

**HKF Summer Seminar – Question & Answer
With Christopher Curtis Sensei
Sunday, June 25, 2017**

OK, so good morning everyone. When I was in my three-year retreat, in the very beginning of it, there was another guy who was doing the retreat also. I didn't like him very much. We were not very compatible. And so I wrote to the teacher and said, "Could we get rid of this guy please, because he is always bothering me? I am not having a very good time of it, because he disturbs me too much." And the teacher said, "What? You mean you have this chance to earn your fortune in self-realization and you want to dump it? I suggest you look closer."

And then, years later, I was training with Suzuki Sensei, and we had a woman in our dojo who was a real "freaker." She was just causing trouble for everybody. She was in love with Suzuki Sensei and always getting in the way because she was so jealous of everybody else. And she would get very mad, and lose her temper all the time in the dojo, swearing at people, etc. And for years, I told Suzuki Sensei, "Why do you put up with this?" And he would just put me off and say, "Ah, don't worry about it." And then one time she "keyed" the side of Sensei's car on the way out to the dojo parking lot. We were having class and so we heard the shriek of the key along the side of his car, and someone ran to the window and saw her doing it. So, after class I went in and sat down with him in the office and I said, "OK, now you know what a bitch this woman is. Now we'll get rid of her, OK?" And he looked at me, shook his head, and said, "It seems that you don't understand this teaching at all." And of course, he was right.

In both of those cases nothing was done, and, in time each of those people went their own way. The third occasion is a different story about the same thing. I once told you a little about this teacher from India named Vivekananda, who brought the Vedanta Society from India to the West back in the mid-1800's. When he was a young student with his teacher Sri Ramakrishna in India, he was in charge of the student group, and he had a special rank in this group. And one of these students in the group realized that Sri Ramakrishna was very famous and people would pay money to get to see him. So this guy was charging people money and keeping it, and letting outsiders in to ask a question of Sri Ramakrishna. Vivekananda found out about this and was very upset, and he went to his teacher and said, "Do you know what his guy is doing?" And Ramakrishna said, "Yes, I do." "Well, let's get rid of him. This is immoral and inexcusable. We must get rid of this guy." And Sri Ramakrishna said, "No, I don't think so. In fact, I think he is perhaps the most valuable student in the group." Oh boy, this was extremely disappointing to Vivekananda. So he didn't do anything right then, but the guy kept doing it, and this brought on another fight between Vivekananda and the student, and so Vivekananda fired him. He said, "I don't care what the teacher said, you are out of here. You can't do this." The next day, Sri Ramakrishna called him to his office and said, "Do I understand that you chased that young

man away, against my wishes?” And Vivekananda said, “Yes, I certainly did. I had had enough of that.” The teacher said, “Oh, OK, well this is a very, very serious offence. I specifically told you not to do that. Because of this action, I say that in this life time, you will not ‘get it’ (meaning to truly awaken from your ignorance) until just before you die.” Long story short, Vivekananda goes on to be a very famous and influential teacher and brings the Vedanta teaching to Great Britain and the United States. He wrote many books and was quite well known. Late in his life, he was in a retreat in the north-eastern part of the U.S. and had a heart attack, but he did not die for about 30 minutes. During this 30 minutes, he wrote a well-known document, which you can find and read on the internet. Basically, this document says, “Everything I ever wrote for you, everything I said, was all B.S. I completely missed the point. It’s not any of that at all. It’s only about loving connection.”

I told you this in the past, when I told you the story about what Steve Jobs wrote on his deathbed. He basically said, “I have always been able to pay for others to do the things in life that make me uncomfortable, whatever those things might be.” But he said, “I am lying here in this hospital bed, dying, the last thing that I want to do, and I can’t pay anyone to die for me. I have to do it myself.” So he was very disturbed and realized that all his money, and all the wonderful things he invented for us, have no meaning at all to him at this point in his life. The only thing that matters at this point is the loving connection that he has with other people.

So, you know we will all come to this point, if we have not yet. And it behooves us to meditate on this now, so that perhaps we can die before we have to die. Perhaps our priorities can be straightened out a bit before our death bed forces that to happen. Yes, we like to blame others for how we feel. I was doing that on these occasions with my teachers, when I told them to get rid of someone who I thought was making me feel uncomfortable. And then, you know, when I began to see the mistake of that, then I just blamed myself for the blaming of others. I blamed myself for not being able to Keep One Point, and being disturbed by someone else’s problem. It doesn’t mean that they were not doing that. It just means that I allowed myself to become a slave to them. I was a slave. You are a slave to the people who disturb you. They can manipulate you all they want, if you allow them to disturb you.

So then finally I realized that it is not about blame at all. It’s about a loving, positive connection with everybody, not just your friends, but with everybody. And that’s what my teacher meant when he said that I was passing up a “fortune in self-realization.” We learn and grow and develop when we turn around and “love our enemy.” Basically that is what the man said. That’s what he called it, you know? In other words, you don’t have to hang out with the people. I am not saying that. But you have to have your priorities straight. What I mean by “priorities straight,” is that, in this business of mind/body unification, this business of Keeping One Point, that only works if that is the most important thing in your life. If having lunch is

more important, right now, if you are listening to this and thinking about lunch, you are a slave to that. Or if you are listening to me talk about loving someone, and you are pissed off at someone and you can't let go of that, then you are a slave to that. Do you want to be a slave? No. None of us do. But we are. We torture ourselves. We suffer. This practice is supposed to put an end to suffering, not pain and pleasure, but suffering – the reaction to pain and pleasure.

Yeah, so, it's really hard. It's really hard for me too to do this. I can talk about it, and I practice it as I have for over 50 years, and it's still difficult. So I am not saying it is easy. But I feel very strongly about it because it has saved my butt many years. Times when I would have otherwise changed the course of my life in a very negative way, if I hadn't known how to Keep One Point. I don't always remember, you know. But just because you don't always act perfectly, don't give up on it. Keep practicing, no matter what. 8 years, 10 years, 40 years from now, you are going to say, "I am still in the same place after 40 years?!" So accept it, get used to it, and enjoy it.

OK, I think that's enough of that. Any questions?

Student: So along that same line, I have noticed in myself that things don't bother me like they used to. Because of meditation, etc. It just doesn't bother me so much. I have so much work to do, of course, but it just doesn't bother me. And yet, others around me will say things like, "Oh, don't get flustered," or "Are you happy?" And I am wondering if I am projecting something that I am still missing, or what is going on here?

Well, they don't understand. They are projecting. This is somebody that you know well, no doubt, that has known you for many years.

Student: Yes.

And in the old years, when you said certain things, it meant you were pissed off. You can say those same things now and not be upset. But you might sound upset, because you are intensely demanding something, or doing something that you are passionate about, that you feel strongly about, and then everybody around you says, "Oh, don't be so upset. I thought you were doing Aikido!" That kind of thing will happen. They are projecting, and so that is what it seems like to them.

You can tell them that they can always tell the difference, because when someone is truly upset, it doesn't go away just like that. Do you know what I mean? If you are practicing, and you are Keeping One Point, you might yell at somebody, but two minutes later, even thirty seconds later, it is completely gone, and you are free of it. For yourself, too, you can notice this way. If three hours later or even a day or two later I am still feeling bad about something, I am

still mad at somebody, then there is a problem. Watch kids. They go berserk, and then they are over it immediately. Lynn and I were driving our granddaughter and she was having a fit in the back seat. She didn't want to go home with us, and she was having a tantrum, and Lynn said, "Would you like to have a popsicle when we get home?" And I said, "Oh yeah, I got those new popsicles that she has never had. They are really delicious." And there was sudden silence. "Can I have one of those popsicles?" she said. Just like that. She just turned around, and she forgot all about her upset immediately.

Do you know the story of the two monks that come upon a stream, and there is a woman who asks, "Could you help me across the stream?" So one of the monks says sure, sit on my shoulders and I will take you across." She was too small to ford the stream. So they go across the stream together, he puts her down, she thanks him, and the two monks go on their way. And three miles later the other monk says, "I just can't understand why you did that. We are not supposed to touch women. You let her get on your back. What's the matter with you?" And he said, "I put that woman down three miles ago. You are still carrying her."

That story is to remind us not to torture ourselves with self-righteousness. That was a long answer to your question. Someone else?

Student: Sensei, you said in the past that when we are testing we are nervous, and that we don't really want to try to get rid of that nervousness because it is there for a reason. It is energy that will enhance your performance. Something like that? Could you go into that a little bit further, how to manage that?

Well, when you are approaching an important task of some kind, your energy rises to meet this task. The level of energy in your body intensifies because you are facing some challenge. So, automatically your body prepares itself for this challenge, whatever it is. And it is very important to be prepared to meet this challenge. But we are not always used to this, and often misinterpret this. We may think this is a problem. We call that "nervousness." We try to push that feeling, that intensity, away, because it scares us and feels uncomfortable. And when we push it away we create this tension, and we call this nervousness.

When I am going to teach a seminar, my energy rises up in my body, in the same way that it always did. In the beginning, long ago, it felt like nervousness and it made me more nervous and scared, because if I am so nervous then maybe I will forget what to say. Now, I would be very disappointed if I was sitting there before the seminar and that didn't happen. I would think, "Where is my juice? I need my juice. Got to have the juice to get up here and do this."

So, yeah, you want to learn to embrace that, and use it to rise to the occasion. That is my experience of this. Nervousness is a form of suffering, because you are fighting against something that natural needs to be there. So, be grateful for it.

Student: The first night you said that we don't get calm to do Ki Breathing, we do Ki Breathing to become calm. So my question is, if you sit down to do Ki Breathing and your mind is going fifty miles an hour, would you not just sit for a little while and let your mind slow down before you start? I find that when my mind is really going, my Ki Breathing seems off. It's hard to pay attention.

Well, I don't know. What are you going to do before you do Ki Breathing? What's the difference? I don't know quite how to say it, but if your mind is going a thousand miles an hour, it is because you are not paying attention to what is happening, and Ki Breathing is an exercise to help us pay attention to what is happening. So I can't think of anything you could do to prepare better than doing Ki Breathing.

Do you notice that, before you give someone a Ki Test, they often try to adjust their body and make themselves ready to be Ki Tested. That is a big mistake. It is just the opposite of that. And it was already happening before you got up in the morning. You just haven't been paying attention to it. That's why your mind is going a mile a minute. You are distracted. You have been feeding something.

That's why Tohei Sensei gave us Ki Breathing. So we can do Ki Breathing, paying attention to that, and any time we are paying attention, we experience calmness as a result of that. Calmness is a result, or a side effect, caused by paying attention to anything. But the deeper levels of paying attention, are more and more inclusive. Of course, just concentrating on a game of Solitaire, for instance, will make you calm. I like to play this game. Just working a puzzle, you know, or even playing Tick-Tack-Toe with the grandkids. When they are being careful not to be tricked, they become very calm and quiet. OK?

Student: Sensei, you know when we practice condensing into our One Point? I remember when I started practicing this, I had a hard time. I would come to a point where I couldn't imagine the condensing any more. Is it like, if we get past that point, we experience more living calmness?

Yeah, that's a good question. I think everybody experiences trying to imagine, trying to visualize this, and then at some point you can't visualize this any further. Tohei Sensei did not really like that visualization idea. He would say that you are not really doing the exercise if you do that. In the beginning, OK, because maybe your mind is just to erratic and you need something obvious to follow. But actually, *Kakudaiho* and *Suchuho*, expansion and what you are calling condensing, contracting, or becoming smaller, these two are the same thing, looked at differently, just looking from a different perspective. But the actual thing itself, that actual phenomenon of an ever-expanding universe, and an ever-shrinking universe, macrocosm, microcosm, are the same. The experience of each is the same. It's an experience of infinity, of moving beyond the relative. And when we really are in attention and are able to experience

the significance of something that there is no end to, there's no boundaries, there's no form, there's no definable quality to it, we call this "infinity." When you actually have an experience of this, it is tremendously profound, and it is the same experience whether it is *Kakudaiho* or *Shuchuho*.

So in the beginning, yes, we might ask a student to imagine a bigger and bigger ball. In the beginning, I used to imagine my house, then Haiku, Maui, Hawaii, and then I would get stuck out there. And then the opposite. So maybe in the beginning you can give that direction to a student, but you want them to try to let go of that right away. When you get stuck like that, when it's come to a point and you can't imagine it any more, then ask them to just let that go and experience the feeling they are having right then, and don't think something is wrong. Just experience the feeling of that, let it continue, and see what happens. OK?

Student: Thank you.

Student: OK, not to beat a dead horse, but on that same subject, when you and I talked one time about Kakudaiho and Shuchuho, you said it is not a thinking thing, it's a feeling thing. You said to Keep One Point and let it go to infinity, until it's nothing more than a vibration. You feel this. And I took that word "vibration" a bit too literally, until two nights ago you said, "It's a living vibration"?? Could you just explain that a little more?

In response to Fincher's question about nervousness, I said that when we are approaching something important that we have to do, the level of intensity of the energy in our body rises. You could say that your vibration becomes more intense. But it is not a vibration like a metronome or a bell. It's not a physical vibration. We just use that word because the hippies used it in the 60's and I was alive then, I guess. I don't have another word. But it is more like a rising, and then maintaining of, this level of intensity. So, when you are doing *Kakudaiho* and *Shuchuho*, or Ki Breathing, or anything for that matter....in other words, if you see the importance of being alive here and now, then everything becomes a spontaneous invitation for your energy to rise. So you are always "up," in this sense. So even when you are resting, if you notice, you will be continuing to experience this great intensity. And it is this, that our practice is all about.

People climb mountains to have this happen to them. They put themselves at tremendous risk in order to have that happen. But if you can find the key, and the key is to recognize that you are alive right now, then that is the most phenomenally intense thing that could possibly be. And you need to be up to meet that. Right now. This is why Tohei Sensei didn't like Zen. He said the Zen guys sit around as if they are being calm. And he said, "No, no, it's not that at all." It's calmness in action.

Student: I beg to differ.

Yes, she also practices Zen, so, I am offending her. This is not, of course, true of all Zen people, but it tends to be a weakness of that particular approach. Tohei Sensei was sitting Zen at that the time, and he would go into the Zendo and knock everyone over in a row and say, "You see? You are not actually experiencing mind/body unification. You are not experiencing the true intensity of being alive."

That is simply because they don't have this particular kind of practice, but we do and so it is in our interest to experience this. And it is something natural already. It is recognizing the value of this moment. Even if it is not exciting, you know? Even if you are just sitting and watching TV, you are still having this experience. Watching TV you may be completely caught up in it, or eating your dinner, or just doing nothing important at all. Once you see it, it doesn't have to be anything significant. It's already as significant as it can be. It's is not actually more significant at certain times. It is always this significant. It is being alive.

Naluai Sensei: Curtis Sensei, I just want to thank you for taking your time out of your busy schedule this weekend. And also I want to thank what I call the "unsung hero," your wife, for sharing you with us. Thank you so much.

Thank you. You know I feel this way about everyone here also. I hope everybody knows this, and maybe I need to say it more often. Thank you.