

Retreat Farewell - May 2009 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Our retreat will be ending tomorrow.

00:00:09 We came here mostly what we were doing, sadhana, which means work on ourself for ourself.

00:00:17 When we leave, we should continue our sadhana.

00:00:22 I mentioned the factors needed for success, a short-term investment to learn some terminology

00:00:33 and concepts, a short-term investment to learn one or more focusing techniques, a long-term

00:00:43 investment to apply those concepts and techniques, actually a lifelong investment to apply those

00:00:50 concepts and techniques in daily life, and the establishment of a rhythm of day-to-day

00:00:56 practice and periodic retreat.

00:01:02 So this is retreat.

00:01:05 Why do we come to retreats?

00:01:07 Several things, not just one.

00:01:10 One thing, we build up a momentum all day, every day, what we've been doing, practice

00:01:16 all our waking hours, been practicing in stillness, in motion, in life, a momentum builds up that

00:01:26 will often take us to new levels.

00:01:29 But if we didn't back it up with day-to-day practice, then those might be peak experiences.

00:01:35 But if we back it up with day-to-day practice, they tend to be plateaus from which we can

00:01:38 then grow more as a tendency.

00:01:43 So momentum is important, an important reason why people do retreats.

00:01:52 Another thing that happens at retreats is we get social network and social support from

00:01:57 the other meditators.

00:02:01 We also get an environment where it's easy to practice, relatively.

00:02:07 Of course, the name of the game is freedom, so you have to be willing to practice in environments

00:02:13 where it's not easy to practice also.

00:02:17 And then we get contact with teachers, people that can give us input into our practice.

00:02:23 We get private interviews, different kinds of contact with teachers.

00:02:28 When I said the factors that you needed, I mentioned those four things, you might have

00:02:32 thought, well, something's missing, community's missing, the teachers are missing.

00:02:37 No, that's implied in retreat.

00:02:39 For most people, the source of social support and pure support and the source of professional

00:02:46 input comes when you do retreats.

00:02:51 And then many teachers will give you a contact that you can contact them in between retreats.

00:02:58 Upon leaving the retreat, continue your sadhana.

00:03:02 The other side of this practice is seva, service.

00:03:05 We talked about that.

00:03:08 Upon leaving the retreat, service is very big because you're going to be teaching.

00:03:17 You're going to be doing a lot of teaching on leaving this retreat.

00:03:22 Maybe you're saying, wait, this is the first retreat I ever did.

00:03:24 What do you mean I'm going to be doing a lot of teaching?

00:03:26 Well, you know that I define teaching in a very broad way.

00:03:31 Anybody that changes as the result of doing this practice, that change in their life is

00:03:36 a teaching.

00:03:37 It's a sermon to the people around them.

00:03:41 If you are changing for the better as the result of this practice, then that means you

00:03:47 are teaching because you just carry that with you.

00:03:51 That's the subtle level of teaching.

00:03:54 Then there's the descriptive level of teaching.

00:03:57 Hopefully you've thought about how you could describe this practice to people.

00:04:04 And when people ask you, hey, what happened at the retreat, you can give a coherent description

00:04:08 of what it's like.

00:04:14 That's a kind of teaching.

00:04:17 So you will be teaching.

00:04:19 Some of you are moving into the more explicit role of teaching, actually, showing people

00:04:26 what to do.

00:04:27 And that's wonderful.

00:04:29 So continue your sadhana, continue your seva.

00:04:36 You know the idiom, I hope it was as good for you as it was for me?

00:04:49 You all heard this, right?

00:04:52 Well, I hope this retreat was as good for you as it was for me.

00:04:57 This was really good for me because of you, working with you, the privilege of working

00:05:05 with you, of contributing to your growth.

00:05:10 You folks did a lot of quality work here.

00:05:16 And so it was really fun and empowering and encouraging and enlivening for me to be able

00:05:25 to be part of that.

00:05:26 And it's a privilege to do this kind of work, that I get to spend time with people like

00:05:32 you.

00:05:33 A bodhisattva in Tibetan, they're sometimes called sembachambo.

00:05:40 It means a great hero or heroine of consciousness.

00:05:46 So I want to thank each and every one of you for who you are and what you're becoming and

00:05:57 for the gift that you've given me this retreat.