

Developing the 'Taste of Purification' ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Purification

00:00:07 We talk a lot about purification on this path

00:00:12 and especially I hear you talk about it as one of the benefits

00:00:18 or events that happen with this practice.

00:00:21 And I'll speak to my own experience,

00:00:24 but purification isn't always pretty.

00:00:26 And sometimes you can be blindsided with lots of emotion

00:00:34 or disconcerting internal talk.

00:00:37 Could you just speak to this process of working with purification

00:00:44 and or how it can arise?

00:00:47 What are the different forms of purification that we could experience

00:00:51 in terms of working with that as its own phenomenon?

00:00:56 Sometimes people confuse the purification and might think that's a new problem.

00:01:02 When one practices, as time goes on,

00:01:07 one develops a kind of sensitivity to something that I call purification.

00:01:17 In fact, I would say that one of the major watersheds in a person's practice

00:01:24 is when they start to develop the taste of purification

00:01:27 where they can actually sense that purification has happened.

00:01:31 So what do we mean by purification?

00:01:35 It's a perception that because of the way that I'm experiencing this moment

00:01:45 with high concentration, sensory clarity, and especially equanimity,

00:01:51 because of the way I'm experiencing this moment,

00:01:55 things that have been getting in the way from the past are getting worked through.

00:02:02 And you actually sense that that is happening.

00:02:06 Now, how do you sense that?

00:02:08 That's hard to put into words.

00:02:11 You just develop a ... it's like wine tasting.

00:02:14 Tasters can detect all sorts of subtleties in flavor, bouquet, finish, tannins, what have you.

00:02:24 They just develop the palate to detect stuff that the average person doesn't detect.

00:02:30 At some point, every meditator who stays with the process

00:02:35 develops this sense that because of how I'm experiencing the present,

00:02:41 the past is being worked through.

00:02:44 Like I say, I can't put into words how you know it's happening, but you just do.

00:02:50 You also know that because of that, every moment in the future is going to be better for you.

00:02:58 So that's a huge watershed in practice,

00:03:02 because before that happens, your preoccupation with regards to meditation

00:03:08 is to have certain experiences while you meditate.

00:03:12 You want to be concentrated, you want to be calm, you want to have altered states,

00:03:17 you want to have whatever you want to have.

00:03:20 Feel good, have something interesting and entertaining or unusual happen.

00:03:25 When people start their practice, that's how they evaluate their practice.

00:03:29 It's like, oh, something good or interesting or unusual happened,

00:03:34 so that was a good meditation.

00:03:37 At some point, if you stay with it, you develop this sensitivity for the purification.

00:03:43 And then your motivations shift.

00:03:48 You're not interested in getting to any particular state.

00:03:53 You're interested in setting the stage for nature to optimize purification.

00:04:01 You set the stage and let time pass, and the purification is taking place, and you can taste it.

00:04:11 And because you can taste it, you don't mind if you're in a lot of pain in your body,

00:04:19 you don't mind if there's a lot of emotions in your body,

00:04:23 you don't mind if there's a lot of confusion in your mind.

00:04:26 Because, although by all ordinary ways of thinking,

00:04:31 pain in the body, uncomfortable emotions in the body, confusion in the mind,

00:04:37 that's like the last thing in the world anybody would ever want.

00:04:40 But if you can taste the purification while that's going on,

00:04:44 so you know the past is getting worked through,

00:04:48 and the future, every moment of the future will be better for me

00:04:53 because of how I'm experiencing this present moment, uncomfortable though it is.

00:04:59 Once that taste of purification kicks in, then you start to grow exponentially.

00:05:06 The rate of growth takes off in a hockey stick mode.

00:05:11 When you're saying taste of purification, it's making it sound like,

00:05:15 ah, I'm developing a taste.

00:05:19 You know, when someone's drinking wine, they know they're drinking wine.

00:05:22 But to know the interpretation of if that is purification, if it isn't purification,

00:05:28 and or, my relationship to that is that you said,

00:05:33 oh, I don't mind if I'm in pain, I don't mind.

00:05:36 When you say develop a taste, do you mean where that starts to become a pleasant experience?

00:05:41 I would say that whenever a person in the present moment

00:05:47 brings a quality of concentration, clarity, and equanimity to their experience,

00:05:53 or even one or two of those, at any level whatsoever,

00:05:59 purification is happening whether they're aware of it or not.

00:06:03 Whether they're aware of it or not, it is happening.

00:06:06 But after long practice, you know it's happening.

00:06:12 But I cannot describe to you how you know.

00:06:16 It's another dimension of experience. You sense it.

00:06:20 Does knowing help the process?

00:06:22 The knowing is what makes the process snowball.

00:06:27 That's what gives the exponential growth.

00:06:30 Because the fact, in other words, you're getting a reward.

00:06:33 I wouldn't exactly say the reward is pleasure.

00:06:37 It's another kind of reward.

00:06:41 How you will typically react with pleasure when you taste purification,

00:06:46 the taste itself is not the taste of pleasure.

00:06:49 It's its own dimension.

00:06:51 It's just one of those things you have to experience by practicing.

00:06:55 But once that happens, then no matter how horrific an experience may be,

00:07:01 you're getting rewarded in that experience.

00:07:04 Not necessarily rewarded by pleasure, but rewarded by this something else,

00:07:09 this taste of purification.

00:07:11 So that the more you taste it, the more you're willing to have equanimity.

00:07:17 The more you're willing to have equanimity, the more you taste it.

00:07:20 That's called a positive feedback loop.

00:07:22 And your practice just goes off on a hockey stick curve.

00:07:27 Before that, it tends to be linear and rather subtle.

00:07:33 Once the taste of purification develops,

00:07:36 you've got this positive feedback loop and it just goes.

00:07:40 And that's how you make that journey of a million miles in just a few years.

00:07:47 You only walked 10 miles in the first year.

00:07:50 But what you don't realize is the longer you walk, the faster you walk.

00:07:56 And the taste of purification is the main thing that makes that happen.