

Being a Generalized Mystic ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 How did you get into Buddhism?

00:00:06 Okay, so, let's see here.

00:00:15 How I went from being a monk to a non-Buddhist,

00:00:24 and how I worked through my various issues on the cushion.

00:00:28 Who gave me this question?

00:00:32 Don't be embarrassed.

00:00:34 At which issues were you thinking of?

00:00:37 That could be several Dharma talks.

00:00:41 I think you were a pig.

00:00:44 A pig one.

00:00:46 Well, now that's interesting.

00:00:48 We have these teachers' meetings,

00:00:53 where the Western Buddhist teachers,

00:00:55 meaning the people teaching Buddhism in the West,

00:00:59 nothing to do with your ethnic origin,

00:01:02 the so-called Western Buddhist teachers,

00:01:06 we have these periodic meetings.

00:01:09 Next one is going to be in two years, in 2015.

00:01:15 And in the past it's been 200, 250,

00:01:21 it's probably going to be twice as big next time.

00:01:23 It's awesome.

00:01:25 These are all full-time teachers.

00:01:29 So, we had this meeting, as we do from time to time,

00:01:38 and they took us through an interesting process

00:01:44 called crossing the line.

00:01:48 Anybody here know what this is?

00:01:50 I see only like two or three people.

00:01:55 That's interesting.

00:01:57 I had never seen it.

00:01:59 I don't know what is its origin.

00:02:01 I mean, I don't know.

00:02:04 What would you even call it?

00:02:06 It's an empathy builder?

00:02:10 So, what they do is,

00:02:13 you've got this huge group of people,

00:02:15 and they put a line in the middle of the room.

00:02:22 And then everybody is on one side of the room.

00:02:28 And then they call out different ways
00:02:37 that people could be characterized.
00:02:39 In fact, the whole range of things.
00:02:49 Now, this is, I should say,
00:02:53 done with this huge confidentiality agreement thing.
00:03:01 Everybody knows that nothing is going to be revealed.
00:03:09 It's like, never to leave this room.
00:03:12 And then people are safe to reveal who they really are
00:03:19 within that group,
00:03:21 assuming they feel they're safe enough to do that.
00:03:24 And people start doing that.
00:03:28 And so it's everything.
00:03:29 It's how you think of yourself ethnically.
00:03:37 It's how you think about yourself sexually.
00:03:41 It's... you name it.
00:03:46 Have you ever been arrested?
00:03:49 I was one of the few that crossed the line.
00:03:53 There weren't many of the Buddhist teachers
00:03:57 that had actually been arrested.
00:04:00 I thought that was sort of cool.
00:04:03 Let's see.
00:04:13 Well, you know, are you of Jewish origin?
00:04:19 Well, I'm sarcastic.
00:04:20 And me, Jack, and Joseph all ended up, of course,
00:04:30 we just crossed at the same place,
00:04:33 so we all said, ah, I'll just conquer Jewish teachers at this point.
00:04:38 So anyway.
00:04:41 But it was also things like,
00:04:50 who believes in reincarnation?
00:04:53 Well, not everyone crossed the line.
00:04:57 Who considers themselves a Buddhist?
00:05:03 Well, the great majority crossed the line.
00:05:08 But I didn't.
00:05:11 And I looked around and I saw a couple of other people.
00:05:16 You can probably guess who they were, okay?
00:05:20 I'm not like, no way am I going to reveal their names.
00:05:24 But if you know anything about who writes books about what,
00:05:28 you won't have too much difficulty figuring out
00:05:31 who was left back there with me.
00:05:33 Because I couldn't really say that I'm religiously a Buddhist
00:05:44 or identify myself that way.
00:05:48 Then how would I identify myself?

00:05:53 Well, actually, we went through it yesterday.

00:05:58 I'm a generalized mystic.

00:06:01 With a scientific mentality.

00:06:07 However, absolutely, and hands down,

00:06:16 the biggest influence on me is from the Buddhist tradition.

00:06:21 There's no doubt about that.

00:06:23 Why? Because I look upon the historical Buddha

00:06:26 as the first and greatest mystic

00:06:32 to attempt to have something like a scientific mentality.

00:06:36 To sort of say that, hey, mysticism doesn't have to be covered in mist.

00:06:42 That it can be logic and evidence-based.

00:06:46 I mean, he obviously wouldn't use those words.

00:06:50 I don't make puns in English, okay?

00:06:52 But you get the general idea.

00:06:56 He was scientist-like.

00:07:00 And it was not an add-on, it was core to what he did.

00:07:07 So to me, that's the model.

00:07:10 However, a Buddhist is someone that follows the Buddhist religion,

00:07:19 which has all sorts of credos and all sorts of customs.

00:07:25 And I wouldn't really put myself in that category.

00:07:34 I can think of at least three things that are pretty prevalent in Buddhism

00:07:44 that to me do not seem to be evidence-based.

00:07:50 And I've talked about that on occasion and so forth,

00:07:57 so don't need to belabor that.

00:07:59 But I would say, you know, I am certainly profoundly influenced.

00:08:06 More than any human on this planet, I'm influenced by the historical Buddha.

00:08:12 And I just think that it's the job of us to build on what he discovered.

00:08:26 So, anyway, that's...

00:08:32 But I wouldn't say I'm a non-Buddhist, okay?

00:08:37 I would just not say I'm a Buddhist.

00:08:39 I would say that...

00:08:44 Well, there was once a Sufi master who said,

00:08:51 I'm in agreement with 100 conflicting theologians.

00:08:59 I agree with every one of these 100 conflicting schools of Islamic interpretation.

00:09:06 So, I think that's how I would characterize myself.

00:09:14 I am comfortable in anybody's church.

00:09:19 I mean, really.

00:09:22 Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist.

00:09:27 It doesn't make any difference.

00:09:29 It all seems the same to me.

00:09:30 I don't see the surface, I see the depths.

00:09:35 So, anyway, there's that.