

Zen Ox-Herding Pics - Part 3 of 3 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 In the end, why do we do this? In the beginning, we might do it out of curiosity, out of desperation,
00:00:17 out of wanting to get high in some way. Who knows? Maybe relief of suffering, maybe find
00:00:25 out who we really are. These all have their validity. So in the beginning, there could
00:00:31 be many causes for us to take on this practice. But the final cause, the arete, when you get
00:00:43 right down to it, what is it going to be about? This is my favorite and the last.
00:00:53 Essentially, the Chinese version of Santa Claus. Roly-poly guy, the bag full of goodies,
00:01:05 going into the marketplace, handing them out to anyone who wants to take them. Very ordinary,
00:01:14 okay? The kind of person you wouldn't hesitate to talk to, the kind of person you might not
00:01:21 think even was in any way special, unless you knew what to look for.
00:01:34 This is actually a historical character, someone that existed in Chinese history. He was known
00:01:46 as the cloth bag monk. That's essentially what he was, a bag man, a street person. In
00:01:57 the capital of China, during the Tang Dynasty in Chang'an, there was this well-known street
00:02:04 person that was a kind of Buddhist monk. But all he did was play with children all day
00:02:15 and just hang out in the marketplace and schmooze with people. Everybody knew him and he was
00:02:21 just sort of this friendly guy, easy to get along with. You'd never really think there
00:02:27 was anything all that special. He was always just sort of around for people, particularly
00:02:34 like to give out gifts to children, things like that. At night he used to sleep in the
00:02:45 snow. That should have been a giveaway right there, that there was something a little unusual
00:02:50 about his physiology that may have been the result of something.
00:02:57 He was known to the citizens of Chang'an. They called him the bu dai he shang. Bu means
00:03:03 cloth, dai means bag, and shang means a monk, the cloth bag monk, because he carried around
00:03:11 these gifts to give to people. The emperor of China at that time was a Buddhist and a
00:03:18 meditator who had his own imperial preceptor, his own sort of master, right, who would have
00:03:27 been like the most authoritative monk in China at the time. They called that the guo shi,
00:03:35 that's the teacher of the emperor. So one morning the guo shi said, your majesty, I
00:03:50 don't know if you're aware or not, but the most enlightened subject in your kingdom died
00:04:01 this morning. The emperor said, who? The imperial master said, the cloth bag monk. The emperor
00:04:13 couldn't believe it, because it was like, that was the most enlightened person in my
00:04:20 kingdom? Because everybody just took him for granted.
00:04:26 So this becomes a sort of ideal for what an enlightened person should be like. Very ordinary,
00:04:40 very easily approachable, just they're there for you, nothing all that special. In the
00:04:49 Indic formulation, an enlightened being is a god, is an archetype. But in the Chinese
00:05:00 formulation the enlightened being is a sort of pudgy, easily approached guy hanging out
00:05:14 in the streets, available to people, but with these gifts to give. So this is called, this
00:05:25 last picture is called, entering the marketplace with hand outstretched. We may start this
00:05:35 path for various reasons, but if we stay on it, in the end, this is where we end up. We
00:05:46 end up with what's called the Dao Xin in Chinese, the Bodhicitta, the intense call to be of

00:05:58 service to our fellow beings in one way or another. It's an automatic consequence of
00:06:08 having understood the nature of consciousness, the nature of mind, which is the nature of
00:06:18 nature, the nature of the source. It's an automatic consequence of knowing that your
00:06:28 source is everyone's source, but knowing that for real, not in a sort of feel-good belief
00:06:36 kind of way, but in a very tangible way, moment by moment, really inescapable in your moment
00:06:45 by moment perceptions of things. We're going to be going into the marketplace when we leave
00:06:54 here, metaphorically. We have a bag full of goodies, and we can go with hand outstretched.
00:07:06 Not that we're going to lay any trips on anybody, but you have a gift to give, the gift of the
00:07:15 effects of your practice. You may never speak about it explicitly, but your pores will.
00:07:26 The pores of your skin, that's teaching. That's going into the marketplace, giving a gift
00:07:32 to people. If somebody asks you what you did, and you're capable of giving a reasonable,
00:07:39 logical, coherent description of this practice, you're giving a gift to someone. Some of you
00:07:50 already, and many of you eventually, will discover that you'll end up actually teaching
00:07:59 maybe one or two people, or maybe more people. You may have heard the cliché, when the students
00:08:09 ready the teacher appears. Well, I don't know about that, but I can definitely tell you
00:08:17 that when the teacher's ready, the students appear. You may notice that happening to you.
00:08:25 Do not be alarmed, and understand that in the end, this is the final goal of this practice.