

LATE NIGHT SITTING CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE ~

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00:00:00 So, yaza, it means night sitting or extracurricular sitting. It's a tradition. At a lot of retreats

00:00:20 I give a whole talk about strategies for doing it and why people do it. So maybe I can give

00:00:29 you the executive summary. At night there's an alternation of brain chemistry that occurs

00:00:39 and that can sort of give you an interesting perspective from which to do the practice.

00:00:50 Different themes tend to come up. For one thing, each wave of sleepiness induces a wave

00:00:59 of rest. That's why people lurch because actually what's happening is there's physical relaxation.

00:01:08 So you can get into a rhythm where if you happen to be sleepy, you won't necessarily

00:01:13 be sleepy, but you may be at some point sleepy. What happens is that you notice how the sleepiness

00:01:20 comes in waves. Each wave will tend to cause the body to physically relax and it could

00:01:29 also cause sea rest and hear rest. It could turn off the mental talk and it could cause

00:01:36 either bright light or darkness, sort of an undifferentiated visual experience. So at

00:01:44 least feel rest and perhaps also see rest and hear rest get triggered rhythmically by

00:01:55 rhythmic waves of sleepiness. Now if you can sort of get into that rhythm, then what happens

00:02:01 is you're re-engineering the experience of sleepiness into the experience of meditative

00:02:09 absorption. Because there's something, if you've read about, if you've read sort of

00:02:15 the Abhidharma or Buddhist scholasticism, there's something called the Bhava-Anga-Solta.

00:02:24 So Bhava means existence, Anga means support or underpinning and Solta means stream. So

00:02:33 what is the Bhava-Anga-Solta? Well, that's the boundary zone between the conscious mind

00:02:40 and the unconscious mind. Now in meditative absorption and in falling asleep and in dying,
00:02:51 in those three circumstances, we dip below the Bhava-Anga-Solta. So there's an intimate
00:02:59 link between those three things. And the ability to drop below the Bhava-Anga-Solta and not
00:03:08 lose consciousness is a big deal. In fact, to live and function below the Bhava-Anga-Solta
00:03:20 is to solve the koan that I'm going to give you, actually. I just gave away the answer.
00:03:31 Living like ordinary life below the stream of existence would mean that you're alive
00:03:44 in the unborn, you're functioning from the unborn. So all-night sitting is an opportunity
00:03:56 to explore dipping below that boundary zone. Now, if you dip unconsciously, then you're
00:04:05 going to have the Zen lurch, okay. But if you get into the rhythm that I'm describing,
00:04:12 it will just take you deeper and deeper. Let's see if I can remember.
00:04:19 Ani yeshana velebi il. That's how you say it in Hebrew. I learned that last time in
00:04:32 Israel. Ani, I, yeshana, sleep, velebi, and or but, my heart, my consciousness, il, is
00:04:48 awake. I sleep but my heart waketh. It's from the Psalms. The Latin is ego dormio sed cor
00:04:57 meum vigilant. And that was used as an ideal by the Christian monks in the Middle Ages
00:05:07 when Latin was the language that was used. The canonical hours that the monks keep, which
00:05:15 we still have remnants in our language in words like matinee and noon, okay. It's known
00:05:24 as the ninth hour, etc., etc. Matins is the afternoon, maybe the morning, lods. I can't
00:05:35 remember. There's a certain set number of hours that the monks kept and very few orders
00:05:45 still do this, but a few do. And essentially, it's like a radical disruption of the sleeping
00:05:53 cycle because they never get more than a few hours sleep and then they have to go to the
00:05:58 chapel and either do chanting or singing or have a liturgy of some sort or mass or something.
00:06:12 And I think it's like seven times in a 24-hour cycle. So, it's like they

waken up in the

00:06:19 middle of the night, well, they're just sleepy all the time. And that's a lifestyle thing.

00:06:24 It never varies, ever. So, what's that all about? Why be sleepy all the time? Why never

00:06:31 get any continuous sleep for your whole life? Well, for that reason, ego dormio sed cor

00:06:43 mea vigile, you learn how to bring consciousness into sleep. So, it's not sleep anymore. What

00:06:51 is it? Well, in Christianity, it was called infused contemplation. But in Buddhism, it's

00:06:58 called formless jhana. So, one way to go about that that's used in Zen and obviously also

00:07:08 was used in Christianity is to re-engineer the sleepiness thing. So, one facet is you

00:07:16 can sort of ride it into these delicious restful states. Of course, it takes a little practice,

00:07:23 like a lot of practice. So, I'm not guaranteeing that you will experience I sleep but my heart

00:07:31 awakens. And tomorrow morning, be enlightened and live the rest of your life in the unborn.

00:07:40 But you can take some sort of step in that direction. Now, I'm sort of convincing myself

00:07:50 that I should join you. Look what Choshin's doing. She started that. She knew this was

00:07:58 because she was shaking her head even before she knew that I was like convincing myself

00:08:04 that I want to do this. Well, now you probably think I'm a wimp, right? That I can't do it.

00:08:14 Well, prove it. It's like the army, right? Sir, could you do that? You know, you're supposed

00:08:23 to be able to ask your sergeant to do anything he asks you to do, etc. etc. But, now I'm

00:08:31 really convincing myself. Well, the truth is you deserve my A game tomorrow, which may

00:08:43 not manifest if I'm too sleep deprived. I can still function, but maybe not the A game

00:08:53 function. Okay, so, but other things come up. It's not just explore the restful states.

00:09:04 You may never get mental images. Well, at three in the morning, maybe you have mental

00:09:08 images. Dreamscape starts to replace the landscape. And that could be, oh,

well, image space is

00:09:17 never available to me. Well, maybe it'll be available at three this morning. So that could

00:09:22 be a little window of opportunity. The world is solid. Well, at three in the morning, maybe

00:09:28 it won't be so solid as your eyes swim. Now, you might say, well, that's bullshit because

00:09:34 that's just, you know, you're just tired and that's an optical illusion. But it's also

00:09:40 a place to stand to explore visual experience. And if you do an awful lot of that, it will

00:09:47 give you insight into the impermanent nature of see out. That's there when you're quite

00:09:53 recovered and looking quite normally at the world, you still have this knowledge of flow

00:10:03 within that experience. So a whole lot of interesting things can happen as a result

00:10:08 of the yaza. So there are reasons to do it. There is also, of course, you know, it can

00:10:17 sometimes be uncomfortable. Physically, there's this icky, sticky, creepy, crawly, sort of

00:10:25 like yucky on your face, right? Coagulated yucky and sort of excruciating yawniness that

00:10:35 just sits in your chest hour after hour after hour. And then there could be all sorts of

00:10:41 emotions that come up because we're in a little non-composmentus. I mean, it is the classic

00:10:49 way to break people down, right? Brainwashing and so forth. So now I'm giving you the answer.

00:10:54 You're really selling it now. What kind of sales pitch is this? Who wants to buy this

00:11:01 product? However, people that are committed to this practice know that there is such a

00:11:10 thing, there is a thing called working through stuff. And the same process that breaks people

00:11:20 down also can break people up, if you follow the distinction. To be broken down is a

00:11:30 disempowering experience of abuse. To be broken up is an empowering experience of abuse.

00:11:40 You're broken down, it means you're like shattered glass. Broken up, you're like a

00:11:51 spray of pure steam that now joins the flow of nature forever. So anyway, I

didn't intend

00:12:12 to talk about Yaza, but let me just give those of you that have never done it, first-timers,

00:12:20 I'm going to give you a reality check. How many people in this room have done an all-night

00:12:25 set? How many people in this room have done it again? So you can see this is not like,

00:12:35 oh my god, no one could do this kind of shit kind of thing, right? So there you go, that's

00:12:45 my Yaza rap, extemporized.