

Do You Think Sex is Dirty? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Do you think sex is dirty?

00:00:09 I think it is.

00:00:12 Actually, it's true.

00:00:15 I do think that for most people, the experience of sex is dirty.

00:00:22 That's not at all, however, to say that I think that the experience of sex is dirt.

00:00:30 Those are completely different things.

00:00:32 A window can be dirty.

00:00:36 That doesn't mean that the window is itself dirt.

00:00:40 Dirty means that there's something covering, something from the outside that's covering

00:00:48 the transparency that would be there otherwise.

00:00:54 For most people, there is craving and unconsciousness entering into their sexual experiences.

00:01:06 That could be called a kind of dirt.

00:01:10 The term in Buddhism, in Pali, would be agantukakilesa.

00:01:15 Agantukakilesa means secondary or coming from the outside.

00:01:21 Kilesa means impurity.

00:01:24 Not in the sense of you're impure because you're a bad boy kind of impurity, but rather

00:01:33 more impurity in the sense of mining engineering.

00:01:46 In other words, if you have an ore, with that ore can be mixed something other than that

00:01:52 ore.

00:01:53 You can have gold and there are impurities in the gold.

00:01:55 A refining process removes the impurity.

00:02:00 In that metallurgical sense, kilesa is an impurity.

00:02:06 Consciousness is gold and there's this other stuff, craving, aversion, and unconsciousness

00:02:12 that's mixed in with it and causes our problems.

00:02:19 Yes, there is this craving, aversion, and unconsciousness mixed into the sexual experience

00:02:30 that covers over what otherwise would be a transparent window to transcendence.

00:02:38 So yes, from that perspective, we could say that for most people, sex is dirty.

00:02:45 Of the three, craving, aversion, and unconsciousness, in the sexual domain, because it's primarily

00:02:52 pleasure involved, it's the unconsciousness and the craving or grasping around the pleasure

00:03:01 that cause the obscuring of the clear window.

00:03:06 If we develop our mindfulness skills to the point where we have enough momentum of concentration,

00:03:18 clarity, and equanimity, that momentum will automatically carry into the lovemaking situation,

00:03:30 in which case it will be less dirty and eventually not dirty at all.

00:03:39 All the dirt will be cleaned away from the window.

00:03:43 We'll be able to clearly understand the jewel that has been sort of hidden in the petals

00:03:57 of this beautiful lotus.

00:04:03 Nothing wrong with the petals of a beautiful lotus, but when you peel them back, you'll

00:04:09 discover something extraordinary, the jewel in the lotus.

00:04:15 So what is the jewel in the lotus?

00:04:18 Well, it's the liberation potential in the act of making love.

00:04:25 And what is that liberation potential?

00:04:29 It's at two levels.

00:04:31 The first level is that the act of lovemaking can potentially become a pleasure meditation.

00:04:39 Now pleasure meditation is a tricky deal.

00:04:43 Pleasure meditation is meditation.

00:04:47 It's not the same as pleasure indulgence.

00:04:51 What makes the experience of pleasure a meditative endeavor?

00:04:54 Well, as you're experiencing the pleasure, you taste the effect of your equanimity with

00:05:02 that pleasure, and that effect is that the pleasure is providing you with greater and

00:05:12 greater fulfillment, seemingly, paradoxically, as you become more and more detached from

00:05:21 the pleasure as it's occurring.

00:05:24 You don't tighten around its arising out of fear of being overwhelmed.

00:05:31 You don't hold on to its passing out of fear of loss of something.

00:05:38 When you stop tightening around pleasure in general, out of fear of overwhelm, and stop

00:05:47 holding on to it, trying to prevent its passing out of fear of loss, when you stop doing that,

00:05:57 then the pleasure starts to deliver for you greater and greater satisfaction.

00:06:03 Clearly, this becomes most challenging when the pleasure is of the most intense type that

00:06:09 the human nervous system can produce, which typically happens in the lovemaking situation.

00:06:17 There the fear of overwhelm is obviously great, so there tends to be a tightening around the

00:06:23 arising of the pleasure.

00:06:26 Also the sense of loss when a wave of pleasure passes can be great, so there's a tightening

00:06:33 around the passing of the pleasure.

00:06:35 If you can learn to experience the pleasure without the tightening on its arising or its

00:06:43 passing, then you start to experience something beyond pleasure.

00:06:48 You experience fulfillment.

00:06:50 At the most extreme level of that phenomenon, the pleasure hovers right at the boundary

00:06:59 between existence and non-existence.

00:07:03 It's so much a wave, you're so open to it, that it's in a sense not there, but it also

00:07:11 is there.

00:07:13 The Tibetan term for that is the oneness of bliss and void.

00:07:19 One level at which the lovemaking, the jewel in the lotus, reveals itself is in this complete

00:07:30 experience of pleasure, which gives immense fulfillment, transforms consciousness, but

00:07:36 is paradoxical because it's both rich and empty at the same time.

00:07:42 However, at an even deeper level, the jewel in the lotus, the spiritual potential in the

00:07:50 act of making love, arises from the fact that the feel-image-talk-self has a natural tendency

00:08:03 to dissolve into flow and even to vanish, to disappear, due to the expansion of the

00:08:21 pleasant touch and the sight and sound of your partner.

00:08:28 That is a direct window into an experience that actually happens naturally all the time

00:08:40 in daily life, just not quite so intensely.

00:08:46 If you can look through that window, see the dissolving of your feel-image-talk-self into
00:08:56 flow and then the disappearance of that flow into nothing whatsoever, you may be able,
00:09:05 in fact you will eventually, be able to remember what that experience is and replicate it with
00:09:14 the touch, sight, sound of everything in the world.
00:09:17 That is not to say that all your daily experiences become eroticized.
00:09:23 All your daily experiences become spiritualized.
00:09:34 The act of love was your synagogue, your church, where that sermon was first delivered.