

2020-12-02 Eightfold Path-Right Concentration (4 of 4)

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SPEAKERS

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Good day everyone. Continuing with a third of the fourth talks on no no, the fourth right? - Last talk on right Samādhi.

Right Samādhi is the eighth step of the Eightfold Path. Samādhi, or sometimes called concentration, is a variety of different states of being. And depending how concentrated we are, how open we are, how settled we are, a lot of different factors come into play, the nature, the quality, the characteristics of what is Samādhi. And there are many kinds of Samādhis. But what they all have in common, at least from the early Buddhist tradition, is that Samādhi begins when the hindrances abate. As long as we have hindrances, the five hindrances being preoccupation to sensual pleasures, preoccupation with ill will, preoccupation with sloth and torpor, preoccupation with restlessness and regret, and preoccupation with doubt or uncertainty. To be preoccupied, to be caught up in, to be in the grip of these five forces. The mind is scattered, it's divided, there's kind of a black hole we fall into. And awareness doesn't really have a chance to work and see because sometimes you get consumed by these things. Long time ago, I learned of someone who described the five hindrances as strategies of agony. And certainly many times there's not agony involved, but they certainly can lead to that when they're strong and we make unwise choices based on them.

So when the five hindrances abate and the mind is no longer restless, or agitated, or shrunk, or lethargic, and is not caught up in things. And mind then has the ability to stay on track, to stay here present. And there's a qualitative different feeling of being a human being if we're caught in hindrances, or for not caught. If our interest, our attention, doesn't get hijacked all the time by things that are not so healthy for us or that so nice for us. That takes us away from our wholeness. And so once the hindrances abate and get quiet, then it's a difference between feeling like the mind, "Ahh I'm here. Ahh, the mind is here. I'm not wandering off. It just feels like coming home." It can feel quite refreshing and delightful to have the mind finally a little bit like the mind is ours again or we belong to the mind. The mind and me belong together, we're connected, we're here we're present. And the tendency for the

mind to wander off in thought again is really diminished. It might begin but it comes right back. We either bring it right back, or by itself it just doesn't want to go away. It's so good to be here, settled.

If we continue to practice and develop deeper and deeper concentration or fuller more wholehearted connection to what's going on. Then the subjective states begin to change and open up. And the symptoms of this kind of Samādhi are feelings of lightness, feelings of being like weight wise light, feeling light, sometimes lamp light, you know, like sunlight, moonlight light, really, since a glowing and radiance. Sometimes there's a glowing feeling of joy, delight, harmony. Sometimes with Samādhi, it feels like what courses through the whole body is a feeling of a healing force, a healing energy that goes through. Sometimes it's a glow of delight or joy or happiness. Sometimes the body seems quite, in the mind, quite expensive and big. And the boundaries of the body begin to fall away and dissolve. And sometimes even the whole sense of body disappears as we get deeper and deeper into this kind of holistic sense of concentration.

The tradition has these beautiful metaphors for describing some of this. One metaphor is that of back in the ancient world, that kind of like we make a dough out of dry flour and water, they made a kind of soap from dry soap powder and water. And they would need it together into ball I guess to lather up. And you would kneed it, the powder, until moisture was saturated throughout it. That well being, the joy, the subtleness, the at homeness of Samādhi is like a water. And the idea is to suffuse that throughout our beings so no part of our being is not suffused with a sense of being settled and open and present and warm and connected. And so this feeling of physical embodied wholeness, that comes with the Samādhi as it develops.

Another metaphor is that of a lake that is surrounded by maybe mountains maybe. But all the rivers flow into the lake or actually the way they talk about it, there are no rivers flowing into the lake at some point. No input from the outside, sometimes deep Samādhi we're not really hearing so much and aware of the world so much around us. And the gathering together and being really here, nothing's flowing in. The rivers are not flowing in, it's not raining into this lake. But rather, the lake has a natural spring deep in the center of the bottom of the lake that's bringing forth refreshing new water to renew the lake. And so in deeper Samādhi, we're not really getting input from the outside, nourishment or support or stimulus from the outside. But there's a wonderful delightful feeling like a wellspring of joy and happiness that comes from the inside out. And for some people this is a game changer in their life. To realize that you can have this very, very deep satisfying feeling of well being without having chocolate or sex or alcohol or wonderful recreation opportunities. And not to dismiss the joy, the possible delight of these things. But to really feel that there's a resource inside, of well being inside, that is so wonderful. And to know that, then we don't get involved in these other things out of a feeling of lack. A feeling I'm not good enough, I'm inadequate, or I feel kind of dry inside. But we feel really wet and full on the inside. And these other pursuits, maybe have their place. But we're not addicted to them, or we're not depending on them in order to have some kind of inner sense of well being.

The next metaphor the Buddha uses when the Samādhi gets deeper, is that of a very still mountain Lake. Again, also very refreshing water. But it's completely still. And in this lake grows lotus flowers of many different colors. And these lotus flowers sometimes are underwater, they haven't really surfaced

sometimes. But no part of the lotus flower is not touched by the delightful refreshing water. And so the sense of all parts of us are very, very still. And in the stillness, there's a still quiet happiness in which it all abides. There's no more movement to joy, but this stillness of happiness.

And then the final metaphor for the deepest kind of, one of the deepest kinds of Samādhi that has metaphors for it is a person maybe after taking a refreshing bath or in the lake, coming out and wrapping themselves in a blanket that covers their whole being and sits up against a tree and relax and content. Everything is taken care of. Very settled. And in ancient India covering yourself completely with a blanket meant that the insects couldn't get to you. So you could sit there clean and content and a very clean, maybe a new sheet or blanket. And felt safe and contented and just be able to sit there and have no worries and concerns. Is a deep deep state of equanimity that can arise.

And the purpose of all this Samādhi is the Samādhi itself is really, I think of its main purposes healing or wholeness, becoming whole, becoming healed, becoming a collected. In and of itself. But Samādhi is also the foundation from which to do insight. To have deep insight for mindfulness, Vipassana, to really be able to do its work well in two ways. One way is that with the stability of Samādhi, our ability to observe and be present and see what's happening in the details of our experience becomes much more acute. And for Vipassana really to work, we have to really be able to register and experience and sense, perceive, the moment to moment direct experience of phenomenon as it flows by, as it arises and passes. And this requires a very still quiet mind to really work well. So we're able to see more clearly with Samādhi.

The other function of Samādhi is a Samādhi, mind of Samādhi, is not frozen or rigid. It's not tight or locked in. It's soft and ready and malleable and workable. And so it's prepared to do some of the deepest work that Buddhism is asking us to do. And that is to let go of the fist in the mind, the grip in the heart. The way we're held down or held in. The deepest attachments we have, to have them release. And for those to release with the gaze of Vipassana, with insight, that the mind has to have started to become soft and malleable or not so frozen.

So I want to end with another metaphor for this that I learned in my son's kindergarten class. And his kid in kindergarten class, once a week the kids would make wax, beeswax sculpture. And there'll be beeswax that every kid had that was up on a shelf. And when they went to it in the morning, it was always cold and hard. In the only thing you can really do with hard cold beeswax is to, if you get a hammer or something, you can break it. But you can't really shape it, it's too hard for that. So all the kids would get their beeswax and they'd put it in their hands and hold it between the two hands, in the palms of their two hands. And the teacher would tell the story. And the story was long enough that by the time the story was over, their hands had warmed and softened the beeswax. And then the kids could make the beeswax into something beautiful. And then they put the beautiful thing up on the shelf until next week. So the same thing if we can hold ourselves in the warm palms, warm hands of Samādhi, warm hands of concentration and awareness that and do it long enough so we're really warming and softening ourselves. Then we become something beautiful. And then the most beautiful thing is liberation, a liberated mind. And that will be the topic for the next two days. We finished the Eightfold Path. But the Buddha also then went on to say there's also right liberation and right

knowledge. And so the combination of the Eightfold Path is these next two steps, which we'll do the next two days.

So thank you so much and look forward to being here tomorrow with you.