

2017-06-21 Dharmette Bowing To The Teacup

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SPEAKERS

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I had a formative moment for me, in my Buddhist practice. On a retreat, there was a Zen retreat called a session. And it was on the last day. And they, I was during that retreat, I was sitting right next to a visiting Japanese Zen monk who'd come to America to be practice and in America, check out American Zen for a while. And there was a, there was a way in which these retreats were conducted, where they serve tea in the afternoon. So around three o'clock or so, there would be a little break, but then the meditation hall and so we're sitting on these platforms, and we would be meditate facing the wall. But this circumstance, we turn around and face the middle of the room with a little piece of the platform would be space for that come in, offered some tea and cookies and a cookie. And we would have, you know, the never ritualized way be able to have a brief period of this refreshment to carry us through the rest of the afternoon. And the first day they did this, they come with a tea cup, and they give it to you. And they serve tea in it and the cookie and when that's finished, you keep the tea cup next to your seat for the next seven days for so that they don't have to bring you a tea cup again, it's your cup, the last day they come and collect the teacup and there's kind of a ritual way of doing it, you know, they comes to silence and meditation hall and everyone vows and offers the tea cup up. And so we you know, I've been I've done this for a while, newest familiar with how it's all done. And so there's a you know, Zan, it's all choreographed. I knew the choreography, I knew the, how the theater worked, the play worked. And this Zen monk who was sitting next to me, I think he was pretty comfortable with how it was done in American zen, because a lot of the ritual choreographic come from Japan. So he saw very similar to what he was what he knew. And then during the, the, when they came to collect the teacups, he did something that was not part of the procedure wasn't choreographed. And so he had his teacup in front of him. And before he gave up a teacup, he did a deep bow to the teacup. And that kind of struck me, it was so it is you'd be grateful or appreciative or, or offer, you know, you know, offer some kind of feeling of special care or attention or maybe even reverence to a cup. I mean, give me a break, right, given my background, and never would have occurred to me a teacup. And so with that kind of background that I had kind of, to watch the ceman offer this kind of care to this tea cup, made a big impression on me. And one of the impressions it made was the value, not so much about adding to all the things the objects of our life, but the impression that whatever we have, whatever comes through our hands, whatever we see, the objects, the things that people of our lives, it's possible to meet it, be with it, as if it's an object of reverence of care appreciation, were in and of itself, what it is itself warrants our full attention to be really there for that thing. And that was a lesson that in Zen practice that I had to kind of relearn a number of times, because especially when I went to Japan, one of the things in Japan was that there was an expectation that you would kind of meet everything in the monastery with that kind of care. And one of the things was how you picked up the pot of rice, it was my job to bring the rice from the kitchen to the dining table eating table and there was a handle on the on the rice pot. And you know, I would just pick it up with one hand it was strong enough to hold in one hand and just carry it but no. Gilson, they would say hold it with both hands. You rice, you hold it both Hands because you want to

hold it with respect and care, and you really want to be there with it. And you find it often in Asia, that when you give something, something to someone,

you don't just hand it to with one hand, or you don't receive it with one hand, you would actually hand it with two hands, and you'd receive it with two hands. And again, it's just kind of care and attention to, to the details of our life to really be present for it and attentive for this thing. And not be casual with what we're doing. But to offer a certain kind of respect, or care or appreciation, or maybe simply attention to each object of our life, without a hierarchy, that some things are more worthy of our attention than other things. What's on the computer screen is more important. Than then, where you put down your pen. You know, the pen is kind of casual, you know, it's like excuse, toss it down doesn't really matter. But perhaps what if everything mattered equally matter enough that it's you know, it makes a difference in where you put something down and, or the care your attention you give. So I have this striker here in front of me the striker for the bell. And, you know, I could ring the bell. And then I can just, you know, we're done with that, and it's not doesn't matter anymore, you know, it's its function is over. And, you know, or I could, you know, ring the bell. And then I can with two hands. Look, notice what's in front of me here. Be mindful, right to pay attention. But in paying attention to what's here, what's my hand? What feels what feels like the how we are the what feels like the appropriate attention? Or if I give myself really attention to this, would I just toss it down? Or would I put it down as if it matters? Sometimes somehow. So when that monk bow to his tea cup, that set in motion for me, a many years process of learning to be interested or curious or learning to begin to kind of pay attention to what's here as if what's in front of me what's here. And part of that process of learning for me. And one of the reasons it was very that really rich for me was they helped me to notice all the different beliefs, ideas, habits, tendencies, I had to not do that. And that's a fascinating issue. Even if you don't believe that you should put down strikers carefully, mindfully or just be really present with your teacup and hold it with two hands and pick it up. Maybe you don't think maybe you think it's silly? or something. But But why do you think it's silly? or Why do you feel that this is not worth it? Why do you think that there's something else is more important? So I found that, in doing this, I found there were times I was impatient times that I was thinking ahead to the future, I was worried about things, I noticed that I had a clear sense of what was important. And what was important was the things that I most want to get than to have. And once I got something, it didn't really matter. You know, it's important to get the get the dishes down, to put my food on. And that that was I was willing to do it carefully. But then when it's time to clean up the plate and put it back, I mean, that was that already served this function. The purpose of that is to get it over as quickly as I can. So I can go on to the next thing. And as I started seeing all these attitudes that I had, that I wouldn't have seen, unless I kind of began kind of looking or questioning, what is it like to be with this experience to really connect to it and be fully for this? For the for this? What are the hindrances? What are the beliefs to get in the way of giving a time to this, this activity to this, this is what I'm doing. I also found that doing this was a tremendous aid to mindfulness and made the mindfulness kind of more three dimensional. Because if I tried to just be mindful of everything I did, it lends itself to kind of just being kind of mental, a little bit during the head with it. But to be present for everything, to you know, so that the mindfulness had a sense of participation in the experience made the mindfulness more three dimensional. So I could be mindful of myself picking up the striker to ring the bell. That's not I can I can know I'm doing I can be present for that. But, but this kind of added kind of really being fully with something, as if that's the most important thing of the moment.

For me, that translated to let me participate with this experience. So how do we not just probably be more mindful and experience? How do I how does mindfulness also become How do I participate more fully in the action of the moment. And that made it more richer, more valuable, more connected, more intimate, more full experience, I have this, which I wouldn't have had, if you know if, you know, so

participating with putting the striker down, it actually feels much better in my arms and my hands, it just feels like it's connected and intimate. That No way, if you know, that doesn't do just tossing it down. So I'm not suggesting that you bow to your teacups, or your coffee cups. But, but maybe there's a way in which that kind of attention to the details of your life, that mundane experiences of your life can really be a way to augment and develop your practice of mindfulness, your practice of presence, your prep here on the path of freedom that we are on here, that you don't have to if you feel like you don't have enough time to meditate, do you have enough time to drink your coffee or your tea with really just being there for that one thing. And not to do it, reading the news or doing other things or doing it casually as if there's other things which are more important. But each moment is important to each thing, your contact and your mundane life makes it special by how the attention you bring to it.

So with that, I'll say that in a couple of minutes, we're going to those of you can stay we're going to clean the center. And if you would like you can clean up whatever you'd like. But perhaps cleaning is a chance to really be there for each activity of cleaning. As if that is you can fill in the blank. I don't know what with language words are that work for you. But as if that is a sacrament to do, or as if that is the most important thing in the moment. Or if that is where you have to kind of your whole life depends on just being fully there for that activity. Or if that's an act of love, as if you know you're with your lover and just with that you and that broom, sweeping, you know, you might see what is it you can bring. So, I hope you enjoy it. Thank you