, and it says, I'm the director of Friends

00:34:27 World College East Asian campus, which is a Quaker International University. And I heard

00:34:40 that you're an American and that you're at Mount Koya. Our students don't speak Japanese.

00:34:49 So would you be willing to show them around Mount Koya and give them a little lecture

00:34:56 on Buddhism in English? Because it's international. So I thought, oh, this must be that Nikola.

00:35:06 So I said, yeah, come on up. And I was, like I say, expecting a Russian man. Instead, it

00:35:13 was this German housefrow with this really strong accent. And so it was like, okay. And

00:35:27 I showed the students around. And she says, if you're ever in the city of Kyoto, come

00:35:35 visit me. Here's my address. So a few months go by. Sure enough, I have some business in

00:35:41 Kyoto, which as you probably know, is the old capital of Japan. And it's just a few

00:35:46 hour drive from Mount Koya. So I go to her house and she says, oh, come up. For some

00:35:58 reason, she decided to call me Stefan. Something told her that's my name. So, Stefan, come

00:36:19 on up. And so she says, you know why I wanted you to come visit me? And I said, no. And

00:36:35 then she proceeded to tell me exactly where I was at with my meditation practice and what

00:36:41 I needed to be doing. And it turns out that she was friends with all the great Zen masters

00:36:52 in the city of Kyoto. And it was like she had this incredible background. Of course,

00:36:59 I couldn't see it. She just looked like an ordinary person. But she could see who I was.

00:37:06 And the main thing that she said is, I mean, without talking to me at all, just watching

00:37:13 me, it's like she said, yes, I can see that you're able to sort of be in a meditative

00:37:21 state, which is pretty good. But you have to learn how to serve people and you have

00:37:27 to learn how to be comfortable around people. It's like, well, this is surprising that

00:37:38 she could sort of know that. So I observed her and I had a role model. I could see what

00:37:51 it was. This is the result of a lifetime of practice. This is the result of having stayed

00:38:02 on the ox while you're watching your friends being guillotined. This is the result of having

00:38:09 stayed on the ox while Russian troops are raping you. This is the result of staying

00:38:16 on the ox when you're being interrogated by the SS and you're 20 years old.
What's
00:38:26 the result of having done that? Is, oh, just here and available to help
people through
00:38:37 their stuff. And I saw the entire spectrum of Japanese society walking across
her, crossing
00:38:52 her threshold over a period of a number of years. Everything from the highest
to the
00:38:59 lowest. From the great masters of Zen to Yakuza, which if you don't know it,
well, I'm
00:39:09 sure you do know what that is. It's bad news Japanese criminals, right? But
she could
00:39:17 relate to them. Left-wing terrorists, international terrorists, I couldn't
believe it. I mean,
00:39:29 like criminal terrorists would come and she had something to give them. And
everything
00:39:45 in between. Just, okay, this is a person that can relate to everyone. That's
comfortable
00:39:53 around sinners and saints equally. That's a role model. And then later on, I
lived in
00:40:04 a Chinese monastery, the Chinese master, same thing. Exactly the same thing.
And over and
00:40:12 over again, I saw this pattern. This is where it ends up. You're basically in
the marketplace.
00:40:21 Not in the sense of selling your wares, but in the sense of just available.
After I had
00:40:28 completed my hundred days of isolation, my best friend was a Tendai monk. So
there's
00:40:40 Shingon and there's Tendai. Those are the two schools that were dominant in
Japan during
00:40:46 the Heian period. Heian is when Kyoto was the capital. Before Zen, before
Pure Land
00:40:54 and so forth, the two schools were Tendai and Shingon. And each was on a
different mountain.
00:41:02 Shingon is on Mount Koya and Tendai is on Mount Hiei. Mount Hiei is right
next to the
00:41:09 city of Kyoto. So my best friend, Kendai-san, was a Tendai monk from Osaka
and he was my
00:41:23 age. So he said, now that you've completed the hundred days of training, and
I thought
00:41:32 I was hot stuff after a hundred days. No Westerner had ever done that
particular practice.

00:41:38 So he said, now that you've done that, I think you can meet my teacher. So come to

00:41:48 Mount Hiei, let's go meet my teacher. So his teacher was one of the quote marathon

00:41:56 monks of Mount Hiei. You can actually find this on the internet. I think they even have

00:42:03 YouTubes of it. There's a documentary. A documentary. Is it on the internet? It's

00:42:09 on YouTube. It's on YouTube. I think it's called the Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei.

00:42:14 But the Japanese don't call them marathon monks. That's a Western term. The Japanese

00:42:21 call them Dai-gyo-ma-ajari. Ajari is acharya. It means, it's from the Sanskrit, it means

00:42:28 a teacher. It's the same root as acharn in Thailand. So acharya is a teacher, master.

00:42:37 Dai-gyo-ma means someone who has completed the great practice. And it is a great practice.

00:42:45 Like I say, I thought I was hot stuff after a hundred days in isolation. This is 12 years

00:42:52 in isolation. And during that 12 years you do a few things that you would not think any

00:42:59 human being could do. Like sit for nine days without food or water or sleep. A couple times

00:43:10 actually. So I actually am sitting down having a meal with someone who's done that and just

00:43:23 sort of shooting the breeze. And talking about practice of course, because that was very

00:43:31 salient for me at the time. And he's telling me about the traditions of this 12 year practice

00:43:39 on Mount Hiei. So you wouldn't think a person could do it, but people do. And in addition

00:43:56 to like the nine day sits, they do these hundred day walks up and down Mount Hiei. So they

00:44:10 walk down the mountain into the city of Kyoto, chant mantras and prayers at every shrine

00:44:18 and temple, major one in the city, then come back up the mountain. It's done in winter.

00:44:27 That walk takes about 20 hours. And they do a hundred of those walks in a row. So that

00:44:41 leaves four hours for everything else. Rest, eating, bathing. You wouldn't think a person,

00:44:53 that's where the term marathon comes from. You wouldn't think you could survive that,

00:44:58 but people do. But you know, my thing is I want to figure out how to work smart so that

00:45:11 it's not a, for you folks, it's not a brute force algorithm. Okay. But you work smart

00:45:19 so you can get similar effects without having to go through the brutality and intensity

00:45:27 of the old school practice. And it is my dream to figure out how to do that because the average

00:45:35 person is not going to ever take on something like this. So in any event, when each day

00:45:52 of this 12 years, they carry with them a tanto. Tanto is like a short samurai sword. And a rope.

00:46:11 Now, it's a symbolism of one of the main deities called Fudo. Fudo is F-U-D-O. You can look

00:46:25 up on the internet if you're interested. Achalanata is his name in Sanskrit. And he's sort of

00:46:32 ferocious looking and he has a rope in one hand and a sword in the other hand. So the

00:46:37 rope stands for samadhi because you sort of bind attention in a concentrated way. And

00:46:44 then the sword or the knife stands for what you think it stands for. That's the wisdom.

00:46:52 So it's like the shamatha and vipashyana, right? The rope is samadhi, it's concentrated,

00:46:58 and then the wisdom is the sword that cuts through. So they carry the attributes of this

00:47:05 bodhisattva, achala, in Sanskrit or fudo, F-U-D-O, in Japanese. But it also has another

00:47:19 meaning besides symbolic of the practice. Maybe you can guess.

00:47:29 If they fail, they have to commit suicide.

00:47:31 Yes. If they cannot complete even one day of the 12-year commitment, they take their

00:47:41 own life, either by hanging or, you know, the knife. So, okay, that's, you know, maybe

00:47:55 feeling a little weird right now, but in all honesty, that did not make me feel weird at

00:48:03 all. I got it. I got it. Once again, I'm not saying I expect anyone to practice that way

00:48:15 at all, but I got it when he explained. Because I was still a kid, and so you still ask, I

00:48:27 was just 25 years old, so you still ask embarrassing questions. I even love people like that. So

00:48:37 I asked him, would you have done it? Would you have actually killed yourself if you couldn't

00:48:43 make one day of it? And he said, yeah. And he said, I'll tell you why. Because the only

00:48:59 way that we've been able to do this for the last thousand years, and that's how long they've

00:49:05 been doing it, on that mountain, the only reason we've been able to keep this up for

00:49:11 thousand years, is everyone that does this has made that commitment. And so that, that

00:49:23 resolve is what allows us to do this. And my sense of gratitude towards this practice

00:49:36 is so great that I'm willing to take my own life in order to maintain this tradition,

00:49:45 to make it possible for future generations to do this. So yeah, it's extreme, and yeah,

00:49:53 you don't have to, you know, have the Japanese, you know, suicide pilot, do or die mentality

00:50:06 to get enlightened. But I got it. It did not weird me out at all. It just made sense. That's

00:50:15 how grateful you are. That's how important it is. So what did he do all day? I got to

00:50:27 observe him. Same thing, just like all the other people. He's just there. And people

00:50:33 from the village come and people from the city of Kyoto come, and they've got this problem

00:50:39 and they've got that problem, and they know what he's been through. In the old days in

00:50:47 Japan, they didn't have psychotherapists. People had problems. Where did they go? They

00:50:52 went to people like him. And he's got something to give. So one has these role models. One

00:51:05 is indoctrinated into a certain philosophy of practice. One is miserable at the beginning

00:51:15 a lot. So these are factors that lead to it being quite natural to see the, if you had

00:51:32 to just say one thing that this practice is about, it's becoming the person that is approachable,

00:51:40 is just there, and has something deep and important to give to a wide spectrum of human

00:51:51 beings, in fact the whole spectrum of human beings. Then there's one other factor, and

00:51:58 it's also very important. So it's sort of the flip side of failure. The flip side of

00:52:07 failure is success. So at some point you see the ox. It might happen suddenly, but it's

00:52:17 probably going to just sort of sneak up on you as time goes on. You see the source, and

00:52:26 when you see the source, your source, you see everyone's source. And when you finally

00:52:40 are able to stay on the ox 24-7, just as before you took on the practice, you could not escape

00:52:55 from fundamental alienation. Without this practice, you can't escape from fundamental

00:53:03 alienation. Everyone has it, unless something dramatic happens. Fundamental alienation is

00:53:12 that rock-solid sense that there is a, that your identity ends with your skin, that there

00:53:19 is a tangible barrier between inside and outside. Us versus them, I versus it. It's constantly

00:53:29 present in all perceptions. And there's just no escape from it, and everybody assumes it's

00:53:36 the nature of reality. But after you've ridden on that ox for a while, you cannot escape

00:53:44 the opposite of that. You can't escape it. It's in your face 24-7. Everything you see

00:53:55 or hear or touch is being loved into existence right in front of you by this activity of

00:54:08 the source, this formless womb. And that's the first thing you perceive. Each time you

00:54:17 turn your head or reach out, touch the world, the first thing you perceive before anything

00:54:25 else, amor primero, is this cosmic love. And it's just natural to want to be of service

00:54:47 to this larger identity. It's just natural. And it's very, very empowering and comforting

00:55:12 because just like anyone else, you judge. You like this one, you don't like that one.

00:55:23 You find this person who's empowered to be wonderful or this person who's empowered

00:55:32 to be scary and horrible, just like anybody else. But that comes a moment later.

00:55:44 That's a moment later. And therefore, it's just in a very different context.
So therein lies

00:56:06 the secret to being of use to this world. Love deeply. That's what I mean by
love deeply.

00:56:22 Act effectively.