

PROS & CONS of DHARMA MAPS ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So, the topic was the pros and cons of Dharma maps. Maps that sort of map out, okay, here
00:00:21 is the state. I think you were mostly thinking of stages. It's like you go through these
00:00:27 stages and this is what happens and then this happens and this happens. So, there are all
00:00:34 these maps. So, what's the pros and cons in general of having these maps and what's the
00:00:42 pros and cons of this map versus that map kind of thing. I'm assuming that's...
00:00:47 The one I like is Mahasi's.
00:00:49 Yes.
00:00:50 The progress of insight.
00:00:51 And I was afraid of that because that was what I would have gone to the Wikipedia and
00:00:59 come all prepared to make comparisons and contrasts, but then again I would have missed
00:01:07 my body work. So, maybe I'll have time tomorrow. There's 16 of them, right? 16 stages, I think.
00:01:15 And I have a vague recollection, but I'm not going to pontificate based on that vague recollection.
00:01:22 I have a map in my computer.
00:01:25 Yes. I also have to think about it. Okay, but I can probably say a few things broadly
00:01:34 on this issue. Many years ago, the Kuroda Institute, which is an academic Buddhist study
00:01:44 institute associated with the Zen Center of LA, had an entire seminar where they invited
00:01:54 Buddhist scholars to present papers on stages and maps throughout the Buddhist world. And
00:02:04 I tried to find it online. I couldn't. I think it would be really cool if anybody wants to
00:02:10 see if that was ever published or is available someplace or other similar scholarly collections
00:02:21 where this issue is discussed in its full breadth and depth.
00:02:27 I would, but I've got body work with Diane.
00:02:30 Say what?
00:02:31 I've got body work with Diane.
00:02:33 I think you made the right decision. The map is not the journey.
00:02:46 So you decided to make the journey. So this is good.
00:02:52 Now, Buddhism broadly is three vehicles. And then within that, there's a gazillion other
00:02:59 divisions. It's 2,500 years and half the world and now the whole world.
00:03:09 And Buddhism is just a subset of world mysticism anyway.
00:03:13 So broadly, if we're going to talk about maps and that kind of thing, we really should frame
00:03:21 Buddhism within the larger context of world contemplative practice. So it's a huge and
00:03:30 very rich question that you bring up. So let me just start blabbering and we'll see what
00:03:38 comes up. First, I'd like to share my own experience. Well, actually not. Before we
00:03:44 do that, so three vehicles, numerous subdivisions, and that's just a subset of what's worldwide.
00:03:53 So within Buddhism, what do we have? Well, let's see. We have the ten observing pictures.
00:04:00 That's my most popular YouTube presentation, which tells you that people are really in
00:04:06 the stages and what have you. And that's used in Zen. But see, here's the deal.
00:04:13 There's different versions of the ten. There's one that has eight. So this already tells

00:04:19 us that it's not exactly constrained to exactly ten. What else is there? Well, there's the
00:04:26 one that I frequently use myself, which is the four classes of noble individuals, the
00:04:34 four Aryabhugala. These are maps for a lifetime of practice. This is really big picture stuff.
00:04:46 Sota, Apana, Sakadagami, Anagami, Araha. So that's stream enterer, once returner, non-returner,
00:04:55 and worthy, if I were to translate these into English. Over a lifetime of practice or in
00:05:03 traditional belief, over lifetimes of practice, you pass through these four stages. But then
00:05:11 there's the stages of insight, which are like 16 stages that precede stream entry, I believe.
00:05:19 So it's like, oh, it's all this fine subdivision. And then there's the four jhanas, the eight
00:05:26 jhanas, the nine jhanas, which are not exactly paths to enlightenment, but they're definitely
00:05:33 demarcations and are related. So the Chinese have their ox-herding pictures. The Tibetans
00:05:45 have their elephant-herding pictures. And there are various stages. And some of those
00:05:51 elephant-herding pictures look an awful lot like some of the versions of the ox-herding
00:05:56 pictures. And since, once again, remember that Eastern Tibet and Western China are the
00:06:03 same place, so we're not surprised that there would be interactions there, even though the
00:06:13 political concerns of those two cultures don't like to, well, they definitely both have axes
00:06:22 to grind with regards to history. And that can sort of get in the way. What else is there?
00:06:29 Well, there are the ten bodhisattva stages. And then there are Tozan's five degrees, and
00:06:41 I'm pretty sure there's a five-stage, one five-stage model that's prominent in the Kargyu
00:06:50 lineage. I could be wrong about this. You get the general idea here. There's a lot.
00:06:56 So now I'll tell you my own story. I started out not as a Buddhist practitioner, but as
00:07:07 a Buddhist scholar. And actually, I'm very glad that I had that academic background and
00:07:13 that training. And it was serious graduate-level training that involved mastering a half-dozen
00:07:22 languages of Asia and reading these things in the original languages, etc., etc. So I'm
00:07:31 glad I had that background. But in some ways, well, I remember when I was in the Zen temple
00:07:39 in Japan when I started, one of the senior monks there said, because I could really impress
00:07:49 them, I mean, I knew classical Chinese and Sanskrit. He said, someday all your learning
00:07:58 will be very useful. Someday in the distant future, when you're in a position to teach,
00:08:05 it's going to be really, really good that you know all this stuff academically. But
00:08:11 right now, it's like totally getting in the way of your practice. And he was totally right.
00:08:22 So what happened to me was I spent, I would say, at least 15 years, the first 15 years
00:08:31 of my practice, torturing myself with regards to where am I at on these maps. Have I experienced
00:08:43 this yet? And then it was actually like literally torture. It was like if I read some classic
00:08:54 thing, it's like, oh my God, there's a stage I haven't heard of even. What to say of achieved?
00:09:00 I never even heard of this one. Well, that's another one to put on the list of I'll never
00:09:05 be anywhere until I experience X, Y, and Z. And I mean, it was horrible. It was like for
00:09:13 me, because there was so much grasping around the notion of I got to get somewhere and I
00:09:20 got to get these signs and there's all of these things to do. Well, fortunately, eventually
00:09:27 I grew up and grew out of that. But that is one of the dangers of having these maps. Okay,
00:09:36 we're going to talk about pros and cons. I'm certainly going to talk about pros, but there's
00:09:41 certain cons. One of them is that you get very concerned with rating. And of course
00:09:53 that just links into the whole thing that when did it start? The sixth grade, kindergarten,
00:10:03 certainly by middle school, by high school, it's all about mate and rate, right? So it's

00:10:10 status. And so it links into all of that stuff, et cetera, et cetera. The other possible con
00:10:21 about these maps is what I was talking about, which I briefly alluded to, which is putting
00:10:35 an inordinate amount of time and energy and emotional investment in the maps or the quest,
00:10:44 the map quest, the quest for the right map. Time and energy that is therefore not devoted
00:10:53 to practice. So if you go on the internet, most Buddhist time and energy on the internet
00:11:01 is being spent in contention about who's got the right map. You don't know whether to laugh
00:11:10 or cry because there's people that are interested in making the journey are not interested by
00:11:22 and large in debating about who's got the right map by and large because there's only
00:11:35 so much time and energy. And the trap is, well, I don't want to start to make the journey
00:11:41 until I'm sure that this is the very best, right? Because I don't want to be like not
00:11:49 doing the very best. And then what happens is that years pass and people just study and
00:11:59 argue and study and argue and study and argue. So what I find useful, although I know to
00:12:09 say this is offensive and confusing perhaps, but I myself take great comfort in the notion
00:12:20 which I alluded to briefly and has already annoyed people, the notion that actually none
00:12:29 of these maps really work very well by my standards of what I would call work very well,
00:12:39 meaning that I know enough based on my own personal experience as a professional meditation
00:12:49 teacher and as a pretty good dilettante scientist, I know enough to know that we can do a lot
00:13:01 better with regards to making enlightenment available to great masses of people. By we
00:13:12 I mean humanity and I mean in the next few centuries. It will take a combination of three
00:13:24 things, deep practice, a scientific mentality, and out-of-the-box creativity. But there will
00:13:37 be people, probably dozens, maybe hundreds of people in the future that bring these three
00:13:47 things together. And it seems to me not unreasonable that they will come up with things that change
00:13:59 the course of human history, that dramatically change the course of human history. All of
00:14:06 the maps and methodologies that we now have essentially are based on one approach, which
00:14:16 is introspection. An individual looks within, discovers certain things, and creates a formulation
00:14:27 based on that. Often based in part on what they've learned from the past, usually taking
00:14:39 some parts of that, rebelling against other parts, and often creating something new that
00:14:47 wasn't there before. Some combination of accepting the past, rebelling against the past, and
00:14:56 innovation. Then a new model, a new path arises, but it's still based on an individual's introspection.
00:15:07 And it's pretty good. When I say they're all relatively ineffective, I just mean that it
00:15:22 takes a very long time. And most people are not, most human beings are just not willing
00:15:31 to put the time and energy like you and I are into this path. So what is lacking is
00:15:47 an objective view of what's going on, a view based on hard science and evidence. What is
00:15:56 also lacking is true collaborative dialogue among the masters, and among the masters and
00:16:07 their students. The great, right now the great masters, most of them are old fashioned, old
00:16:19 Asians, with whom which you cannot communicate in an open peer to peer kind of dialogue.
00:16:30 They won't do it with you as a student, it's just not on their cultural radar. And they
00:16:37 won't do it among each other either, because there's just too much at stake. So they're
00:16:45 not like scientists. In science, there could be a Nobel laureate up there, talking about
00:16:55 something, and I could be a graduate student. And I could get up and I could say you're
00:17:03 wrong because of this, this, this and this. And if I'm right, if I've got evidence to
00:17:12 back it up, then that's it. It's over. Even though I'm just a no one that no one's ever

00:17:26 heard of, and this guy's got a Nobel Prize, he was wrong. I pointed out something. That
00:17:33 kind of thing, that doesn't happen in the context of meditation teaching. But I think
00:17:41 it will as things become more modern and more Western. You start to have really frank dialoguing
00:17:51 among the masters and among the masters and their students. So the combination of turning
00:17:59 the lens of science towards it, plus really being willing to discuss things, specifically
00:18:10 to look at each other's maps and discuss in an open way, what's this, what's this.
00:18:18 No, I don't quite think it works that way, etc. etc. That will probably happen in the
00:18:23 future. Now, of course, when I say that in general they don't work well based on what
00:18:32 I think will eventually replace them in the future, don't get me wrong. Relative to not
00:18:43 using these maps, relative to not doing this practice, well, forget about that. The alternative
00:18:51 to what we now have is horrific. The alternative to not doing it. So, you know, it's good that
00:19:02 we have this. I just think we can, we meaning humanity, can potentially do a lot better.
00:19:10 So, okay, so what should we think about, what should we, how should we think about these maps?
00:19:21 Well, I pointed out some of the cons. Let's talk about some of the pros. They can give
00:19:30 you an idea of where to go, what to look for. They can give you an idea of what's optimal
00:19:39 to do when various things occur. That's really useful. They can motivate you. It's like,
00:19:49 well, why do it if there's not goodies at the end? Or in the middle? Or even maybe in
00:19:57 the beginning? So, you can be motivated by this and you can be informed by it so you
00:20:03 know what to look for. So that's good. They are based, at least in part, on real people's
00:20:18 real experience. And those are by and large real people with very, very deep experience.
00:20:26 So, people with very, very deep experience, that's something we need to pay attention
00:20:38 to. However, it is also important to realize that not everything that appears in those
00:20:45 maps is necessarily a deep person's deep experience. Because other factors enter into the creation
00:20:55 of these things. What are some other factors? Well, some master a thousand years ago might
00:21:09 have said some things to a student. But they didn't write it down. When that student wrote
00:21:21 it down, well, that student's ideas are there mixed with that master's ideas. Perhaps there's
00:21:30 speculations. So you cannot be sure that you're getting the ipsit-dixit, the very words that
00:21:38 were said. Furthermore, these things were usually written by hand, not printed. Printing
00:21:47 is... well, Chinese had printing a long time ago, but they were written by hand, so you
00:21:52 get scribal error. So if you start to get all fundamentalist about exactly what's there,
00:22:02 you know, it must be exactly that way. Well, it just might be some scribal error. Also,
00:22:14 because of the authoritarian nature of these cultures, there's a need to make your innovations
00:22:23 appear to agree with scripture. So there can be a forcing, where it's like forced onto
00:22:33 a certain model that has been passed down. All of these, therefore, give us our caveats,
00:22:43 not to get fundamentalist about what's literally there. On the other hand, as I said, by and
00:22:53 large, these are important experiences of deep masters. And so there's really something
00:23:01 to learn. The Buddha said that there are three epistemological bases. Epistemology means
00:23:16 the investigation of how we know, how we gain valid knowledge. So in ancient Greece it was
00:23:24 the same, in ancient India it was the same. There's three bases. Direct experience, logical
00:23:31 inference, and reliable authority. Now, the Buddha rejected reliable authority. He said
00:23:43 base yourself on direct experience and on logical inference. But the fact is, maybe
00:23:53 the fact is that consulting with an expert is a good idea. But there's a difference

00:24:04 between consulting with an expert and reading something that was written, hopefully, by
00:24:14 an expert a thousand years ago, but may have other things that have entered in there. Because
00:24:22 when you consult with an authority, you can dialogue. But when you've got a text that
00:24:33 has come down to you, you can't dialogue with the person that wrote that text. So the
00:24:39 good news is that there's probably stuff in there that is hugely valuable. The other news
00:24:46 is, though, that we can't, we can only, it's a very one-sided communication. It's not like
00:24:56 when you hire a consultant and you say, you know, this person knows what they're talking
00:25:01 about, so let's see what their opinion is and then you can ask questions, etc. So those
00:25:12 are some of the pros and cons of having these maps. I myself don't have a map. I don't
00:25:34 say that you'll pass through certain stages and delineate what those stages are. But I
00:25:48 do give you some general trends. I say that over time you're going to notice an elevation
00:25:56 in your concentration, clarity and equanimity. And that's going to have some pretty dramatic
00:26:03 effects on your life. So I like to talk more along those lines. Yet inevitably we want
00:26:16 to know that we're making progress in some way or another. So I will give you four criteria
00:26:25 that you can use to judge your progress. Starting with the least, what would I say? Starting
00:26:39 with, each of these criteria is valid, but there's a hierarchy of maturity. I'm going
00:26:49 to end with the most mature. So that means I'm going to begin with the least mature,
00:26:55 but you don't have to take that as a put-down. The least mature criteria is, during periods
00:27:03 of practice I have experiences that are unusual, interesting, fun, entertaining, and so forth.
00:27:12 An awful lot of people, for an awful lot of people that is the criteria. If you want to
00:27:21 sell spirituality, you sell entertainment. But I'm not saying that that's completely
00:27:31 without validity. Because if fun and interesting and unusual things happen, then that's going
00:27:40 to motivate you to keep practicing. So from that perspective, that's fine. The only problem
00:27:47 is, I don't care who you are or who your teacher is or what you're doing, it ain't going to
00:27:55 always be fun and interesting and entertaining and have unusual things happen. So then when
00:28:06 it's the opposite of all those, if you hold out these criteria of fun, interesting, unusual,
00:28:15 entertaining, then when the opposite of those happen for a period of time, which could be
00:28:22 perhaps a long period of time, then it's to hell with meditation. You don't want to do
00:28:30 it anymore. So, that's one criteria, because have fun if you can. A little bit more mature
00:28:40 is during a formal period of practice, you can actually taste mindfulness. You can taste
00:28:48 concentration, clarity, and equanimity right while you're doing the practice. And each
00:28:55 one of them has its own taste, its distinctive reward taste. And it's a mature palate. You
00:29:03 learn how to taste that. There's just a taste of being concentrated. And as Mike Chixentli
00:29:12 Hai pointed out, that's an intrinsic reward just to being concentrated. Doesn't matter
00:29:21 what you're concentrated on, independent of the particular focus. Hence, you could be
00:29:30 doing a god awful boring task, like licking stamps or the archetypal nun task is stepping
00:29:45 out communion wafers, okay? You know, like hours and hours every day just making these
00:29:52 communion wafers. Okay, now, I would suggest to you that that is either heaven or hell,
00:29:58 depending on how recollected you are. Recollected is the Catholic word for Samadhi. So, if you're
00:30:07 tasting, like Shelley, some of you know Shelley Young. So, before she became a really impressive
00:30:19 psychotherapist back when we were kids, she used to do temp jobs. And it was literally
00:30:28 like licking envelopes, right? Putting stamps on it, whatever. So, she'd go to these temp

00:30:33 jobs and there would be other temp workers doing this. And as the day progressed, you
00:30:44 could see their moods deteriorate, okay? They were just like, by the end of the day, they
00:30:50 were just like, you know, not doing a very good thing. But she would just get higher
00:30:56 and higher and higher, right? Because it was Samud, it was Karma Yoga, it was a tasted
00:31:06 concentration, Samadhi, the rest of it, the taste of Samadhi was there all day. So, I
00:31:12 mean, she left and she was just like, you know, she's doing this shit job, pardon my
00:31:18 French. But the more shit job it is, the actually easier it is to meditate, in that sense, right?
00:31:25 The simpler. So, you know, with that taste of concentration. So, and the clarity has
00:31:34 its own taste and the equanimity is the taste of release and catharsis of purification.
00:31:40 So, yes, if you can actually taste those things while you're doing formal practice, then,
00:31:48 yeah, that's good, that's a sign of progress. But what about when you can't taste those
00:31:56 things? Because that's going to happen. Why? You can go for years with very deep states
00:32:03 of mindfulness, but then either something happens in the external world that's pretty
00:32:11 challenging or nothing's happening in the external world, but it's just time for the
00:32:18 next layer of stored material to release. And suddenly it seems as though you're back
00:32:25 to square one. You can't focus, it's just like everything is surface, it's like I never
00:32:31 meditated before. Now, you're not really back to square one, the clock is not pointing to
00:32:39 where you started, okay? Many days have passed, okay? It's not the same day, even though it
00:32:46 seems like the clock is still pointing to, you know, twelve o'clock or what have you.
00:32:51 But it seems that way. So, you're not going to have those reward flavors. So, then what?
00:32:58 Well, if that's all that you use to judge your practice with, then you're not going
00:33:03 to be meditating. So, what's the next mature, more mature criterion is not now linked to
00:33:14 what I experienced during formal practice. It's linked to the long-term effects of the
00:33:20 practice in daily life. It's possible you might not have anything unusual or entertaining
00:33:27 during the practice. It's possible that you might not even taste concentration, clarity
00:33:38 or equanimity individually or collectively. But you notice there's a trend in daily life
00:33:46 as you're sort of popping around in the world with regards to five things. One or a combination
00:33:58 of the following five. Less suffering, more fulfillment, insights, understandings about
00:34:11 things that sort of happen, either personal or transpersonal, improvements in your behavior
00:34:21 and a kind of sense of love and service for humanity, a disappearing of that fundamental
00:34:34 alienation that separates inside and outside. And along with that, a sense of a larger identity
00:34:44 that it is your privilege to serve. If in one or a combination of these, it can just
00:34:54 be one, often it's reduced suffering. It's not necessarily the whole list. But if in
00:35:00 any of these areas you're noticing improvements and it seems to be linked to the practice,
00:35:07 then we say that you're making progress and the practice is working.
00:35:19 The most mature criteria is to just do the practice and not really, you just do the practice,
00:35:30 you do the practice and you're not really thinking that much about the goals. As Maezumi
00:35:38 once said, when asked directly, what is satori? What is enlightenment? He said,
00:35:45 satori to satori de nai to no kubetsu ga naku naru koto deshou. I think you could say that
00:35:54 satori, enlightenment, is the passing away of the distinction between enlightenment
00:36:01 and non-enlightenment, which is a very empowering statement in a lot of different ways.
00:36:13 So you might say that how far away are you from enlightenment would be measured in exactly

00:36:28 how much you identify with the moment by moment arising of the conviction, I'm not enlightened
00:36:40 and I won't be. So the length of time between where you're at now and enlightenment is no
00:36:50 longer than the length of that thought, I'm not enlightened, depending on your relationship
00:36:57 to that thought each time it comes up. So, very fast path to enlightenment, have a complete
00:37:09 experience of the belief that you're not enlightened. Now you understand a complete experience,
00:37:16 I described a complete experience. Complete experience is a paradoxical experience. It's
00:37:23 infinitely full and absolutely vacuous at the same time. Okay, so, here's a, let's see,
00:37:43 I wrote down, I did actually write down a couple of things. Okay. What does that say?
00:37:59 Okay. It's in Chinese. Okay, so here are some common beliefs about the maps that people
00:38:18 have and that don't agree with my experience. I just say it that way. One very common belief
00:38:33 is that there's this thing called enlightenment and before it happens to you, you're messed
00:38:42 up and after it happens to you, everything is perfect. Now, you know, when we say it
00:38:52 that way, we sort of like laugh and well, no one's that naive, but actually this notion
00:38:59 is deep down in people, okay, because I see it. It's like, even though we say that like,
00:39:11 even if we use the Theravada model, okay, and we say enlightenment is stream entry,
00:39:16 what is, well, there's like three more steps, right? And although it may seem from pututjana
00:39:26 to ariya, to a street, to a sotapanna. Pututjana means you're not there yet, okay, means, literally
00:39:36 means an ordinary person, okay, pututjana. So from pututjana to sotapanna seems very
00:39:44 far, I know, but sotapanna to araha, that distance, that's really far, okay. Stream
00:39:59 enters all over the place, all over the place. Arahas, I mean, I've met a few that probably
00:40:12 were or could have been if they wanted to be, Sasaki Roshi could be if he wanted to
00:40:18 be, I'm not sure he wants to be an araha. Well, you say, well, wait, that doesn't make
00:40:24 any sense. But when you're that enlightened, the difference between enlightenment and non-enlightenment
00:40:30 goes away, okay. So we can't really fathom the decisions of people like that. You look
00:40:38 at the classical path and you see the descriptions of what arahas are supposed to be like, well,
00:40:45 Sasaki Roshi's not that way, okay, but you sense he could be that way if he wanted to.
00:40:51 He just doesn't want to sever the connection to humanity. That's called the bodhisattva.
00:40:58 I mean, the ones that I've met from Southeast Asia, like Thamphu Luseda, you can find him
00:41:04 on the internet, okay. You can actually get videos of the Thamphu Luseda. He was a reputed
00:41:11 araha. 20, 30 years ago, how long ago, I don't remember. Remember, some of you can remember
00:41:21 when I was downtown at CMC in Koreatown, at my own center there. Yeah, Charlie, Judy,
00:41:27 go back that far. You remember? Yeah, you do remember. I remember picking you guys up
00:41:33 at the station downtown.
00:41:36 I remember learning to meditate with that ice cream truck, too.
00:41:41 Oh, yeah. The ice cream truck and the schizophrenic derelicts and the mariachi on one side and
00:41:48 the Sino-Vietnamese opera on the other side. To say nothing of the gunshots and the turf
00:41:57 wars of the drug dealers fighting on the front lawn. We're killing you, Araha! And we're
00:42:04 actually there meditating. Yeah, that was, that's the center I used to have. It was like
00:42:14 amazing. New Year's? Ah! New Year's in El Barrio. It's the Battle of the Bulge. Guns
00:42:26 everywhere. I mean, automatic weapons. So, you know this thing of sitting, sitting until
00:42:34 midnight? It's so tame now. You know, it's really like very anti-climactic for me. Like,
00:42:44 last night, was it last night? The night before, whatever. You know, hit the bell here, I heard

00:42:52 maybe a firework somewhere. You don't even hear people go, ah! You know, because we're
00:42:58 just too far away from things. But when we were down at the community meditation center
00:43:04 downtown, we did the thing. I've been doing the sit, you know, the chant, the om mani
00:43:10 padme, and then we ring the bell exactly at midnight. I've been doing that for like 40
00:43:15 years or something. Well, down there, it would start like maybe a minute before you know
00:43:26 the bell was going to ring because, okay, because the gunshots would start. And then
00:43:32 it would just reach this crescendo. It would end on all sides. And you could actually see
00:43:38 the tracer bullets going out, okay, out the window. I think it's illegal now, right?
00:43:46 To shoot off guns. I thought it was illegal then. And so then you hit the bell, right?
00:43:54 And then there would just be this firestorm of rounds going off in all directions. But
00:44:03 anyway, back in those days, which had their charm, but I'm sure glad we grew out of that.
00:44:14 But back in those days, when I give classes, there would be four or five people. It was
00:44:24 a pretty small operation. So one of my residents, just before, I used to do this thing on Monday
00:44:32 where people would come. So one of my residents calls me up and he says,
00:44:44 Taunpulu Sayadaw. Sayadaw is like the Burmese equivalent of Roshi, okay? Taunpulu, T-A-U-N-G-P-U-L-U.
00:44:54 Taunpulu Sayadaw is in town. He's at the Burmese temple. And he says he's willing to come over
00:45:03 and talk to your group tonight. You know, this is like that joke about Jesus shows up
00:45:09 in the parish church. I mean, it's like, oh my God, okay? Because this guy was a reputed
00:45:18 arhat. He was old. He had not gone horizontal for 30 years. Every night, yaza, for the last
00:45:28 three decades. Okay. They carried him around in a palanquin kind of thing. And he came.
00:45:41 He came to my little center in Koreatown. He didn't speak any English. He had translators.
00:45:48 And he did not look like any human being that I ever saw. I mean, in terms of his body language
00:45:58 or whatever. Like I say, look him up on the internet, okay? It's like death walking.
00:46:06 It's like dead man walking, okay? It was like, imagine a human made out of rubber that you
00:46:18 could just like pull on any part of the anatomy and it would just like stretch. There's just
00:46:23 nothing there to resist. Okay. So yeah, this guy was probably an arhat, okay? But you know,
00:46:37 hey, I can do one yaza. But like eternal yaza? That's a whole other deal. Okay. So anyway.
00:47:01 So first of all, what I call enlightenment is stream entry. And that's doable by you folks.
00:47:09 I mean, that's like, you know, that's the stated goal of my program. So, you know, you
00:47:19 think that people have this idea, oh, I'm going to get enlightenment and then everything's
00:47:24 going to be okay. Well, the distance between having seen no self for good and full purification
00:47:37 of consciousness, that is a huge distance. But no matter how much you tell people that,
00:47:45 you get these weird things that they expect senior masters to somehow be perfect, okay?
00:47:53 Or people that are enlightened at a stream entrance level, then people get all weirded
00:48:00 out when they're screwed up in certain ways. Even though we say, you know, hey, working
00:48:08 this whole thing out, it takes a lifetime, okay? Enlightenment in the sense of stream
00:48:15 entry is just the beginning. But however many times you say that, people that are enlightened
00:48:22 at some level, when they screw up, people seem to be surprised for some reason. It's
00:48:27 like, well, they're enlightened, how could they do this and do that? Enlightenment just
00:48:31 means that you've seen no self for good forever. But it doesn't mean you've worked out all
00:48:39 your bad habits by any means. That's what those three other stages are. So this notion
00:48:47 either expressed or implied or somewhere in the subconscious that because someone has

00:48:54 a deep practice, even a practice so deep that they have abided permanent oneness and nothingness,
00:49:04 the notion that, oh, well, everything's perfect and they never suffer about anything and they
00:49:11 never make mistakes, it doesn't work that way. And besides, even if you become an arhat,
00:49:22 that's great, but that's not a Buddha. What's the difference between a Buddha and an arhat?
00:49:32 The Buddhist tradition has asked that question, okay? The Buddha is a special kind of arhat.
00:49:39 So what's different about the Buddha if an arhat is fully enlightened, has impeccable
00:49:45 behavior and never suffers? So then what's the difference between that and a Buddha?
00:50:02 The Buddhist scholastic tradition says, and I think it's a very good answer, the difference
00:50:08 is that a Buddha is a creative arhat. A Buddha comes up with something that no one discovered
00:50:16 before, number one. And number two, it is of sufficient power and relevance that it
00:50:26 changes human history. So from that perspective, there's only been one Buddha so far that we
00:50:35 know of historically, 2,500 years ago, that has had that big an impact on the world being
00:50:42 enlightened. But I think we're due for the next one, okay? But the next one may not be
00:50:48 a person, maybe a team of enlightened, scientifically oriented, out-of-the-box thinkers, maybe a
00:50:59 different one, with the technology as it will exist. Okay, so, this notion of... So I can
00:51:14 see why some teachers avoid the e-word, because people have this idea that it's like, oh,
00:51:20 you're screwed up, then you're enlightened, and everything's perfect. The other notion
00:51:26 that people seem to have is that enlightenment happens suddenly. It can. But in my experience,
00:51:41 not necessarily. I see that in a lot of cases, it just sort of comes on, okay? And you're
00:51:52 acclimatized to it, you may not really quite realize that you actually have become enlightened,
00:51:58 because it wasn't sudden and dramatic. So, there's that point. Can it happen suddenly
00:52:15 and dramatically? Sure. But I don't particularly aim at that. However, some teachers do. They
00:52:25 aim at getting you to have this sudden epiphany kind of thing. And if they have a track record
00:52:33 in producing those results, then that's a good teacher, okay? When I look at teachers,
00:52:40 I don't look at, say, oh, this one has this map that I agree with, and this one has this
00:52:46 other map that I don't agree with, but this person says it's similar to what I say, so,
00:52:52 you know, they're right, or something. I don't think that way about teachers. I think about
00:52:59 track record. Someone could have a completely different perspective than I do. But if they've
00:53:09 got a track record in leading people to significant transformation, I'd rather have you study
00:53:18 with that person than someone that, like, agrees with my methodology but doesn't have
00:53:25 a track record. So, anyway, be that as it may. Another thing that notion that people
00:53:41 seem to have is, not fairly recently, is that everyone has to go through these dark night
00:53:50 experiences before they get enlightened. Dark night experiences are sort of emptiness and
00:53:59 no self and it's a bad trip kind of thing. Fear and depression and hopelessness and disorientation,
00:54:09 etc., etc. And it's horrible and you just have to white knuckle through it. That everyone
00:54:19 has to go through these. That's not been my experience at all. Now, everyone has to go
00:54:27 through some fear and some depression and some disorientation, but not necessarily this
00:54:35 sort of paralytic thing that can last for months or years that some people do go through.
00:54:43 Don't worry, you probably won't. One last thing is the notion that the map is linear.
00:54:55 That there's this step and this step and this step and this step. Because when you act...
00:55:02 That doesn't agree with my experience. When you actually talk to people that use that
00:55:09 and you say, well, is it like literally that or do you revisit certain steps and does it

00:55:16 loop around, etc., etc., they'll say, oh, well, yeah, actually you do go through these
00:55:23 things cyclically over and over again, which does agree with my experience. But the way
00:55:31 it's presented, it's not presented that way. It's presented like there's just this linear
00:55:37 progression. So that's why I don't have a linear map. What do I have? I have a looping
00:55:45 and branching algorithm. And I think that a lot of the linear maps, when you really
00:55:54 ask what really happens, are looping and branching algorithms. So that impression, I can promise
00:56:04 you that topologically, a series of points with links is not at all the same as a net.
00:56:21 Those are mathematically completely different critters. A sequence with arrows that only
00:56:33 point in one direction is not at all even remotely like a directed cyclic graph. So
00:56:47 if it's really a looping and branching algorithm, then we shouldn't be calling it a linear map.
00:56:58 So I set the thing up so that you do certain procedures and certain things happen. Some
00:57:07 of the things that happen will be walls. You'll hit the wall, there'll be a challenge. And
00:57:12 then there's something optimal to do for that challenge. Some of the things that happen
00:57:18 will be windows. There'll be windows of opportunity. And there's something optimal to do. And the
00:57:24 whole thing is just loops and branches and loops and branches, optimizing your experience
00:57:30 as the months and years go on. And that's sort of the view that I like to take.
00:57:37 Now, having said that, I don't have a map, etc., etc. I have to be honest, it is also
00:57:48 true that there are certain broad trends. But it's not like everyone goes through these
00:58:00 trends. There is a trend over time for the themes of flow and impermanence and so forth
00:58:16 to become prominent in your practice. But that doesn't mean that if that's not the case,
00:58:24 that your practice isn't working. But I openly talk about flow and so forth because I think
00:58:36 it's useful to know about it and to work with it and so forth. So, yes, there is a tendency
00:58:47 as time goes on for many people for that to become more and more prominent part of your
00:58:55 meditation landscape. But as I say, that's not necessarily the case for everyone. So
00:59:07 how will you know if you're making progress? Well, I give you four ways of judging if you're
00:59:14 making progress. It is also practically useful to touch base with at least one competent
00:59:28 coach at least every once in a while to talk about your practice, to dialogue, to see,
00:59:35 okay, what's working, what may not be working, get suggestions and so forth. So I think that's
00:59:45 all that came to my mind tonight in talking about maps. Is that okay? It's something.
00:59:57 I think in the future when the kind of really open dialogue that I envisage takes place
01:00:08 and when evidence, objective evidence, all of the scientific method is brought into this
01:00:19 whole thing that I would make a conjecture that maybe in a hundred years or two hundred
01:00:28 years there will only be one universal model. But it will probably be a very complex model
01:00:39 because it would have to cover all the individual variations of individual human beings. But
01:00:50 I suspect that we'll someday have a true science of enlightenment. And I can't say for sure,
01:00:59 right, but it's what my gut tells me. We'll either survive or we won't. And if we do survive,
01:01:07 I think the future will be very bright. It's our honor and privilege to be the early adopters.