

# How Shinzen Uses the Term Spaciousness ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 You

00:00:02 Hi.

00:00:28 What do you dare ask?

00:00:39 These all relate to spaciousness.

00:00:50 Part of the definition is thinness within, openness around, or both that may present

00:00:55 themselves in sensory spaces.

00:00:58 That's the best I could do.

00:01:02 So let's start with that.

00:01:09 When you first brought in the term spaciousness, I thought it's just like he's making a special

00:01:19 case of expansion and contraction and kind of giving it its own term.

00:01:25 The openness is like expansion and the thinness is like contraction.

00:01:30 And then you said you brought it in to represent the four formless absorptions, etc.

00:01:40 Roughly yes.

00:01:41 Okay.

00:01:42 It's not a one-to-one correspondence, but I think of it as moving people in that direction.

00:01:53 Okay.

00:01:55 So I have kind of several things in this area that I wanted to get your response to.

00:02:05 So one is when the Tibetans talk about spacious awareness, is that part of how you think about

00:02:16 it?

00:02:17 Yeah.

00:02:18 That was another source.

00:02:20 The Theravada dhyanas or jhanas, the whole Tibetan thing around space with Dzogchen and

00:02:28 Mahabhutra, and then Sasaki Roshi's formulation, he used the word space a lot.

00:02:37 So I saw a way of integrating those traditions, roughly.

00:02:55 I think Harprakash froze up.

00:03:00 He's going through a cessation.

00:03:04 It happens.

00:03:05 It has happened before.

00:03:09 He had a cessation in the scanner at Harvard Medical School.  
00:03:26 We caught it on camera.  
00:03:27 I don't know if Dave Vago, what he ever did with it.  
00:03:32 That actually happened.  
00:03:37 He was in the scanner and he just turned off for a little while.  
00:03:47 Well, I guess now gone.  
00:03:52 Yeah.  
00:03:53 Maybe we should go to someone else until he re-arises.  
00:04:03 Yeah we can reconnect as soon as he does.  
00:04:07 Okay.  
00:04:08 Harprakash yet, unless if I'm missing you, please unmute Harprakash.  
00:04:14 Otherwise we'll go to-  
00:04:15 Hey, I'm back.  
00:04:16 Oh, great.  
00:04:17 Okay.  
00:04:18 Where are you?  
00:04:19 Where am I?  
00:04:25 I'm right here.  
00:04:26 Where are you?  
00:04:27 Okay.  
00:04:28 Okay.  
00:04:29 Apologies.  
00:04:30 I slipped into gone for a while.  
00:04:35 I made a big joke about it.  
00:04:38 I told them about when we were at Harvard and you had that cessation thing.  
00:04:45 Yeah.  
00:04:46 Okay.  
00:04:47 Let's see.  
00:04:51 Okay.  
00:04:53 So let's stick with the spaciousness part.  
00:05:12 So you said among other things, you brought it into representative, the Aruba Jones, the  
00:05:19 four formless absorptions.  
00:05:22 And you also said that when spaciousness goes with dynamic flow, that there's  
lots of opportunities  
00:05:36 there.  
00:05:38 And my association with spacious awareness from Tibetan Buddhism.  
00:05:53 So why did you make, if I can see spaciousness as just a form of expansion  
and contraction,  
00:06:03 why did you make that its own specific theme?  
00:06:08 Yeah.  
00:06:10 So the

00:06:29 descriptions don't necessarily classically mention anything  
00:06:44 about energy or flow or impermanence.  
00:06:51 It's just sort of a description, boundless space, nothing whatsoever, boundless consciousness.  
00:07:10 And going so deep that you're right on the border of even being conscious or not conscious.  
00:07:21 These are the names of the four formless jhanas.  
00:07:27 The boundless consciousness is, once again, I'm just reporting my own experience.  
00:07:37 So other people might be different, but for me, when you get to the base of all of the  
00:07:45 archetypal material, you're basically in the multiverse of all stories.  
00:07:55 And then that seems, then you take it one more step and it's no story because all the  
00:08:05 stories have now shrunk to a point.  
00:08:11 And that seems like boundless consciousness.  
00:08:20 And nothing whatsoever clearly is getting close to nirvana, if you were to abide there.  
00:08:33 So what they do say, though, is that when you enter absorptions, this is more modern  
00:08:50 terminology, but some teachers talk about a vipassana jhana, an absorption where there  
00:08:58 is an insight component.  
00:09:04 And usually the insight is impermanence.  
00:09:09 So some absorption teachers will talk about these states and then they'll say something  
00:09:19 like it can be a pure shamatha, in which case I'm guessing there's an emphasis on stability.  
00:09:32 That's a guess.  
00:09:34 Or it can be a vipassana jhana where you're aware of impermanence within the deep state.  
00:09:42 So I wanted to be able to deal with spaciousness as its own independent dimension, allowing  
00:09:59 for the possibility that it might stabilize and not be dynamical for a person.  
00:10:09 And then pointing out that if flow in general is present, well, that's insight absorption.  
00:10:20 But if expansion contraction flow is present, in other words, if the vastness doesn't just  
00:10:27 sit there, but it moves out, the thinness becomes the basis for an effortless crunch,  
00:10:37 a continuous crunch.

00:10:40 If that happens to present itself, that's very close to Sasaki Roshi's formulation of

00:10:49 the source.

00:10:51 So I wanted to take the fact that in the Tibetan formulations and in the absorptions from early

00:11:03 Buddhism, it is not necessarily explicitly mentioned that there would be flow.

00:11:14 What to say of explicitly that the expansion might in fact not just sit there, but move

00:11:22 out, be a force, likewise the contraction.

00:11:26 They don't explicitly mention that.

00:11:28 It might be implicit or added on later.

00:11:32 So in order to have a formulation that was sort of dimensionally clean, that would work

00:11:40 for a lot of different situations, I said, okay, the spaciousness is one thing.

00:11:46 If flow is present within that, great.

00:11:50 If not, that's okay too.

00:11:52 So it's the best I could do to integrate such a wide range of formulations.

00:12:03 Okay.

00:12:06 And related to that, the spacious awareness, is that the equivalent to what you're ...

00:12:19 I think I just used the word spaciousness.

00:12:22 I might use the phrase spacious awareness for exactly that same thing.

00:12:30 It would just be synonymous.

00:12:33 Would have to look in the manual.

00:12:37 I don't remember what the official vocabulary is.

00:12:42 Okay.

00:12:44 Thank you.