

7. talk – engaged buddhism - chaplaincy work

Welcome everybody, I'm back again after spending 5 days at the 100 anniversary celebration of the US Sotoshu mission in Los Angeles and after 5 days of Sesshin. So a few weeks have passed since my last talk.

Last time I ended with the observation that our own emptiness is the precondition for the four Bodhisattva actions, I would say that our emptiness is the practice to clear our mind to act like a Bodhisattva more and more, or to become mature Bodhisattvas acting in the world. This all is based on our experiences in our zazen practice and supported by the framework that develops out of our dharma studies.

Today I would like to devote special attention to the third embracing Bodhisattva action, Beneficial action. Nowadays, this often goes hand in hand with the term "Engaged Buddhism", and it has taken many different forms.

Issan Dorsay, Zen priest and former drag queen, who opened the first AIDS hospice in San Francisco around 1990 and whose life is described very impressively in the book „Street Zen“, once said in response to a question about what he had to say about engaged Buddhism: "I don't know anything about it. But when someone is down on the floor, I help them up."

This view has carried me along from the very beginning, it has encouraged me to act from this intention.

There is this Koan about Joshu Jūshin, his Chinese name is Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen. He lived in China in the eighth or ninth century and we heard a lot about him in the Genzoe's, especially in the last one.

His koans in the Biyan Lu, or "Blue Cliff records," and in the Wumenguan, the "Mummonkoans," are among the most famous, Koans,

I'm sure you all know the one about whether a dog has Buddha nature or not.

He is featured in the following koan:

“One day Joshu fell down in the snow, the snow was man high so that you could not see him anymore and he called out, “Help me up! Help me up!” A monk came by and lay down beside him and also dug himself completely into the snow, Joshu got up and went away.”

It took me some time to understand what this koan wants to tell me and why I got stuck on this koan in particular.

Like many koans, perhaps all koans, it's about relationships and the interdependent origination. At some point I realized that the action of helping in this koan is about the space that the monk shares with Joshu, and the fact that Joshu managed to come out of the snow by himself. In a mundane way of seeing the world, it is a very strange to express compassion for someone.

When we start caring about others, we always must be careful that we don't get stuck in our

ideas about the world. We must be careful not to give in to some form of activism that might currently be en vogue. Reflecting on this topic and one's own intention seems to be very important in my point of view. Any form of activism shapes our practice into a political action that arises purely out of a discursive attitude of our mind. Quite often, it only shows how big our ego-centeredness is. Like I said in my last talk, Dogen says in the "Mountains and Waters Sutra" that we must unhook our ideas, that is, take them off the hook of our self. We must always subject these ideas to deep investigation.

We must also trace their sources, find out where they come from, and most importantly, whom they benefit in the end. We must not allow ourselves to be taken in by political agendas just because they are fashionable and in line with the spirit of the times.

We must never forget our vows. These vows are about helping people to free themselves from suffering, always, without any political agendas or ideologies. In fact, our whole practice is always about realizing the true reality. We can only sense this level of reality in our direct actions.

That is, in our direct environment, in our direct relationships with everyone and everything. It is in direct action and not in our ideas about action that this is witnessed. Our ideas about it are all just a fiction, that is, delusion.

There is this story I found in an old edition of „Opening the hand of thought“ in the Q&A part that is now missing. A student asked Uchiyama Roshi a question and he is talking about his teacher Francois A. Viallet. Hojo-san told me that he knows Viallet. He was an Austrian French person with a PhD in philosophy and he was the first European in Antaiji who got the transmission from Uchiyama Roshi.

He translated "Jinsei Ryori no hon - How to cook your life" into German. Last year, my sangha in Vienna read it and compared it with the English translation by Thomas Wright. And it was really interesting to see the different styles and how the cultural background created two different books.

Viallet was a friend of Teilhard de Chardin, he was a French Jesuit, anthropologist, and philosopher who wrote many books and was very well known.

Viallet made a great effort to create a dialogue between Christianity and Zen. His strong Christian influence can be clearly felt in the translation.

Anyway, his student was in Antaiji and asked the following question to Uchiyama: "During a dharma lecture several years ago in France, Reverend Viallet, who later became your disciple, presented this sort of koan to our group:

A communist went to the master and said, "I can't practice because the ideological differences are too strong." The master replied, "Well, I'm a communist, too."

Then a fascist went before the master saying that he couldn't practice zazen, either, for the same reasons. The master gave the same reply—I'm a fascist, too. To other people's comments, the master replied in the same way: I am that, too.

Then one day, when all these people happened to be talking among themselves, they realized that they had been tricked by the master. They were furious and finally decided to arm themselves and go teach the master a lesson. When the master saw them coming, he shouted: "Zazen!" and they all fell down in a faint."

I will shorten the story to the points that are important for us here:

Uchiyama Roshi answered: "I can hold up a cup and say it is red, but from that side of the table you might be able to see only white. It's really just a matter of how you look at things. The communists fight with the fascists, saying red, while the fascists on the other side say white. Actually, though, it is neither one. The cup is just what it is, I am the reality I am, and you are the reality that you are. Now, when reality settles on itself, that is what we call the reality of Life. Sitting, returning to the reality of what one truly is, is zazen. In other words, philosophies and ideologies are nothing but singular ways of looking at the world. When you look from some angle it is only natural that everyone's view will be different.

As long as people look at things from an angle, there is always going to be conflict; it will never end.

The idea of putting an end to looking at life from some angle appears in the Suttanipata, in the words of Shakyamuni. When everyone's running around shouting that he is the one speaking the truth, what else is there to do but to tell everyone to shut up and sit down?

What is most essential is that each person returns to the reality of his or her own life and sits within that reality. It just makes sense to live in this way. There is certainly nothing wrong with people in the world quieting down a little bit. Doing zazen means just that—to let go of all viewpoints and return to the reality of life."

This is what Uchiyama Roshi says, and what is this reality of life? The basis of our action as bodhisattvas is the effort to eliminate suffering, or at least to alleviate it.

The methods we use as Bodhisattvas arise directly in the moment and are based on our own practical experience, and, in the case of chaplains, also on the experience of our training. However, our methods and skills must always be related to the respective moment that which we experience right here and now.

Of course, we need to train our skills and acquire basic knowledge, but the implementation of this knowledge is only true or real if it is in harmony with the respective moment and whatever it is the moment calls for.

However, we can only experience this in the particular moment and this moment is the reality of life in this specific moment.

The concept of cause and condition and mutual interdependence clearly shows that we only know what the situation really requires right in the moment of action.

These days, we express our opinions far too quickly and too often on social media, judging and commenting situations and things with just a few words or simply with emojis. We do this based on our ideas, of which we don't even know how they have been generated over the years, even over generations.

We don't know how they came about and where their roots are, who brought them into the world and, above all, whom they benefit in the end. We find things good or bad within a few seconds and spread this opinion on the internet, send it out into the world, instead of witnessing our bodhisattva vows in our real life, in the moment, in face-to-face relationships.

"May I be a protector to the defenseless,
a guide for those who have set out on their journey.
For those who want to cross the water, to the other shore,
may I be a boat, a raft, a bridge."

This is from: *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, 3.18 – Shantideva

Shantideva was a king's son from southern India who lived in the first half of the eighth century and became a monk in a large monastery called Nalanda. He was and is very important in the Tibetan tradition. He wrote the "Bodhicharyavatara", which translates to "The entry into the path of enlightenment", or also "bliss", Pema Chödrön translated it as "The Path of the Bodhisattva" and she wrote a wonderful book called "No time to lose" with commentaries on that classic text.

I read this book in the early years of my practice and I have a habit of highlighting important passages in books and also of marking them with sticky markers in different colors, depending on their importance. And this book is full of pink sticky markers, the color for very important parts of the text.

In the book, Pema gives a lot of advice and guidance on how we should deal with the kleshas, those ungraspable energies.

She talks about living in klesha-addiction and therefore having to treat them as such, and the healing power of self-reflection and that we must not ignore our emotions, but look closely at them.

We also have to look closely at the feelings of shame and guilt that are so important in our western world. From my point of view, guilt and shame are seen differently in eastern culture, like I mentioned in one of my previous talks.

These two emotions very quickly lead to self-doubt and by extension self-hatred and self-destruction. This is not the destruction of the self which would be considered very positive in the zen sense, no, it is about the destructive force that only produces self-hatred and transforms nothing, but only uproots us, and cuts us off from our the source.

As I discussed in my third lecture, the way we deal with emotions in Zen is not so direct. We put everything into our zazen and its slow transformation effect. Energetic practices like Neidan, which I also discussed in the third lecture, can help too.

After Shantideva, another bodhisattva model became important for me very quickly, namely Vimalakirti, I think mainly because he was able to realize lay life so deeply with his bodhisattva existence and that was very instructive and helpful for me. In addition, he was a merchant, entrepreneur and much more. Everyone, no matter their status, respected him very much.

The Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra was written almost 2000 years ago and is also called the "Sutra of Unimaginable Salvation". It addresses important questions such as "What is a bodhisattva? How does he or she act?"

As is often the case in the sutras, it begins with a supernatural action by the Buddha, he is given umbrellas by many visitors and unites them into a single great umbrella that spans all the galaxies and is then asked how one can attain the purity of the Buddhahood. The Buddha replies that the Buddhahood of the Bodhisattvas lies within each individual being.

"If the bodhisattvas wish to attain the Pure Land, they must purify the heart and mind, and when the heart and mind are purified, the Buddhahood also becomes pure." Śāriputra then wonders if the Buddha's heart was impure, since this world is so impure.

The Buddha recognizes this thought and replies that in reality the world is always pure, but beings cannot see this purity because of their spiritual delusion.

Because Śāriputra still cannot believe this, the Buddha shows him the purity of the world. After this miracle, desire for supreme enlightenment arises in many of those present, or they attain various stages of realization."

Then Vimalakirti enters the story and people learn that he is a lay person, living with a wife and children and doing business, perfuming himself and putting on jewelry. But his actions show that he is a true Bodhisattva and he uses many skillful means, "upaya", to work for the benefit of all living beings. He even went into brothels, where he pointed out the ruin of excess to the people, and helped people to get away from alcohol.

As a skillful means, he also gets sick and 1000s of people visit him and he tells them about the shortcomings of the body and encourages everyone to always seek the body of the Tathagata.

By the way, Ryuten Rosenblum, my first teacher, was very often sick for a while and he whined to Shunryu Suzuki that it was getting on his nerves and Shunryu Suzuki only replied, "A good monk is always sick".

At some point Vimalakirti wonders why the Buddha does not send anyone to visit him when he is sick. Buddha recognizes this thought, due to his supernatural powers, and then asks his disciples to go to Vimalakirti. One by one they refuse to do so, because they have already had an encounter with Vimalakirti and were ashamed to realize that Vimalakirti's enlightenment is so outstanding, more outstanding than their own, that they were all ashamed.

Disciple after disciple tells stories about why he can't go to Vimalakirti. In telling the stories of their previous encounters with Vimalakirti, the whole Mahayana teaching is offered, about meditation, suchness, and how through his speeches hundreds of lay people always reach the highest enlightenment.

Finally, since no one wants to go, Manjushri goes, he is ready to face Vimalakirti and everybody comes along, because they know what a great and wonderful Dharma teaching will be offered when Manjushri and Vimalakirti come together.

And that's where the sutra really begins, we're in chapter 5 five 14.

So onward:

Due to his supernatural powers, Vimalakirti knew immediately that Manjushri was on his way, and he cleared out his room, also with his supernatural powers, only the sick bed remained and he went to bed and pretended to be sick.

"Welcome, Mañjuśrī! You come here as if you were not one who comes, and you see as if you do not see." Mañjuśrī replied, "Lord, what you say is right. If a man has already come, he does not come, and if he has gone, he does not go. And why? For a man who comes, there is no place from where he comes, and for one who goes, there is no place to where he goes."

Nagarjuna sends his regards here!

And further, Vimalakirti states:

"Foolishness arises from desire, and that is the cause of my sickness. Because all beings are sick, I am also sick. When they will be cured, I will also be cured."

The conversation goes on like this for a very long time. The two protagonists talk about many things, but especially about the teaching of non-duality - connectedness, and in the 10th chapter the conversation is over:

After this teaching on entering the doctrine of non-duality, all five thousand assembled bodhisattvas entered the doctrine of non-duality and attained the patient acceptance of the non-existence of all dharmas (anutpattika-dharma-ksānti).

Then, of course, Vimalakirti goes on and reveals thoughts of the other bodhisattvas who are still there and teaches them, for this Vimalakirti puts himself in the samādhi state and with the help

of his supernatural power he revealed before the great assembly a land called Sarvasugandhā, which one can reach if one passes through all the Buddha lands in the upper worlds. And he continues in the teachings also about the 6 paramitas, what a funny coincidence that Hoko talked about them last week – the six Paramitas, or the six virtues that can be very helpful in our liberation, Pāramitā (sanskrit.), literally means "reaching the other shore," that is "realizing the truth." The six Pāramitās (rokudo 六度) are:

giving, generosity – discipline - vows - patience – diligence – meditative concentration and wisdom

In the Vimalkirti Sutra, many other teachings on how to act as a Bodhisattva follow, and it ends with praises and the handing over of the sutra, which is named : “unimaginable liberation”

For me, these are the prerequisites for committed Buddhism, this is our basis and we should not get excited about political ideas or get pulled in this direction. Our actions are not for a special class or elite only, our actions must be inclusive of all beings.

But they must be balanced with wisdom and compassion, so that we leave no one behind. When we exclude anybody, separate and divide the world into good and evil we are not fulfilling our bodhisattva duties.

We must be aware and let go of everything, even if we believe we are on the right side, who knows which side is right? We open our hearts and broaden our perspectives, also and especially on what we do not like. This is what leaving the household means, in my point of view.

Beneficial action manifests in many small things, not in the big things. A Bodhisattva should not be visible says Vimalakirti. He is like the Avalokiteshvara with 1000 hands, one hand for every occasion where help is needed. It is like reaching for the pillow in the night.

This is our Bodhisattva Ideal and the vows we always chant after the talk give us the framework. Living by vow and not by karma is an important quote in our lineage and I will tell you more about karma in a few minutes.

I work mostly in prisons. It is an ideal field of practice It constantly helps me to break down my inner walls, to open my heart and to expand my habitual perspectives.

The German word "Seelsorge" has many possible translations or meanings in English. Counseling, chaplaincy, pastoral care, ministry, spiritual care, contemplative care. The variety of terms shows how important this all is here in the US.

And things are very different in Europe or in Austria and Germany in particular but I try to open this field and support the development of Buddhist chaplaincy work in general with all other Buddhist traditions.

Koryu from our Viennese sangha and I are now members of the working group for chaplaincy of the German Buddhist Union and we spent the last few years translating the important book “The Arts of Contemplative Care” into German and it was released a few weeks ago.

In the Japanese Sotozen practice, the focus is mostly on the monastic practice and for sure this is important, but also there are more and more attempts to develop this field of chaplaincy and Hozan Alan Senauke, who has done great bodhisattva work, will get in contact with a Japanese chaplain who will build an international chaplaincy network .

If you take a look at the organizational chart of the Sotoshu, you have to look for a long time until you find the small department for prison chaplaincy.

This characteristic is certainly also a Western phenomenon that has a lot to do with the Judeo-Christian religions and the interpretation of mercy and how this interpretation has developed in the time of industrialization, when the State slowly started to take over the tasks of caring that were formerly performed by the Church. As far as I know, and I do not know much, social support is organized differently in Asian societies. This is an exciting field for social studies and hopefully some academics will explore this field more.

I would like to focus on the practical level right now and not get lost in institutional and organizational examples. But I think it is very important to think about the framework for our bodhisattva actions and how we bring this into the world for the benefit of the society. And it is time to bring the merit, or the fruits of our practice, to other beings on different levels and I can see that this happens more and more.

The starting point of our actions as chaplains is always our own Buddhist practice, or in other words, our actions should arise from sharing our practice. It is the role of a spiritual guide to help alleviate suffering and support inner liberation.

This role can take many different forms, depending on what is needed at any given moment. Meditating together, entering silence, as the most direct practice, is certainly our most important practice. Also lecturing and especially to be an example are often forgotten virtues. It is also very much about active listening as I have described and often also simply about giving time, in short: about giving, Dana as we all know now is the first of the four embracing bodhisattva action, “Shishobo”

This practice is primarily about ourselves, about being present in the present moment and about the possibility to find transformation and to open our heart right here and now, and to experience the interconnectedness in this very moment and pass it on.

We practice empathizing with the emerging of our own being, mostly in everyday situations, and thereby develop more understanding for ourselves and our surroundings and recognize the threads of relationship, which is nothing other than interconnectedness.

The basic questions of our actions should always be: What makes me do this, why am I doing this? Exploring these questions should become one of the most important practices of our practice in pastoral care. As we seek to clarify these questions, we assist ourselves in resolving our karmic entanglements.

These explorations can also help us to break down our own walls, to dissolve our inherent separateness bit by bit, and to move toward the ideal of being a Bodhisattva and being in connection with ourselves and our world, feeling this connection from moment to moment, opens healing spaces for ourselves and others.

These questions help us to develop compassion for ourselves and thus open our hearts to ourselves and in this understanding of ourselves we also open ourselves to others and can show them compassion. And as we know, developing compassion is one of the great goals of our practice.

In our daily pastoral life, this means that from the felt practical experience of the interdependent nature of everything, we learn that we also, or primarily, help ourselves by supporting others.

In the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 25 it is said: "The amount of auspicious giving is immeasurable like the sea."

In this form of sharing practice, all four Bodhisattva actions can be practiced and realized. In various ways, the action of giving is also always accompanied by loving words. Out of this, beneficial actions arise, and without identity action we cannot meet anyone right where they are, we always miss them.

I will tell you a bit more about how I use this field as a practice container in the new essay book of our sangha, it will be presented next week.

When we are asked what we do, the most important answer is:

We don't give advice, we give space – like I said in the beginning, when I told you about Joshu in the snow.

Another important requirement is reflection, which takes the form self-reflection, supervision and intervision.

In addition, the willingness to engage in dialogue is necessary.

The premise is: the second of the four Bodhisattva actions, "loving words" and listening. In order to be able to do this, we need training, also in communicative behavior such as "Insight Dialogue" created by Gregory Kramer, the dialogue school of David Bohm, or non-violent communication created by Marshal Rosenberg. To have some training in these methods is an advantage. My wife Kogyu Sabine, my dharma sister Koryu Susanne and I developed our own

practice form based on these methods. We call it: “Connectedness Practice”, in German “Verbundenheitspraxis” and to teach this is part of our project “1000 Hands” – www.1000haende.at

No matter what we do, it is important not to forget that we have to be called or asked for help, we do not missionaries.

And we have to protect ourselves from thinking we are good people and changing the world. We never know how our actions will affect us, which karmic entanglements they will encounter, no matter how good our intentions are.

I know of several stories that illustrate this, where good intentions have generated tremendous evil. We must be very clear in our intentions, like Dogen says in the fascicle “Shishobo”.

I would like to share a story with you that did not have quite such dramatic effects, but still ended very tragically. I’m not sure if everyone here can handle these tragic details, hence this trigger warning.

Once at the beginning of my practice and chaplaincy work, I visited a client of mine from my business company and she was just devastated and told me about her suffering with her daughter and asked me to help her.

The daughter was heavily addicted to drugs, heroine and all kinds of other chemical drugs. Several rehab attempts had failed over and over again. I promised nothing except that I would like to visit her at home. I did so and immediately connected with her daughter, who had just turned 20 at the time.

We understood each other right away and she quickly involved me in her drama. During her first visit to a club, when she had just turned 13, she was seduced into taking extasy and was raped in a drug frenzy.

That was the beginning of her addiction and her isolation, inwardly and outwardly. She had a great spiritual nature and we decided to spend time together, we practiced meditation, or rather breathing exercises, together, went for walks, to the cinema, and museums.

I made this deal with her, the longer she stayed sober, the more time I spent with her and it worked.

More and more, her isolation also dissolved. She met a young man in school, they fell in love and she went to rehab, which she finished this time and came home completely clean. She did start to drink more alcohol with this young man, like young people used to, but as far as I could tell not to excess. I was very happy about the development and ended the mentorship.

5 years later, her mother had closed her business and was therefore no longer a customer. But one day she called me and told me that her daughter now lived in Munich, about 350 miles away from my home, and she was a heavy alcoholic and was again completely lonely.

I called her daughter and she was very sorry and told me that she had often thought about contacting me, but somehow she was too ashamed, because she was devastated again.

We started talking on the phone regularly and when I was close to Munich we also met in person. She was much more desperate this time and it was very hard to get her out of her depressive state, we had a lot of dramatic phone calls.

Finally, she decided to go to rehab again, but she broke off after a few weeks.

She begged me to take her in, but of course I couldn't because I couldn't provide the environment she needed in my home. I was able to get her to go back to rehab on the condition that I would take her there and I did. I will never forget that last glimpse into her eyes. Her eyes were blue green and when she was happy they sparkled, but this time it was the opposite. She met a young man in the institution who was there on heroine rehab, she fell in love and they both quit therapy and ran away.

She contacted me and said she was clean and everything would be fine with her new boyfriend. Six months later her mother called me and told me she had died last night of a heroine overdose, together with her new boyfriend.

This was Laura's story, I will tell you a second one, but there are many more.

The young man with whom I had the awakening listening experience also asked me to take him in, so that we could practice together, but of course that didn't work either.

A few years after the listening experience, he died in a drug frenzy, he choked on a piece of pizza and died miserably.

In my pastoral career I have lost many people, I could tell some very dramatic stories of how karmic entanglements are expressed and interconnected in life.

Some of my protégés I could actually support in their liberation and they still lead a life without drugs and in freedom.

These two dramatic stories are the basis on which the idea to build a place where I can give more support to my protégés is built. Together with my wife Kogyo and my dharma-sister Koryu, I founded the NGO "1000 Hands". We want to build a center with an housing community and we are lucky that we found a donator who supports us. Right now, we are looking for a plot where we can realize this idea.

This is not so easy, but we are motivated and if you want I can tell you a bit more later, or you can contact me if you like.

So after telling you my personal stories, I would like to come back to more general observations about action, and especially about karma.

In the old Indian philosophy, Karma means "movement of the being", it is the concept for the dynamic side of our being and means in the broadest sense "the deed or act".

There are again different kinds and groups, even actions that we only think about already are karma and leave traces, they are eternal and cannot be erased and have a hidden line of development.

The idea is that everything is stored in the Alaya Vijnana as seeds (Bijas).

The distinction into good and evil always depends on the effect of an act and this is determined by the inner impulse or motivation, or intention, that underlies this act, consciously or even unconsciously. Our kleshas are also responsible for evil, therefore these energies are also called evil impulses.

To purify these energies is the goal of our practice, and thereby to awaken to the true reality, or to realize absolute truth.

Thus to realize this wisdom of the other shore, "Prajnaparamita".

This view of the world, out of absoluteness or suchness, can also be called a transcendental view of the world.

But as bodhisattvas we are not dwelling on it, but acting out of this absolute view and thus improving our relative view. That is our task as Bodhisattvas, acting out of the Absolute and staying in the Relative, using skillful means as demonstrated by Vimalakirti.

This is what is meant when we say not one, not two.

Living in the midst of paradox.

The basic Buddhist idea that our lives are eternal and that we can improve our karmic actions from life to life, thus spreading more and more good karma, can easily mislead us and leads to extreme misunderstandings in real Buddhist life. This is pushed to the extreme in some sanghas. I know of a community where there is a kind of indulgence trade and you can buy graduated courses to learn how to transform bad karma easily.

We humans love simplicity and quick solutions.

There is the idea in Yogacara that everything is just consciousness, and our so-called world arises only from our consciousness.

In our practice we can purify it, transform it, and so awaken to the true reality, and in this is the possibility of reducing our karmic evil deeds.

This means, however, that we must observe everything closely and not be driven by rash intentions, which are again only delusion. But we always have to include this perspective out of absoluteness, and thus recognize the structures that have been built up by the karmic threads.

For me, this also involves the structures of our real life, how do power and influence develop in social life, where are the origins and what is the true motivation?

Our task as bodhisattvas is to look everywhere, not just in the places we like, to investigate what we think is good and what we think is good for us.

This is hard work, however, and it is good for nothing and leads nowhere and is an impossible task for us bodhisattvas, but we do not give up. As Hojo san keeps saying we are only baby bodhisattvas and still need a lot of practice.

Everything I said about relationships applies not only to sentient beings, but also to inanimate beings, all of our environment, the whole nature should be treated like this, not only humans or animals. We must care for nature, too.

"Not knowing is nearest" becomes very important here because we cannot understand karma logically because cause and condition as we see them do not work logically and the invisible threads of relationship create effects whose influences cannot be predicted.

When I get to know new protégés and the puzzles of their lives are assembling piece by piece, over time a picture and an understanding of it emerges, but not all the pieces of this puzzle can be found.

They are often hidden so deeply and the influences work through generations, be it from family history or the culture of the country or from wherever, the gift to look into the Alaya Vijnana is not given to me.

I see my role as somebody who gives space for the relational threads to unfold, and sometimes the space becomes so big and can be transformed. I prefer giving space for the individual to unfold to giving advice out of my own opinion, so I'm more of a space-giver than an advice-giver.

This is one of the maxims in my pastoral work.

Uchiyama Roshi said: A bodhisattva is an ordinary person who takes up a course in his or her life that moves in the direction of buddha. You're a bodhisattva, I'm a bodhisattva;

Thanks

Comments, questions please.....