

2009-07-19 Understanding Seeing Transformation

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SPEAKERS

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This morning, I'd like to do this time a little different than usual. In that, I would like to be a little more cooperatively cooperatively done. Dharma talk, I suppose. And what I'd like to do is just talk a little bit, say some words. And then rather than having you get a chance to ask me questions, I have questions for you. And describe how that goes. And a little bit after my words. So one of the many years ago, I read somewhere that someone claimed that everything you needed to learn about Buddhism, you can learn through your own observation. And that's quite a powerful statement, I think. Meaning that you don't have to go and You know, rely on a scripture for a teacher, or something like that in order to find out what Buddhism is all about. But it's accessible and available to you, in your own observation in your own seeing and, and, and discovery for yourself. And so also that means that whatever you do read wherever you learn from books or from teachers, that it can be verified in your own direct experience in your own observation and seeing. And in fact, that's really the point, I think of Buddhism is for whatever these teachings are, for them to be verified by you to really see deeply for yourself. And so we have this idea of many times when we read or listen to Dharma talks, is that we're trying to understand something. And, and so understanding certainly is important place, but understanding something is only really the first Kind of surface, issue surface approach to the practice. The whatever understanding you have, is supposed to be transformed into a seeing, meaning that you're supposed to see it. So it's not just supposed to stay some ideas that we had float around ideas that we apply to the life, but rather, there was to help us really discover directly how it works for us in our lives. So we can verify discover what it really means for us directly here. So the first You know, there's understanding, the second step is then seeing and the third step is transformation. So not just seeing something very deeply, but allowing what we see to change us, changes for the better. And so and that takes another it takes something takes it so to understand requires something one thing to translate or transform understanding to seeing requires something else. And to transform or to move, go from seeing to transformation requires something else requires a deeper commitment or an opening or a willingness to really be changed by what we see. So if I, some teacher sits up here and says, oh, the fundamental teaching of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths. And then you leave here and that great, now I know what Buddhism is about the Four Noble Truths. That's great, thank you. That was nice. That's the first step. That's just the understanding. That's just a surface. What you need to do then is to try to see how the Four Noble Truths actually work in your life. And what way do they work? And then in seeing how they work, then the next step would be how and seeing this. What lessons do we get? What willingness Do we have to be changed for the better by what we see This also means that when you hear teachings in Buddhism or maybe anywhere, from anyone, there's a very interesting approach. If we only stay in the realm of understanding, I understand that I agree with that. I don't agree with that. Then

we hope we miss an opportunity. And because it's not so interesting, actually, whether you agree or disagree, it has an importance. I'm not going to dismiss it. But even teachings we disagree with,

perhaps there's some way of looking at those teachings. Seeing and seeing, Oh, actually, in that particular corner of my life, this is helpful. So the task then is to look at the theory See here, have some understanding, understand what someone's trying to say. And then rather than agreeing and disagreeing, how might this teaching be useful? For me? how might it be useful? So if we hear that four noble truths are important teachings in Buddhism, and you say, well, that's kind of not so interesting and not very profound, and, you know, whatever. That's, you know, I don't agree with that, that four noble truths are important or whatever. That's you're welcome to do that. But if you really want to be open to a new possibility, new realm of seeing something deeply and more interesting question would be, how might this be useful for me work in this day, this foreigner will choose? Where can I apply them my life, so that they're useful? So how do we so that becomes your responsibility as a practitioner, to try to understand how to see and apply and be changed by the teachings we have and how Do it in a way that's useful for you. That's helpful. You're not asked to be to change in ways they're not useful. We take responsibility for ourselves. So to lead, when you hear some teaching, you don't like it. Don't dismiss it. Spend some time looking. Okay, I mostly I don't agree with that. I don't like that. But where and when might it be useful? If you ask that question and explore that question, then you can milk the cream out of whatever teachings you have. But if you just kind of dismiss it and walk away, then you don't get the nectar. You don't get the cream you don't get what's what's, what might have been there for you. And it could be that in applying the teaching and applying the practice that for yourself, that you might actually come to a different understanding of what was taught Then what the book said what the Buddha said or what the teacher said. And that's great, you know, you don't have to be stuck with you to know what was presented to you. So the idea is to, so to understand, and then to see, and then to be transformed. Now to see something I said requires something different than understanding. Understanding is more cognitive, maybe read, you reflect you think about it, but to see, it really helps if we prepare ourselves to see well. If you're near sighted like I am, in order for me to see Well, I have to go to the eye doctor and get prescription and get the glasses made and then put them on. Oh, there you are. And now I can see. So something is required. So what do we say in Buddhism is that preparing yourself to see well, it really helps if you can become and if the mind is calm, It's easier to see more clearly. When the mind is agitated, it's not so easy to see. So one of the reasons we do meditation practice is to create some more calmness in our lives. So that when we turn to look and they see the mind is not ruffled are agitated or distracted. So we can really see what's going on here. And the other thing that's required in in seeing is a willingness to suspend our are fixed ideas about what is what we say sometimes beginner's mind is useful to have a beginner's mind. That kind of kind of can look fresh at what's there. And that's one of the benefits of being calm, is when you're calm. you're less likely to carry with you a lot of the usual old ideas you have what's right or wrong or who you are. And it helps you to see fresh And what's required of you to be transformed by what you see is a willingness to be transformed a willingness to change or to grow or develop with what happens here. And that willingness is not always there, not easily there. Sometimes there's resistance. Sometimes we're stubborn. Sometimes we think we know better. Sometimes we feel like we've already arrived. And, but the willingness to be open to the possibility and then see what comes in that. So a teacher like myself,

it said sometimes to be just a finger pointing at a moon. The moon is the fullness of your awakened mind, the full moon and all a teacher can do is to point towards that and they say you shouldn't confuse the finger. For the moon. So I'm just like the chief finger here. Chief Executive finger. And if you feel sorry for me, all I could do is go exhausting myself pointing at things. And, and so today I'm interested to find out some of you what you've done with all this. What you've seen what you've how you've been changed, how you've been changed by this practice, those of you who've done it. So I have a series of

questions. And each question begins with the phrase in doing this practice. And that's meant to be a vague statement, vague phrase, this practice, because some of you maybe it's meditation, practice some words, mindfulness. Some of you might be Buddhist practice much broader than just mindfulness. Some people couldn't care less Buddhism but they like the mindfulness. So whatever it means for you this practice that more or less brings you here what we do here have in common here, that's what this practice means in the question and then there's a different then there's a question of follows that and the way we're going to do this if you are willing is I have the grab bag surprise bag

with the questions in here. And

so what? So I'm gonna pass the bad guy into the group here. And when it comes to you, you can, if you want, you can either pass it on, or you can pull out a question and read it out loud. And then see what comes to mind. comes from from your heart or come from your belly or something, see what comes for you in response to this question, and And if you've spent a lot of time thinking about it, perhaps you'll miss it. Maybe it's nice to see what comes first comes may perhaps.

And

now you're welcome to pass it on. You don't have to do this. It's not obligatory, except for those of you who've been around for quite a while. And for you, I don't know, you know, for you, it's not obligatory. Now, I don't know who you are. I don't know. I don't know for who that it's obligatory. But you'll know

you'll know what if the light comes to you if the if the back comes to you, you'll know if you need to. So

so there's

A bag and a mic.

Few people have been around longer than him. Yes.

In doing the practice, what has surprised you?

weren't too

surprised me to see how much I lean forward, wanting things grasping at things I've heard for quite a while, that it's better to be upright. Right. upright posture relaxed, viewing forward.

You're off balance and suffering.

You're grasping for things. I thought that sounds great.

And about a year later, I

saw myself still doing it took a while. I was so surprised. Great, thank you.

They put they put it back in and then shake it up and then pass it on

in doing the practice what is deepen in you?

I would say everything but that's a little too

whatever my mind

brought attention to so if that was patience, mindfulness, concentration, generosity, it just whatever

My mind went toward, it broadens and grew. Okay, thank you

in doing the practice what has surprised you?

I've been surprised

how often

what I thought

what I thought was being expressed was not actually what was being expressed and

that

there was much greater breadth of interpretation that I was always allowing, and that there's happiness and strength in that and not limitation. Thank you.

In doing the practice, what have you learned about freedom? It's a light one.

I've learned that freedom is not that far away, and it's very close to stillness. Thank you

Got the same one in doing the practice? What have you learned about freedom?

I've learned that after nine my

biggest obstacle to experiencing freedom. Thank you.

There aren't that many slips in here. So they all say the same. There's about eight or 10 questions. So it depends what lottery Gods bring out.

In doing the practice, what is challenged you? Well, me, I challenge myself. I mean, I'm the biggest creator of my own suffering. So I challenge myself every day. Thank you.

In doing the practice, what have you learned about freedom? I've learned that there's a direct correlation between my level of acceptance and my

level of serenity

during the practice what has inspired you?

Many of the teachers talking about their practice and the and the hindrances that they've had over the years. And knowing that if they could do it, I could do it. Thank you.

Right behind you right behind you is someone who has to choose whether she's going to do it.

Don't feel pressured

in doing the practice what has surprised you?

I'm very surprised at how busy my mind continues to be year after year after year. And this morning when you said beginner's mind, I take that as kind of, it's okay. Everybody wants beginner's mind. That's the point. But I think the way my mind is beginner's mind is not quite there. And it's something I value highly

in doing the practice what has surprised you

Probably by having boundaries, it gives me freedom. Thank you

doing the practice. What have you been doing the practice? What have you learned about freedom?

By separate, I've learned that my suffering comes from wanting something to be different.

Doing the practice what has surprised you?

Just how much more practice I need.

In doing practice, what is surprised you?

And I think

one of the things that I was practicing for years and when I was doing mindfulness was I actually thought it was about stopping the mind. And then when I realized that that's not what it's about, that was a huge relief. And it took me quite a while to get that it was more just not identifying with the mind. And but I still, I still feel that when I really get very, very peaceful, and I go into those places where my mind is very stale. I fails, just a sense of refreshment, that I don't feel if I just keep going with the busy mind. So I still kind of judging a little bit like that was a really good meditation.

Thank you mix it up really well in there.

In doing the practice up, what have you learned about joy?

What comes to mind is the joyfulness that I feel in the practice

as in being here with all of you

and it's not something I expected.

When I started

out on the path

Yes, the things feel

very, very warm and very All

right.

Yes, I'll stop there.

Thank you

in doing the practice what has surprised you?

I guess what surprised me is.

This is not the question. I wanna

actually, um,

and

I think that really what surprised me is

I actually thought people's motives were much different than what I found them to be. And a lot of that has to do with teachers that

although I don't totally agree with the dāna system, I noticed their motives couldn't be monetary. And then they didn't seem anyways.

They can't. After much testing they seem to come from a much more pure place than I was used to experiencing. Thank you.

Now if you wish you could take her another one.

Because you didn't get because you didn't get the one you're hoping to get.

You decide

for yourself when you're supposed to or not. I don't decide for you.

Yeah

In during the practice, what have you learned about freedom?

I think one of the places I've learned freedom that's the most specific is through passing data to some passing method to someone who's cut me off on the freeway versus getting crushed up and freaked

out. So I have a freedom to decide how to respond to something like that. And it's been very, very, really transforming of my driving.

Thank you

in doing the practice, what has inspired you

I think my

greatest source of inspiration has, has come from the sense of renewal that I have received from the practice.

It has

the sense of hope and healing that came to me through it. And in in, in finding my own hope of healing, I also then saw the hope for the healing of the world. And so

in and so I have then learn to look at people in different ways, perhaps, and look at myself in a different way in my deepest suffering and when I see Other people in their deepest suffering. I remember being in retreat and being just so deeply touched that in these long retreat, the teachers were actually been there were there in there were not charged and it was just it was it there were there out of more sense of donation the practice of dāna. And, you know, I never knew that I had paid for the retreat. And then in the end, I found out this in something in my heart was deeply touched about that, in the kindness in to know that they had been there for us, guiding us through through these retreat, I also remember the another source of inspiration have been when I took the my my very first teacher Bob stall was deeply inspiring me in starting to do this practice and being exposed to him with the idea of unconditional love say for the first time in my life I was experiencing being in an inner circle in an environment where there was complete acceptance It was so refreshing to know that there was no judgement in it in that was just like all the my mind could do or my life was to judge and in be conditional in such a before that. Yeah, that was deeply touching and continues to be. Thank you

In doing the practice what has challenged you?

The practice

continually allowing it to challenge me.

Being aware, to let it challenge me to let myself challenge me.

I think that's,

that's the beauty of the practice. Thank you

in doing the practice, what have you learned about joy?

I guess when the when the moments come

of peace and serenity that the joy comes with them

and when you let go

beating yourself up or being judgmental of others, and you realize that you've let go. That's also a moment of joy. Thank you.

In doing the practice, what have you learned about freedom?

That the freedom that I experienced mostly depends on my attitude that I bring to a situation. Thank you

during the practice was challenged to

I think one of the things that challenged me the most has been my anxiety and I realized that my anxiety was much less than the bag was on the other side of the room.

But one of the things I did find

was my fears sometimes challenged me to a great extent. And I guess anecdotally, the best way to explain it, one of the fears I had from growing up was a dentist. And I remember when I'd make an appointment for the dentist, until if it was six months away, there wouldn't be a day that went by that I didn't think about the appointment and what I'd have to go through. And after coming here for a number of years, I started looking at what was triggering these responses. And sort of peel that away I realized it was the fear of this would be the fear would really get greater as I get closer to the dentist office, I realized it was the fear of the pain, the fear of the noise,

the fear of

the shot,

and I watched what happened at some of my visits, and I realized the pain of the shot. wasn't that great. The noise of the drill wasn't painful. It was just a trigger to what was going to come. technology changed so much. It wasn't that painful at all. And then what happened? After that was something I would never have dreamt in a million years. I fell asleep in a dentist's chair. So, Buddhists, Buddhists, Buddhism has given me a way to deal with the fears that I have. And the challenge has been to acknowledge them and see what what triggers them for me.

In doing the practice, what have you learned about freedom?

I think similar to what other people have said is that

there is really a freedom that comes

when you

attempt to just pour acceptance have what is on the situation?

But I have to say that I've also learned that

there's a lot of layers of doing that, and that I'm continually surprised by how much

I think I'm doing it. But then I realize I'm really grasping on some other level or, you know, like, the depth of my desire to

get comfortable.

Cannot be overestimated.

I thought I'd mixed it up, but I got the same question. Doing the practice. What have you learned about freedom?

What I've learned is the extent to which freedom is simply dependent on how I think and

why Where I am or what I'm doing.

Okay, thank you. Yeah.

One question which hasn't been told yet.

In doing the practice what has surprised you?

That's the question I wanted.

When I first started doing the practice, what surprised me and even shocked me was the scary thoughts that would come out of my depths that were things that were controlling me that I would do anything not to look at. And so, I was surprised at how scary meditation was. And lucky that I had a teacher at the time who kept I would run out of the room. She would go out and bring me back and make me sit And now what surprises me is how much easier it is to meditate. And I'm so surprised that I come here every Sunday. I mean, I started coming sporadically a year ago and now I wake up Sunday morning and I come here without questioning or thinking about it. That surprises me. Maybe,

maybe one more, maybe one or two more and then we'll open you get that other question.

In doing the practice, what have you learned about joy?

I've learned and I guess I'm answering another question too surprised at how, how easily. joy comes when I pause for just a moment when I'm feeling impatient or irritable. and wanting stuff to be different and it's much easier. I'm also surprised at how it's so much easier for me to do that professionally and then it is in my day to day life. So that's what I'm working on. Now.

Thank you. Maybe Rob can be the last one. Just really going deep and see what you

this was the question I was hoping to receive to.

In during the practice, what have you learned about fear?

Well, I've learned, first of all that fear has been something that has been very very centrally part of my patterns that I've carried from almost from birth. And through meditation, I've finally come to recognize how much fear has driven my life. And I began to catch glimpses of how I can let go of fear, even for a moment, and then what comes to me when I let go of fear, and notice what else is here. And that's brings joy. Great.

Thank you. Okay. So the there was one more question. I believe in the bag. It wasn't pulled. And that the question is in doing the practice, what have you learned about love? What have you learned about love? So it's kind of odd that didn't come up? Who would like to answer it? I would like to choose to take that one on. I've been surprised that how pervasive love can be and how it's possible to seemingly love everybody. That's been a surprise. I've learned that so for those of you who didn't answer take some of those questions home with you. Don't leave them here and, and see if you can let these questions kind of rumble around your heart and your mind and see what gets dislodged or what comes up. And perhaps there's some friends you can talk to and ask them the questions and have a conversation about you know what challenge you What inspired you what you've learned about fear and love

about freedom.

and joy. And

having questions is really helpful. That's one of the ways of that all these three aspects of understanding seeing and transformation has a chance to kind of work its way through us if we ask good questions. So thank you so much for dissipating. I appreciate it. It was valuable for me to kind of hear from you, and to hear different voices and different kind of expressions and what you've learned and I very much valued it. Thank you.