

Enlightenment Maps and Models ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Is there a best model or map for the various stages of the spiritual path, including classical
00:00:18 enlightenment and all of its ramifications, the places, the directions that you grow from
00:00:27 it?
00:00:29 Is there a best model, a best map?
00:00:32 It is possible that there is.
00:00:37 I don't think anybody has found it yet.
00:00:42 Probably what comes to mind for most people when they consider looking at the various
00:00:48 models, maps, stages, and so forth that have been developed in the past, probably what
00:00:57 comes to most people's mind is, well, which one is the most complete, which one is the
00:01:02 deepest, which one really tells where it's at, et cetera, et cetera.
00:01:14 But for me, when I think about the various models, maps, for stages of spiritual unfolding,
00:01:26 the first thing that comes to my mind is how poor they all are, actually.
00:01:42 None of them is really very good.
00:01:44 Now, you might think that that is a very shocking thing, and maybe that's a disturbing thing,
00:01:52 to hear a teacher like myself say something like that.
00:01:58 But actually, I take this as a huge, huge positive.
00:02:04 So let me repeat.
00:02:07 The disturbing, shocking, upsetting statement that none of the models and none of the paths
00:02:13 is very good is, for me, a huge positive.
00:02:18 I wonder if you can guess why.
00:02:22 Can you guess?
00:02:25 I think that there is a lot about enlightenment that is not known and is important.
00:02:38 I think that no living teacher knows very much about enlightenment, even the deeply
00:02:53 enlightened teachers, and I think that no teacher of the past knew very much about enlightenment,
00:03:00 perhaps.

00:03:02 There may be, and probably is, just a lot that could not be known within the limited
00:03:15 confines of pre-scientific culture, the pre-scientific view of things.
00:03:23 Now that we live in a scientific culture, we can start to look at dimensions of enlightenment
00:03:34 that none of the masters of the past could have thought of.
00:03:39 And I suspect, although I cannot know for sure, I can conjecture, and I don't think
00:03:44 it's an unreasonable conjecture, that we will discover radically innovative dimensions of
00:03:55 enlightenment that are very, very important.
00:04:01 Assuming there's no catastrophic collapse of human culture for the next many centuries,
00:04:10 I think it is highly probable that a vastly improved science and technology of enlightenment
00:04:22 will be discovered by humanity.
00:04:26 So for now, given that none of us teachers is very good, and that none of our maps are
00:04:37 very good, that may take a little bit of the pressure off of you in terms of finding the
00:04:45 best teacher and the best map.
00:04:49 The best of what's not very good, we have to be humble about that.
00:04:55 All of us teachers, no matter what their depth of personal enlightenment, have to be very
00:05:02 humble.
00:05:05 In science, this is how it works.
00:05:09 You make a theory, and it has certain implications.
00:05:16 You then do experiments, or you observe and you see, well, did those things that this
00:05:23 theory implied happen?
00:05:26 If they didn't, then you have to modify or reject the theory.
00:05:31 Actually it's not so much a rejecting as an improving process.
00:05:41 A really good map of enlightenment would make enlightenment readily available to great masses
00:05:58 of human beings.
00:06:02 Essentially anyone on the planet with informed consent, who had an idea of what it was and
00:06:09 thought they wanted this, should be able to have it if we had a best map and a best technology.
00:06:18 The fact that this doesn't happen, to me, indicates that we've got a long way to go,
00:06:23 and that's a huge positive.

00:06:25 Because if what someone in India discovered 2,500 years ago is the last word, the best,

00:06:34 and cannot be dramatically evolved from, then we're really screwed up.

00:06:44 We're in bad shape.

00:06:46 I know the Buddhist tradition says, well, it is the best, it's just that the nature

00:06:51 of our impurities is so deep and we have all this reincarnation and it takes a gazillion

00:06:57 lifetimes, etc., etc.

00:06:58 I would say that could be the case.

00:07:01 But to tell you the truth, I don't see any compelling evidence that that is the case.

00:07:08 My gut tells me, as a modern person, a skeptical modern person, my gut tells me that we can

00:07:21 do a lot better.

00:07:24 And my own teacher, who is very traditional, Sasaki Roshi, has said that each generation

00:07:30 of enlightened masters must improve the work of the previous generation.

00:07:36 So I don't just come, you know, it's not just an idea that I came upon on my own.

00:07:41 And he said science is the model.

00:07:43 Science gets better and better.

00:07:45 So what's the best map?

00:07:48 Well, if you're young enough, maybe you will live to hear about the best map.

00:07:55 And that's what gets me up every morning.

00:08:00 That's what I live for.

00:08:01 What can I do to nourish the soil in which the next lotus of enlightenment for the planet

00:08:12 will arise?