

Discrimination and Unification – Part 1 of 4 ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 There's a Zen koan that says, drink down the West River in one gulp.
00:00:27 That would be maybe equivalent to saying, eat all the food in the granaries of the United
00:00:34 States all at once, or something like that.
00:00:38 What does it mean to digest?
00:00:41 What does it mean to incorporate within?
00:00:46 If you look at the process of eating food, and you look at the process of experience,
00:00:51 it might seem that there's not much relationship between them.
00:00:55 But think about what happens.
00:00:59 In order to extract what is nutritive from food, you have to break it down into its molecules.
00:01:11 And you do that in various steps, from coarser to finer to finer.
00:01:16 If you look at what happens, the teeth do their thing, and then the tongue does its
00:01:21 thing, and the saliva, and then all the different juices, and all the different processing stations.
00:01:28 Just break the material down finer and finer and finer, until it's fine enough so that
00:01:35 what has nutritive value can be extracted and accrue to your energy content.
00:01:42 And since matter is energy, you can look upon it as you derive energy from the food, either
00:01:50 in the form of storing matter or in the form of energy that you use.
00:01:56 And then the parts that have no place in your being, by the same process, are excreted.
00:02:08 Experience works the same way.
00:02:10 If you want to digest the world, drink down the West River, have a complete experience
00:02:16 of the moment, in other words, or of the world, because after all, a complete experience of
00:02:23 the world is just a sequence of thousands and thousands of complete experiences of the
00:02:29 moment.
00:02:30 So if you want to have a complete experience of the world, drink down the West River, eat
00:02:34 everything that can be eaten, like the god Shiva, then you have to learn how

to have

00:02:40 a complete experience in the moment, and that's a digestive process.

00:02:45 When you are so engaged in any sensory experience that you have a complete experience, there's

00:02:53 no time to fixate that experience into a thing.

00:02:56 The particles become waves.

00:03:00 And so the experience is digested into vibration, undulation, expansion, contraction, flow,

00:03:11 the activity of impermanence.

00:03:13 And so it can be completely internalized, completely made your own.

00:03:18 Moment by moment, if you digest the present, eventually you will drink down the entire

00:03:24 world, and you will know that you have as your very content, this is the way Sasaki

00:03:33 Roshi talks, you'll have everything as your content.

00:03:37 Now of course you may not be able to have the kind of dramatic experiences that I'm

00:03:41 describing right off the bat, but to whatever extent you bring concentration, clarity, and

00:03:47 equanimity to moment by moment sensory experience, to that extent you are digesting it.

00:03:55 And in the most extreme form, you literally digest it down into its vibratory atoms.

00:04:02 And that causes a merging of inside and outside.

00:04:06 And that's why you don't just merge with flowers and the sky and the rivers, you also

00:04:16 merge with garbage cans and unpleasant people and whatever comes up in front of your eyes.

00:04:27 Because if you have really good digestive flowers, then it all accrues to nutrition.

00:04:34 However the peristalsis of impermanence doesn't just digest the experiences of the moment,

00:04:44 it breaks up the holdings from the past, the doo-doo, the karmic residue that's sort of

00:04:55 stuck in the karma colon, you might say.

00:04:59 I know, it's a gross metaphor.

00:05:04 But actually maybe not such an inappropriate metaphor actually.

00:05:11 The flow of impermanence when turned to the outside world gives you a sense that you're

00:05:19 digesting the present moment, acquiring energy, empowerment, richness from it.

00:05:28 But when applied to the internal world, as we sit and practice and in daily

life, stuff

00:05:34 comes up.

00:05:36 Our cage gets rattled.

00:05:39 The stored pool of poison and pain within gets activated, either due to its own rhythms

00:05:46 for no particular reason or because something happens in the outside world that gets to

00:05:51 us.

00:05:53 This expression, having your cage rattled, I think is a really good expression.

00:05:59 Because it is our cage, that holding from the past, is the prison.

00:06:06 It's our cage.

00:06:07 And when an event in the present sort of bangs on it, we get our cage rattled.

00:06:15 When we get our cage rattled, it comes up in body experience and mental experience.

00:06:22 Usually emotions or, as I call it, feel activity in the body.

00:06:27 And then mental image, internal talk.

00:06:29 Sometimes it comes up in a purely physical form in the body.

00:06:34 If we bring concentration, clarity, and equanimity to that arising, the more it rattles our cage,

00:06:43 the more it seems to go to the depths of our being, then the more we'll be digested as

00:06:51 we bring concentration, clarity, and equanimity to those body and mind volcanoes.

00:07:01 And in the extreme case, we actually can digest it or re-digest it.

00:07:09 The reason it's stuck there is it was never really digested in the first place, so it

00:07:13 sticks around.

00:07:16 So if when it comes up, either as I say from its own rhythms or because it's been triggered

00:07:22 by something from the outside, if we have a complete experience of it, we will digest

00:07:31 it, release it.

00:07:32 And in the most extreme case, it will, it, the depths of the holdings from the past,

00:07:40 will turn into vibration, undulation, expansion, contraction, energy.

00:07:46 And whatever nutritive value we can recycle from that, we will recycle into the energy

00:07:54 of our being.

00:07:55 And the rest just gets dissipated.

00:07:59 It splashes, ripples, radiates, and releases out of our being.

00:08:05 And that's the flow of impermanence as karma digester or purifier.