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Dharma Talk

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So are there any questions about meditation, Buddhism, Zen, ... any kinds of questions that you have?

Question: (unclear on the audio tape, but regarding how to begin meditation practice)

So you mentioned an interesting thing. You said that there is some kind of search going on. Human beings are very interesting because one essential dimension of their lives is a search. And it comes about in many different kinds of ways. For example in English we talk about a *middle age crisis*, or we talk about our parents dying, or some accident happens like a near death experience on a motorcycle or falling off a roof, or a friend dies in an automobile accident, or a kid drowns out at the lake on the Fourth of July.

So human beings have many things in their lives that are like that, that will stop you up short for just a second when it happens. If your husband gets sick or you wife has a car accident, or if you get sick, or your children get sick. So from the time we're born, we're born in a situation where there's some kind of doubt about things. Human beings are naturally doubters because of what their thrown into.

When I was growing up in college there was this thing called *existentialism* that people were very interested in, it was in the late 50's and early 60's. And it emphasized a lot this thing called *doubt*. And I was always wondering what that was about because I also came from a Christian background, but then when I'd go to church I was like him I was wondering *what is this really? How does it really connect to my life*. But one thing inside I knew was: Wow, I didn't understand what was going on. And it wasn't just adolescence. I didn't understand what was going on when I was 25. And at 35, I was still wondering even though I had graduated from graduate school. So it comes in many different styles, but inside of everybody is this search.

Now, the search can transpire in several different ways. One way it transpires is by trying to find the answer by reading books, or listening to sermons, or even coming to things like this and listening to this talk. So he (Harold) said Catholicism presents this system of belief and it says: this is the only way. Then he played it off against someone going up to the Buddha and saying: *Is this the way for me?* And the Buddha saying: *I don't know*. Now that *points* to something because western religions, particularly middle-eastern religions tread on belief a lot, its not totally, but it treads on belief a lot. So people in middle-eastern religions are very concerned about what you believe. So just recently there were some attacks in London, and some of the spin around that, from Al Quada, is doing something about the infidels. And infidels are people who don't believe. So any middle-eastern religion has that strong belief element to it. It's not all of the religion obviously, but it does have that strongly.

But then this person goes up to the Buddha and asks: *Is this the correct path for me?* And he says: *Well, I don't know. Try it out.* So that's talking about something else. Now Buddha didn't ask him: *Well what do you believe? I mean, do you believe in me?* So the interesting thing about Buddhism if you want to call it a religion is that it is not based on belief. And if you join a Buddhist group, right away you'll notice they don't care what you believe. You can believe in anything. In fact, most of the people who come ... I live in a Zen center in Providence, Rhode Island, and Rhode Island is heavily Catholic. It's not like the mid-west. Like over 80% of the people are Catholic, so most of the people who come to the Zen center to practice meditation are Catholics, or Christians. Including myself. I wasn't a Catholic, I was a Presbyterian. But it doesn't make any difference because it's not about belief, it's about something else. And that something else is what he was talking about; doing some kind of practice, so it's more like a path.

So you say how do I do this by myself? Right? Well you already took a step because you came to this. Now I don't know if you thought about it but, we're not up here to *explain* anything to you. You notice that his examples were not explanations. They were all about searching and actually experiencing something. So his story about going to pick up his son from his estranged wife's house is about an *experience* he had. Now he could have read books about... wow, you have to let go of your anger, and how it's really not so good for you, ... and try this anger management program over here, alright? Ok that's not good, and that's not bad, but can you actually *do it*? Now the interesting thing about it was that he actually *did* it. Now I'm sure that that anger came back up in him again because ex-wives and ex-husbands and ex-girl friends and ex-boyfriends, and ex-many-things make us angry, right? Even just thinking about politics sometimes makes us angry. So then, ok, that's us that's there, but also you have happiness, you have joy, you also have desire and you want things. So anger is I don't want something. Desire is I want something, I want to hold on to something. But then where does real *happiness* lie? So all of these bring up questions about some kind of search for something else, like there must be some other kind of solution. By going and beating up his wife and dragging his kid back to his house was probably not going to be such a good solution to that situation. But he had experienced something else so he could use it at that time as a very practical kind of thing. So he said, practicing Zen had a very practical effect in his life. So usually our search is for some kind of real solution, not just another kind of explanation.

So everybody looks for explanations. You can look in the Bible. There are very good explanations there. You can look in the Koran, there are very good explanations there. You can look in Buddhist sutras, there's very good explanations there. You can look in these Zen stories, like the one he told about the old woman and the hermitage. There's good explanations there too. But then what are you really? So one thing about belief is ... belief *can* be,... it's not necessarily this, even in middle-eastern religions, ...it *can* be merely understanding. And your understanding goes out the window whenever you run into your ex-wife or something. So you read Jesus, and Jesus tells you some good things, and then you meet your ex-wife... so Jesus says if somebody hits you here then you say *Oh please, hit me here.* Ok that's good. Right? But, you know ... can you do that? Do Christians do that? Do Buddhists do it?(laughs) You know it's difficult, so Buddhism always points to some kind of practice, and this practice is part of this search.

So what would bring somebody to a talk like this is some kind of searching for something. So human beings always have this feeling like there's something lacking, like there's something artificial. You (Harold) talked about tooth pastes and deodorants and things like that, it's pretty easy to see through that but you know these other dimension of life are not so easy to see. So when your born, your born into this situation where naturally you search. So the primary thing you do in Buddhism or Zen practice about this search is you do some practicing. Not just understanding. So you can read books about Zen. I've read hundreds of them. My teacher always said, ... he said a very interesting thing, this is Zen Master Seung Sahn from Korea, ... he said that 5 minutes of sitting, ... and we sat for about a minute at the beginning of this thing, but just take that times 5. Five minutes of sitting is worth reading a hundred books on Zen. So when I first started being interested in Buddhism, I bought a lot of books. You can go to Borders and others, and in a medium-sized Borders, there's about 35 books on Zen. So you can buy them all, but you can save all that money by just sitting for five minutes (laughter). So that's a little tip about how to manage your money. But what it means is, ...that yeah, you can read all kinds of things in books, but what really pays off is... what are you like in your guts? So when you think about death, or you see death, or you think about your own death, ...did you solve that? So that's this searching.

So he said, part of Zen practicing is this question: *what am I?* That's the question the Buddha had. What is a human being anyway? I mean we're born...right?... does anyone here know where they came from originally? Because everybody knows their body came from their mother, right? But just before that sperm & egg got together there, where do you come from? And then when you die, ...there's another good question, ...where do you go? Everybody reads books. So in the bible, you know, it says you go to heaven. And then some conceive of heaven as some place. And some conceive of heaven as being within you. In the bible it says *the Kingdom of Heaven is within you*. Well if its within you then where exactly is it? Is it just above the pancreas, ...towards the heart, ...is it up in the mind somewhere? Where is it?

So those are questions that are very perplexing,... to any human being. And what's true happiness? You notice that you get things, but it doesn't take you very long to realize that these things also go away. So you're young and strong and you can think you'll live forever. In fact, Freud said inside of everybody's mind they're immortal. But if you look very closely, you'll notice you aren't immortal. If you look in the mirror every morning and you watch closely over the years, you'll notice that something starts to happen. You know, the flesh starts to fall off your face. So Freud said that inside of everybody's mind they're immortal, but you *aren't* immortal. So that brings up this big question, the same question the Buddha had when he left home to sit underneath the bodhi tree, was.. WHAT? And this wasn't just an abstract question, an abstract philosophical question like in a class in existentialism in college or something. What *are* we really? What is this about? Because one thing he realized early on was: *you don't get anything*. You don't even get this body. Even later on this evening, this body could be rotting away in the ground somewhere. So you don't know, ...you might not even leave this room. I might not leave this room. This talk might end abruptly. I have a friend that his wife was a nurse and worked in a doctor's office. They had two children and so she was working to make some extra money by being a receptionist at a doctor's office. Then 10 o'clock one morning, she was about 43 years old, she just dropped on the floor like she was dead - *ploom!* Then everybody ran in to the doctor and said *something bad has happened!... something bad has happened!* He

came out and saw the woman lying on the floor, so they rushed her to the hospital. And she had had a stroke. And it took about five years to come back from that. So there she is healthy, mother of two, going to work, 10 o'clock in the morning, *boom!* Now if it hadn't been in a doctor's office she would have been dead. But luckily she got to the hospital where they could give her all these meds they have for people who have had strokes, and so she recovered. And now it's been 10 years later and she's like 90 % recovered. So that could happen to anybody at any moment. So those are the things that lead human beings to be on a search for some real answers, ... not just intellectual answers, but *real answers*, answers that live in your guts.

So that's why we practice. So that's where it starts, but how to do it? That's what your question was about. One thing that people have done traditionally is they've gathered together to practice. So he says: I'm the dharma teacher at Ten Directions Group in Woodstock, Illinois. So people come together. One thing you'll find if you do practice meditation, it's very difficult to do it by yourself. It's a very interesting phenomena. You'll tell yourself: I'm going to sit down for 15 minutes and meditate, and then the first thing you'll do is get up and wash the dishes that you haven't washed for a week (laughter). You know anything can get you out of that. So its really good to practice with other people. Also, its instructive to practice together with other people. Because if your practicing meditation, its very easy to veer off course. Like this monk in the story who was sitting alone for 10 years. He got pretty far off the path, so the old woman burned his hermitage down and drove him away. So practicing with other people.

Now if you can't practice with other people, it's ok, practice at home, but get together with other people once in a while. And it's a very simple practice actually. You know that there's many texts in Buddhism. Many sutras. In fact, it's said that if you start studying Buddhism, it will take you at least five lifetimes. If you read all the texts, and all the commentaries on the texts, and all the commentaries on the commentaries, it's a lot of stuff out there. So scholars study and ruminate over this stuff constantly, and they have for thousands of years, so there's a lot of stuff. So a monk went up to the Buddha once and asked: if you had to put all of your teaching into one sentence, what would it be? So this is really good because he's going to condense all of these teachings, all of these 84, 000 volumes into one sentence. So he said, Oh if I had to do that I would say: *Don't be attached to anything*. So that's the point of meditation. The point of meditation is to let go of your attachments to things. So his story was about that. So he was driving with tunnel vision. Luckily he didn't have an accident because he was so angry. And then this other thing came up. And he was chanting the name of this Bodhisattva of Compassion, ... which is a meditation technique which allows you to let go of your thinking. So he let go of his thinking,... your anger comes from thinking, your desire also comes from thinking. So he detached from his thinking and then something else appeared. That something else is your true self.

So in Buddhism we talk about there's two selves. There's a surface self which is your likes and dislikes. And usually when you talk to people, and, you know, you want to find out what they're like, you ask them about their likes and dislikes. I like motorcycles. I like to go on picnics on Sunday, and I like Crosby Stills & Nash. And then you talk to someone else, and they say I like really big Lincoln-Continental cars, and I like to go to movies, and I like Beethoven. Right? So you're finding out about their likes and dislikes. So you're finding out about their attachments, what they're attached to in life, what they like and what they don't like.

But the Buddha taught that what we really are is not this surface consciousness. So usually you identify with this surface consciousness, this like and this dislike *self*. You call that yourself. But he said no, that isn't us. What we *truly* are is our *true self* which doesn't have likes and dislikes. It only has compassion and love for all beings. But usually this original self, this true self, this original nature is covered over by something. It's covered over kind of like the sun is covered over by clouds, ...by this like and dislike mind. So meditation is just this technique to return to your original mind. So meditation is not intended to engender a special state of mind. Like you're not trying to hypnotize yourself. You're not trying to put yourself in a trance. Like he said, you're trying to *wake up*. That means let the clouds of like and dislike disperse for just a second. Then the sun appears naturally. So he also said it's not a self-help thing. Because you're not trying to *recreate* anything. You're just returning to what you originally were. What you originally are. Then when you think, ... it's *clear*; when you see, ... it's *clear*; when you feel, ... it's *clear*; when you hear, smell, taste, ... everything gets really *clear*. It happens to us many times a day, but then the thinking comes back and covers things over again. Then we go off somewhere. So meditation at it's core is keeping what we call a *just now* mind.

So all these meditation techniques that you read about like following your breath, keeping you're eyes open, saying a phrase to yourself, even like the Jesus prayer, ... all of those things are just techniques *pointing*, ...pointing to this original mind. And that original mind is the thing that's important for human beings to experience because that's where true happiness is. It isn't in the likes and the dislikes. Most people think that happiness comes from satisfying your likes and getting rid of everything you dislike. But unfortunately, and you don't have to take my word for it, unfortunately that doesn't happen, because that's what we call *outside happiness*. So outside happiness is based on circumstances *external* to your original mind which are always changing, ... always changing. And the most brutal way it does it is through age. So no matter what happens, ... well maybe you'll die of an accident before it happens, but old age, sickness, and death, those things come to every human being and then, ... *gone*, ...then where do you go? So I asked: Where do you come from? Where do you go? So those questions can be answered. Unfortunately, the books don't have the answers. In fact, *Zen* doesn't have the answers. Every human being has these *inside*, if they *look*. So these meditation techniques are teaching you how to look inside to find this true self that isn't dependent on likes and dislikes, ... and isn't dependent on outside situations.

So how you do that is... you just have to start doing it. And nobody can do it for you. You know your husband can maybe make you do it, but then you'll stop. And I can force you to do it, but you'll stop. *You* have to do it *yourself*. And that's why the Buddha said: *Well, I don't know if it's right for you. Why don't you try it?* But that was a kind of trap because every human being is looking for something. So he just pulls out these simple techniques for you to find out for yourself. So when he died, he said a very simple thing; he just said: *Life is short. Please investigate it closely*. So life is short. You notice how everyone is always saying how life is short? I probably hear that at least once a day. I just heard myself say it. You hear it a lot, ... life is short. In fact, ever culture has that phrase in it. Did you ever notice they never say *how* short? That's interesting. How short is your life? It could be that when you're six years old you're middle aged. Or it could be that when you're fifty you're middle aged. You don't know. So that's where the

search comes from. And these are the techniques to find the answer. The answer is inside. It means finding your *true* self. The self that's before your like and your dislike mind. So how you do that...? I don't know, but come and find out. It's possible to find out.

So what you'll learn if you go to any meditation group, even a Christian meditation group,... or an Islamic one, ... we have a Zen center in Seattle, and one of the strongest members there is a Muslim, and he comes to practice Zen because Zen is this very simple, generic meditation *style*, that anybody can use. Christians can use it. Muslims can use it. Even *Buddhists*... (laughter). They all use it. But the words aren't important. The important thing is this *experience*. So start doing it, and then you'll find out for yourself. And how you do that? Well, join some kind of group. There's one here. There's probably one around where you are. In the end it doesn't matter what *kind* it is. What's important is the looking inside part. And then you'll understand, ...even Christianity. Because all religions *point* to the same thing. They all point towards love. Christians say God is love, and we ultimately are love. Christians say Christ lives inside of you. Well, what part is that? So that's how you do it. Any other questions?

Question: What do you think of spirituality and soul?

Spirituality and soul? Those are *words*. Those are words that *point* to something. Spirituality and soul are just like a banana. They're exactly like a banana. Exactly... (laughter) In fact, there isn't any difference between the word *banana* and the word *soul*. So you understand banana, right? But if you didn't understand banana, ... let's say you were an Eskimo, then, well we could show you a videotape here of banana trees. Like, I just came from Singapore, and our Zen center there has about five banana trees growing in the nice landscaping around the temple. So there they are, they're growing there. And we have a Zen center in Mexico City and I always stay at this hotel that has a banana tree growing outside my room. I'm from Nebraska, so it's a little strange for me to be around banana trees, but I learned a very interesting thing because bananas grow *up*, they don't grow down. But I always thought as a kid because you go to the grocery store and see whole bunches of bananas, and I always thought they grew down, but they grow up. And they have the most incredible flower on them that you have ever seen in your life. It's like this bird of paradise flower, you know you can buy at the flower shop, .. it's like that. It's incredible. And you have to take this long knife with a hooked blade on the end ... (tape ends)

... Over the years people have modified bananas, so now they're really big, and they pick them green. So how do you feel about a banana now? I've told you a lot about it, but if you're an Eskimo, you're stilling sitting there thinking: uh, but ...what is it? But there's an easy solution for the banana problem, and that is (mimes peeling and eating a banana). Um... now how does it taste? Well it's kind of somewhere between a paw-paw and a, ... I can't tell what the other thing is. So soul is the same way. So show me soul. It's a nice word. Right, so everybody always throws their hands up in the air and says: well, I don't know. So those are words, spiritual & soul, are words that are pointing to something, ... pointing to something. So in Buddhism we have this very interesting metaphor, and the Buddha used it a lot, and that is always with these kinds of teaching words, like soul, spiritual,... I just used true nature, original nature, basic

nature...Christians might use God nature or they might use Christ nature.... those are all like fingers pointing at the moon, but as with any finger pointing at the moon, you all know that this (indicating his finger) is not so important. What's important is over here. So a small child, if you point at the moon, they'll look up. And when you look at the moon, ... even when you're old and you look at the moon, it's pretty amazing. So the important thing in that paradigm is not so much the finger, but the moon. So there's many fingers pointing at our moon because all of us have the moon.

So when the Buddha got enlightened the first thing he said was: *Wow, this is incredible! Everybody already has it,... but they don't know that they have it. Because they don't know that they have it, they suffer.* So the Buddha said that human suffering comes from the fact that human beings do not understand what they truly are. In other words, they have a misconception about what's happening here. So they *think* that what they really are is their likes and dislikes, but what they truly are is something else. So his teaching is like a finger pointing at this moon.

But there's many fingers pointing at the moon, right? Even within Catholicism there's many different fingers. There's a Spanish, or Mexican kind of style of Catholicism. There's an Irish style. Where I'm from there's an Italian style, in Rhode Island. There's definitely an Italian finger pointing at the moon there. There's many kinds. But what happens with human beings? Unfortunately, they get into a situation where they attach to the finger. And after they attach to the finger, they start finger fighting. Even within Catholicism. So they spend their whole life finger fighting, rather than ... *hello*, you know over here, ... like the rhetorical *hello!*... that people are always doing. Like look at Northern Ireland. One dimension to the conflict in Northern Ireland is religious. So you've got Protestants,... and they wear their orange clothes and do their marches. Then on the other side of the wall is Catholics... well their actually the same religion because their both Christians, right? So why are they doing this? Somebody is *attached* to something. So it's very important not to attach to the fingers, ...whether it's a Buddhist finger, a Christian finger, or an Islamic finger. You know human beings do a lot of this, ... and have for thousands of years. Like in the Middle East... how long have they been fighting in the Middle East with each other? Four or five thousand years? Maybe a little more than that. And who's winning? Like, sometimes one group's on top, then the other group's on top, and then the other group...and it goes around and around and around. Right now there's one group that's on top, but who knows how long that will last? And then it will flip. And it's flipping all the time. So it's very important to see what that is.

So you mentioned spiritual, and you mentioned soul. Those are two very good words. But what's the banana like? So that's what Buddhism always points to. What's it *really* like? And not just in your head, but what's it like in your guts? That means in your whole being. It's a very interesting situation that human beings find themselves in.

Question: So master, is Zen a finger too?

Yep! Don't attach to it! (Laughter)

Question: And Tibetan...?

Tibetan Buddhism also... yes, right... they all point to the same thing. Actually they're all exactly the same thing. We think they're different, but that's made by our thinking. Right? So maybe you like bright colors, and you like,... exotic places. So maybe you'll lean toward Tibetan Buddhism. Tibet is a very exotic place and all the monks there wear very bright colors... maroon, yellow, and orange get ups. Now maybe you like more subdued colors and you like really hot foods, and you like places that aren't quite so exotic and are more convenient to live in, and maybe you'd like Korean Buddhism. Because we wear very subdued colors and Koreans eat very hot food, and Korea is a very congenial country to live in, ... it's not so exotic. So people because of their likes and dislikes, they'll be drawn toward certain things. But in Buddhism all those things are the same because they all teach about just one thing: find your true self, and help the world. Ultimately they all point to that. So yeah, they're different fingers. It's always stupid actually, but sometimes Buddhists of different types will do a little finger fighting themselves (Laughter) That's *really* stupid.

Question: I'm curious about the role of community in Buddhism.

Community is everything in Buddhism. So the Buddha said: there are many important things in life but the most important thing is Sangha, which means community. So the question is... as he said, it's not just for me, but how do I relate to everything around me,...my friends, my acquaintances, my dog, my wife, the garbage, my car.... everything. So community is everything in Buddhism. So, yeah, the search is within but this *within* is... how do I make things correct in my relationship with everything,... moment to moment to moment to moment?

That's why one of our main meditation techniques in our school of Zen is *together action*. Together action means acting with other people. So our Zen centers are always groups of people who come together to practice. Yeah, they're looking inside, but that looking inside has a purpose, it has a direction to it. And that direction is to help the world. So there's a saying: Zen hermits always come back. And what it means is, ... if you go off to practice, whether it's for five minutes or for ten years, ... your job is not to live alone in some cave somewhere, but to help the world. That's the Buddha's teaching. So the Buddha sat under a tree, ... by himself in the end, ..although he practiced with five other guys also towards the end, five ascetics. But, then when he woke up, he left to help the world. And he spent the last forty-five years of his life til he was about eighty years old, helping the world. So that means, that's a human being's job. That's what a human being is here for. A human being isn't here for themselves,... that's their *delusion* or their *dream*,... we call it your *I, my, me* dream,... your like and dislike dream, ... but to let go of your dream and then help the world. So that's community in Buddhism. It's actually everything.

It even functions as a meditation technique because when you act with other people, it's very difficult to hold onto your own opinion. If you're sitting alone in a room for ten years, like this monk (in the story), ... you can have any opinion you like and hold onto it forever. But interacting

with other people, that's really difficult. It's the most aggravating meditation practice,...practicing with other people.

Question: How can I raise my children in the dharma?

I don't know. (Laughter) Be kind to them and loving and give them direction. Because small children aren't so interested in meditation. First of all, they don't have the big question yet. Usually questions about life and death don't concern children. It's not until they get to be about seventeen or eighteen years old that it dawns on people that there's a problem, a real problem here. Mostly it's that way. And then young people usually have trouble doing meditation because their hormones are really strong, so they usually like to do motion kinds of meditation like martial arts. But bringing your family up in, what did you call it, ...the dharma? ..is raising them correctly. Giving them good direction with love. (Laughs) It's not anything special. Although it is kind of special given the way human society usually transpires. Actually part of doing that is doing some practice and searching yourself. Then when those hard questions come from children, you're just not *blah, blah, blah*, ... but you have something to say and something to exemplify. In Buddhism, the teaching is mostly done through example not so much the *blah, blah, blah, blah, blah*. Anyone can *blah, blah, blah, blah, blah*. I've just done it a lot tonight. It's not so important. What's important is *you* doing some searching inside. That's why the Buddha said *life is short please investigate it closely*. That means you look inside. He also said: *I have 84, 000 kinds of medicine for what ails human beings*. That means to cure their suffering. *But I can't take the medicine for them*. So usually people go to the doctor and say I have this and this illness. And then the doctor writes out a prescription. And then you go home and you just read the prescription. You know, after about four days you'll notice that you're not getting better; you're just *reading* the prescription. Better is to *fill* the prescription,... and *take it*. So the Buddha said, I can't do it for you. Sorry. I know he'd like to do it for you, but it's impossible. So you're the one who has to do it. Nobody can do it for you. They can *help* you but they can't do it for you.

Question: What about taking a stand on political issues?

One time I was at a talk like this, and my teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn was answering questions, and the same question was asked. So he said: *If a dog and a cat are fighting, whose side do you take?* I thought, what does that mean? And it took me a while to figure it out,... but if you're a cat lover, and you see a dog and a cat fighting, you think: *that dog is taking advantage of that cat*. But if you're a dog lover, you think: *That cat is really acting unfair because it keeps scratching the nose of the dog, and that's not fair*. And I don't know who wins ultimately in this fight, but in Buddhism there's only one side of any argument. Now usually when we think about arguments we think about two sides, right? So maybe there's the Democratic side and there's the Republican side. Or there's the Israeli side and the Palestinian side. Situations of conflict always have two sides.

But the Buddha taught that there's actually only one side, and that's the people that are suffering. So you can almost guarantee within any conflict situation there is suffering on both sides. So if

you listen to what the Israelis say about the Palestinians, you think: *yeah, yeah, that sounds right*. And if you listen to what the Palestinians say about the Israelis you think: *Oh, yeah that's right*. I mean if you really listen to what they say. Well in the midst of all this mish-mash of the conflict with each other, there's a lot of suffering going on, ...on both sides. I have friends that are Israelis. They've come to this country because they don't want to deal with that situation. And I have a friend who owns a coffee shop in Cumberland, Rhode Island who's a Palestinian, and I listen to him,...and I know he came here to get away from the same thing. Now he lives in Cumberland, Rhode Island. Both of them are just as angry here as they were there. So any side will have suffering in it, for sure. So our job is to see it, to see it clearly, take away *our* like and dislike,... to see it clearly and then say: how do I help? Because both sides, I guarantee you, need help in any kind of conflict. That's why there's a conflict to begin with. But usually we identify with one side,... either we're a cat lover or we're a dog lover. We think cats have an unfair advantage over dogs or we think dogs have an unfair advantage over cats. It's usually how the mind works. Mine does (laughs).

So when I was in graduate school the whole thing was the Vietnam War and Richard Nixon. But those situations arise all the time. If you're on the right, then you didn't like Bill Clinton, and if you're on the left, you don't like George Bush. Whose next? Somebody else is next,... you know it's always this. But where's the real,... what's the real source of the suffering and what can you really do about it? You have to see that clearly. Now what that is,...I don't know. That's for you to find out. Because life is really complex and tangled, and like suffering is everywhere, so every human being has a really big job.

So the Buddha said when you're born, you're born into an ocean of suffering, well that means that every human being has a really big job, because it's our job to help with that. There was one time when someone was asking a question about suffering and when does it end, ... so my teacher Zen Master Seung Sahn said: *Well Jesus lived 2000 years ago, ...how's he doing? How's it going? How are things working out?* And then he said: *Buddha was born 2500 years ago, how's he doing? .. you know, is suffering like more or less?* And what that means is that we just have a really big job. And that job is to help our friends, our acquaintances, to help the people at work, to help our family. That's our job. Like he said, our job is to deal with what's right in front of us.

Even somebody like Mother Theresa, you know, who did she help? Well she helped Catholic people; she helped Hindu people; she even helped Muslims. You know if they were lying in the gutter there dying she wasn't asking them what religion they were. She would take them to her place and help them. But what did she ever do for people in Detroit? Well her example did something, right? ... but she was never there. So every human being faces that. You have to be an example and help the people around you. Then *you're* Mother Theresa. So that's every human being's job.

So what are you going to do about Darfur? Oh, what are you going to do about Northern Ireland? What are you going to do about the Ukraine? What are you going to do about the people in South Africa? So it seems overwhelming, but actually your job is right in front of you, just now. That's

what you do. That's your job. So you can abstractly think about George Bush and what his policies are, and who knows what, but I don't know. Maybe I like him; maybe I don't like him, but, ...oh right in front of me is somebody that needs help probably. Or maybe it's time to brush me teeth, or maybe it's time to eat dinner. To do that clearly, that helps the whole world. It's not abstract. It's very down to earth, but it's called *helping the whole world*. Which just means you're not contributing to all this mess that we're in.

So that's enough blah, blah, blah. What's very important is every day doing a little bit of this meditation practice, so you can let go of your likes and dislikes, and then you can see things clearly, both inside and outside you. And then it's possible to help. If you're always attached to your like and dislike mind, it's very difficult to see. It's like his tunnel vision on the way over to his ex-wife's house. We live there unfortunately quite a bit. We live in that car with him. And it comes in all kinds of different forms. From not liking how the toilet paper comes off the roll, (laughter) ...to wanting to kill our ex-wife. It comes in all different forms. But it's important to be clear about it, very clear. Watch, watch, watch. I don't know how it works, but watching moment to moment to moment, ... it's the best thing you can take. Except, you have to take it.

Meditation is very, very, very simple. Someone can teach you how to do it in one minute. But then you have to do it. And the result will come just from doing it. It's not based on how smart you are or how spiritual you are, what class you're from, what gender you are, how wealthy you are. It's not based on any of those things. It's just based on *doing* it. Then the result will come naturally. In Zen we say *spring comes, the grass grows by itself*. Do some practicing and naturally you'll have a result. Ok? Try that. It's better than the other thing, believe me. Thank you for coming and listening.