

Concentration

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Topic for today is concentration or somebody. And thinking that I was knowing I was going to talk about the subject, I thought I would try to get as concentrated as I could in the city. And I didn't get that concentrated. But I feel a little bit like I don't want to talk now. If concentration does change things quite quickly and on. So the reason concentration is a subject for this evening is that in the weeks, these weeks, right now that I'm here, on Monday nights, I'm giving a series of talks on the five faculties, and it happens to be that the fourth faculty is concentration.

Then there's a few things as a background or an introduction to the faculties. There are capacities that we all have. So there goes something that's foreign to us, and there the capacities of confidence. We either have it or don't have it, or have very habit, in various degrees, things that we do. There is a capacity or faculty for applying ourselves, of applying effort or being engaged. And in different situations, we apply ourselves more or less may be the same activity in different times.

There is more effort or more engagement and activity than there is at other times. And then there's the faculty of mindfulness, of paying careful attention and recognizing what's going on. And then there's the faculty of concentration. And then the fifth faculty is that of a usually translated as wisdom and is in this kind, this list of five. I think I prefer the word discernment because it's a faculty that we use. It's a kind discovery in the process of engaging it.

And wisdom in my mind has the idea of a kind of like knowledge. You bring with you colonel. You have wisdom, and you bring it to bear on what you on your life, whereas discernment is more active. You can be discerning in particular situations. You come in a new situation. You're discerning.

You might bring understanding and wisdom that you have, but applying it and knowing how it applies requires some level of discerning or discernment. And a lot of the teachings of the Buddha, a lot of lists, and a lot of the things that he taught. It doesn't take a lot of analysis to realize that I'm behind the so-called religious or spiritual veneer of what he seems to be talking about. He's often talking about things that are very practical, that apply in a lot of dif-

ferent settings, and they apply a lot of activities in daily life. And so they're not really foreign from certain capacities we have, but also things we're already using. So the five faculties, for example, as I've been saying, are something which I come into play in every activity.

Probably we engage in there's some aspect of confidence involved in the activity, things like driving your car. Probably most of you I've forgotten that you're confident in driving your car. But some of you probably have to remember it every time you rouse your confidence and trust and faith that driving your car is something you can do, in that other people can do, and that okay for you to be on the road. And so you know, it's there sometimes hidden, and sometimes something we have to negotiate and work with. And it's something as simple as driving a car, and then there's an engagement or driving a car. We can be quite engaged and have a lot of good effort and energy in driving the car, or we can be less lax about it, or we could be lazy about it.

There can be ten alertness or mindfulness when driving your car, and that can be up or down. How intense that is after a mere accident. Usually our mindfulness, our alertness, is much sharper for a while than it was after, you know, before the near accident. And the focus, you know, is also other things really needed when you drive your car right now to be focused on what you're doing, and enough so you don't have an accident, and now so you get where you want to go. And then in driving a car, you have to be very discerning. When you drive your car, you have to track the other traffic, and you know the lights and pedestrians and this and that, and yet I know all kinds of things that you're discerning, and watching and tracking and monitoring as you drive.

So the five faculties, the list of activities when you, that list of capacities that come into play in all activities that we engage in, is the argument I want. I want to make whether you're making bread, or doing the work you do at work, or if you work, or whatever. You can probably analyze your involvement with it according to these five faculties. And the suggestion is that if you use these ideas of these five capacities we have, you can kind of monitor yourself to see what is needed to be able to do your activity more fully or more completely or more accurately. There are times when we realize we need more energy or need more confidence than what we're doing. We need more mindfulness, or more focus, or more discerning, more monitoring and tracking what's going on in a discerning way.

And so, you know, something's not working out. We're not succeeding in some activity. You can ask yourself, Which of these five need to be improved on? I need to be focused on here to make things work better. One of the things I'm fond about these five faculties is that their

capacities we all have. It doesn't really matter what spiritual tradition you belong to, because they apply in all spiritual traditions.

Whatever you can apply yourself, they somehow come into play. So whether you're Christian or Buddhist or Muslim or Hindu or whatever, their capacities. We all take with us wherever we go, and we they come into play wherever we go. Whether you belong to so-called non-dualistic spiritual traditions or dualistic spiritual traditions, you still have to have these five faculties. You carry with you, and they come into play in different ways, and they either strong or weak, or some exist in relationship to each other. So the Buddha talked a lot about the five faculties in relationship to the activity of meditation.

And what he suggested is that you use these five, look at these five faculties that you have, and see how you can tune them and work with them so that your meditation practice can be more successful. Whatever your meditation happens to be. And if there is not an adequate amount of confidence in the right things, it's very hard to engage in meditation practice or spiritual practice. And certainly confidence in oneself, but also confidence in the practice itself, and confidence that if you engage in a certain way, that the purpose for why you're engaged in it can be fulfilled, whether it's a non-dualistic approach or dualistic approach, whatever. There's a confidence that you sit down to meditate, that you can fulfill the purpose if you have. And if you don't have that confidence can be very tricky.

It's kind of very rocky to sit down and practice. Effort, as you know, is a wonderful thing of meditation. I love effort. It's kind of mystery about it. I talked about it a few weeks ago, and it's something mysterious to me about the effort, because effort is something that I apply and I do. It also has to do with a kind of the kind of native energy, or the arousing energy, the energetics, vitality that seems to come and go, that sometimes affects a tremendous effect on meditation, but seems to have very little to do with my effort.

I make effort, but then something else aliveness sometimes gets aroused in a way that seems mysterious. Sometimes it's called effortless effort. So today's subject is *samādhi* and concentration in *samādhi* is a great word in the Sanskrit. On Indian religious traditions, many of them put a lot of emphasis on the word *samādhi*. Some of them have very exalted meanings of the word, much more exalted than the Buddhists have. And often *samādhi* refers to a great state of transcendent, great states of peace, of union with, brought with, inherit what's ultimate.

Samādhi has now very powerful connotations, and much of Indian religions. Religion in Buddhism, *samādhi*, isn't, tends not to be, especially in early Buddhism, tends not to be as ex-

alted as we find some other Indian traditions. But the word *samādhi* is more or less synonymous with our word concentration: to be focused, to be concentrated with our attention on what we're paying attention to. The problem with the word concentration in English as a translation is that we tend to think of concentration as being of one-pointedness of mind, and that's an important part of concentration. But it's not only a mental thing. It's not only the capacity to hold something fixed in our attention.

That is *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is something that is more holistic. It's something all-encompassing. It's more like when the concentration is really strong. It's something we seem, seemingly, the whole body and mind, the whole unit of body by mind, is working together for the purposes of this absorption, or this concentration is focus that we're engaged in. So my favorite translation of *samādhi* is not concentration, but rather the English word composure.

And part of the reason I like the word composure is that the Sanskrit roots for the word *samādhi* are probably more similar to the roots of the English word composure than they are to the word concentration. The sum of *samādhi* means with, and a com of composure can also mean with, and the d part dhi of *samādhi* seems to mean to stand or to pose, and in its root. And so to stand with, to pose with is the roots of *samādhi*. And composure then works really well, doesn't it? To be composed. So you know, etymologically, it works.

But more than that, composure is something that's more embodied. When you compose yourself on something, you don't just do it with your mind. You cannot do it our whole being. You know, I was composed in my chair. I was composed in the midst of, you know, giving this speech. You know something you can mean, Take it. Let me take a moment to compose myself.

And it's often something kind of physical or embodied kind of activity of centring oneself on oneself. It's not just simply a mental one-pointed focus. So to be composed on one's breath, to be composed on one's object of meditation, has in my mind at least a kind of sense of being more settled and relaxed and held or contained or kind of holding in a balanced way, with my whole being the subject of absorption of attention. So to me, how do I compose myself on my breathing? It's a different exercise. And how do I concentrate on my breath? And my suggestion is that, or my idea is that if I'm composed on the breath, it's a lot easier to be concentrated on it, to be focused on it.

So *samādhi* has this kind of holistic approach a kind. And sometimes people talk in Buddhism about concentration as being a unification of the body and the mind. And it's this

unification of the body and mind that makes concentration so useful and important for the spiritual development of mindfulness, for the path of the early Buddha. The Buddha was talking about, in the early scriptures, the mind. That's not unified. The mind that's not composed, not focused, not concentrated is a mind that's more likely to be agitated and fragmented and spinning around, wandering around in its attention.

And it doesn't take a lot of mindfulness to sit down in meditation and realize that a fair percentage of the time the mind is out of control. And one of the exercises you can do to find out, to measure how well your mind is concentrated, is to count your breaths, to count your breaths from one to ten. And I'll do that still. Sometimes I did it for years, and sometimes I do it as a check on myself. Sometimes I think I'm more concentrated than I am, and so then I'll count my breath over to find out. And I get to four, and I realize, Wait a minute, you know, I'm not as concentrated as I thought I was.

It was kind of, you know, my mind. Actually, I feel pretty good. I feel pretty stable and there and present. But actually, the mind still has a very strong of a current of getting caught up in various preoccupations and concerns to get lost in what's going on. So it doesn't take a lot of mindfulness to realize that the mind can be quite easily wanders away freely in scattered in many different directions. When the mind is that way agitated, the mind or the inner eye, the inner awareness, cannot see very accurately what's going on.

And though the analogy of developing concentration is that of wanting to take a photograph while you're walking around nowadays, hates cameras are so fast. Maybe doesn't matter. But in the old days, you had to get a tripod if you wanted to, you know. And you got this tripod, and you put the camera there, and then you had the stability to be able to get good pictures of something. And so the mind, the mind that's concentrated, is a mind that can to create a tripod for itself, that stays at a stable base, and so you get this clear vision of what's going on. The paradox with mindfulness and concentration is that I'm not always, but kind of works is that the more the mind is moving, the more agitated the mind is, the more the body seems to be unmoving and solid.

The stiller the mind is, the more the body seems to be constantly in flux, in motion and changing. That's interesting. And the idea in Buddhism is that when the mind is filled with concepts and ideas and distraction and caught up in itself in its preoccupations and concepts. It doesn't really have an accurate view or experience of our own body. And as the mind becomes quieter and stiller and drops below the conceptual level, because it has a kind of stillness, it actually can see and experience the body in a more realistic way. So a very simple

exercise to give you a sense of, This is a we, you know, we go around with our idea of our hand, and you know, My hand bumps into my other hand, and my hand does this, and I pick up the pen, or when my hand does this, in that.

And as long as I'm living in the world of my hand, the concept of my hand, the hand is kind of a fixed thing that you is a move around. And so what's coming to hand is the hand. But if I, but if I close my eyes, or you close your eyes now, whenever I just feel your hand experience, what is experience? The hand's experience of itself. Below that conceptual level, even if you hold the hands still, What you'll find is that different sensations make up the experience of hand pulsing, vibration, temperature, warmth, coolness, tightness, no vibration. All kinds of different sensations. And the more you can sense your way into those sensations, the more you start probably come aware those sensations are in flux and moving and dancing around a little bit in that air, general area that we call hand, the stiller the mind is, the more the body this tends to be moving around.

So the idea that this tripod idea, this stability, when the mind is stable, we think to be able to experience things at a different level of life than the level of life when the mind is very active and busy. The other reason for developing concentration is that, as the mind gets concentrated, it tends to temporarily become purer. It's a word that the Indian religion, in Indian Buddhism, likes a lot: the idea of purity. It tends no longer to, as the mind gets more concentrated temporarily, on the obstructions, the hindrances, the filters, the bias, on the fears, the desires, the wants, the aversions that tend to color how we see things and how we experience things temporarily falls away. A mind that is very concentrated cannot have a lot of wants. A mind that has a lot of desires cannot get concentrated.

That's why it's one of the reasons why Buddhists don't like to watch commercials, because I'm trying to get you a lot of desires. And if you have a lot of desires, you can't get concentrated. That's also why Buddhists don't like to listen to a lot of what's the expression that hate mongering? said the word hate mongering. Because you have a lot of hate, you can't get concentrated. You can't get still. And as you get more and more concentrated, those kinds of tendencies of hate or fear or desire or confusion or doubt tends to fall away.

And as those fall away, then it's like the lem. It's the analogy given the ancient tradition is that of water and water that has a When the mind has a lot of desires, it's like water that has a lot of waves. And you can't see through to the bottom of the water. If you have these waves kind of roughing up the surface, or if you have a lot of anger, the mind has a lot of anger. It's kind like a mind. It's kind like water has been colored by some red dye, and because of the

dye you can't see clearly through the water, and so as the mind gets concentrated, they kind of purifies the mind of these things that tend to create filters, so that we don't see clearly also what's going on.

One of the things that makes it very difficult for us to see accurately is our self-centered ideas, our preoccupation with self. And one of the functions of concentration is to begin to still or quiet the kind of incessant self-preoccupation that a lot of us are often caught up in as we go by. Our daily life and our view of ourselves and our view of ourselves in relationship to others tends for a few of us to be a little inaccurate. And so for those few people that our self-concept is, you know, not so useful or not so accurate. Concentration is very, very helpful, because again, it can quiet that activity of the mind which is full of self-judgment or self-loathing or self-aggrandizement, or in all kinds of ideas of self. The idea of self is a magnet to all kinds of personal or familiar or cultural ideas of what it means to be a self, and then we tend to carry it along as baggage, as wind drag these ideas of self.

That makes often our life quite confusing, quite difficult. Life becomes a lot easier when we don't carry around with us a lot of complicated ideas of self. One of the advantages of developing a concentrated mind is that these ideas tend to fall away for a while, and we get a taste and experience of ourselves without the operating of all these ideas of self. And it's a real surprise to some people to realize that they can exist without having ideas of who they are. For some people, it's quite frightening for a while, and For some people, it's a huge relief. Some people, it's frightening. First, before they feel the relief, just imagine just sitting there quietly with your eyes closed, minding your own business.

Very safe environment to be in, and then realizing that you don't have to have any kind of idea of self, and then getting frightened. What is it to be frightened? about notes. But if people have gotten I've got very afraid sitting in meditation when I was a new student, and realizing that the next moment what I was being asked to do in meditation was to let go of a certain activity of thinking that I had to do it oneself, and being so feeling so vulnerable, so afraid or uncertain about life, and myself if I let go of that and feel I can't do that. And as a meditation teacher, I've come to people. I've people come to me, especially on retreats, in a state of panic. Nothing's happening except their idea of who they are is being challenged in the course of meditation practice, and then after a while they come back and usually people feel quite a relief.

Well, what a relief not to have that. How did I do that? I don't you? OK, like people anyway. Another reason for developing concentration is that the more concentrated the mind becomes,

the more it tends to produce a kind of joy and well being, sense of well being and happiness in our psychophysical system. that seemingly has no object for its arising. You know, mostly people feel happy if something happens in their life that causes them to be happy.

So for example, in the lottery, some people get happy. Or, you know, someone takes you out to a wonderful meal, or some good thing happens. You know, it's been raining for a long time, and then becomes sunny and you're really happy. If people want to go out and get some fresh air and go for a walk, so things happen and we get happy and unhappy. Of the wonderful thing about concentration, there's a happiness that's conditioned by the concentration, gets brought on by the concentration, but it doesn't have any reason for it to be there. That makes sense. And so it gives a very different sense of happiness and sense of well being that can be there without a reason.

And developing a sense of joy and happiness in our life that comes from meditation is a wonderful antidote to all the ways in which we don't feel a sense of well being. For some people, it's very healing, at almost cellular level, to feel the kind of joy and happiness of meditation. Some people spend so much of their life beating themselves up, and being self-critical, and being anxious, and being nervous. And to develop a kind of concentration that can sense, substitute that sense, that sense of ill ease, bad feel, not feeling good about oneself with a sense of well being is calling being bathed in light, bathed in joy and delight, bathed in some goodness. And it's very healing for some people. As also makes it a lot easier to keep doing the meditation practice, if you're really enjoying meditation, you're more likely to want to keep doing it.

And if you're not enjoying it, then it's harder to want to do it. So it's great as a great inspiration for deepening the practice when there's a sense of well being that comes with it also. And that's part of what comes with concentration. Sometimes that sense of well being is not always there with mindfulness. When people do mindfulness practice only, and sometimes a people will switch to concentration meditation in order to develop a sense of well being as a foundation so they can go back and deal with things which are quite difficult to deal with when they are focusing on the mindfulness meditation.

So developing concentration, developing our capacity for concentration, is a good idea. We all have the capacity of developing our concentration. And it's best when you're developing your concentration not to compare yourself with any idea of how concentrated you're supposed to be, or other people compared to how other people are getting concentrated. In order to help you with that, they'll tell you one thing you can compare yourself to. Since I'm

kind of a teacher, people some time people look up to me as being so much as a great mediator and all that and have great abilities. I don't know what people think, but it's usually not true.

But I don't think of myself as having a very great ability to get concentrated. I don't. I've developed over time, and I've learned a lot of, learned a lot about the realms of concentration and meditation, so that it's sometimes because of my knowledge and my knowledge and my understanding. Sometimes I get more concentrated now than I used to be able to get, or fasting faster than I used to be able to get. But it's really out of many, many years of experience and developing myself that I have some, you know, more ability now than I did a long time ago. But by nature, I don't, you know. My mind is not very easily concentrated.

I meet people whose minds can get very easily concentrated, who have a tremendous native ability to get concentrated. And now it's a little bit, and I'm not be envious at times. Why yitshy? That's nice, but I think It's best not to compare yourself to anyone, to any anybody at all. And what I've learned is that it's beneficial even to take your degree of concentration you already have and to improve it. Two per cent provides tremendous benefits. Just your two per cent, one per cent.

Don't have some great lofty ideal of what you're trying to aim for. Just develop yourself a little bit. Just do as much as you can today, or to tomorrow, this week, or slowly. Over time, it develops and grows. It's a muscle that gets developed over time. Also, when people think that concentration is important, some people have this idea that there is one thing we need to do in order to get concentrated.

And that is to develop in at one point, by one point, that just be focused and locked on what we're getting concentrated on. And it's kind of, you know, pretty limited understanding of the psyche, the mind, the body. You have to have one idea of one factor that needs to be developed. It's useful to think of the mind or the being we are as an ecology and ecological system. And so you want to kind of work the whole, all the different elements of the ecology together. You don't just take one element of the system, but you won't have an understanding of the range of what goes on in the system, and then maybe work on different things, different times.

And bring things together. So, you know, the five faculties are some of those things. For example, if you only develop concentration, you need to look at the other four faculties and see how they support it. It's helpful to want to get concentrated. It's helpful to understand the practice of concentration, how it works. It's helpful to kind of have some some sense of

how to monitor yourself as you're doing the practice.

You're not monitoring yourself and kind of learning from your mistakes, learning from how things are going, and you're not really got be able to learn the skill of how to get concentrated. So to have a kind of overview of how things are going, or kind of checking in, Oh, How is it right now? You know, Oh, that was four breaths before I got distracted. That was two. Oh, there I seem to get to eight breaths. What was it that happened there? What was it? Was I more alert? Was I more energized than that moment? What was it that required was a more sense of resolve? What is it that are some of the different elements that come into play that need to be the helpful support of getting concentrated.

The tradition itself gives some very mundane supports for concentration. It says if you want to get concentrated, it's helpful to meditate in a clean environment, a clean, orderly environment. Your mind is more likely to be clean and orderly if your room is clean and orderly. It also says that it's helpful to wear clean clothes. So you, when you want to get a concentrated mixture, you put on clean clothes first, and it's helpful. It says if you associate with people who tend to have more concentrated lives, concentrated minds, you associate with people who are very scattered and distractible, a kind of jumping all over the place, then we tend to kind of pick up those habits a little bit.

If you hang out with people who are settled and calm and equanimous, that tends to rub off a little bit and becomes easier for us to develop concentration. There's a list of kind of things, you know, in practical things to do. Am I believe that what is one of the probably most important supports for getting concentrated in meditation is to enjoy yourself when you're meditating, to look for where the enjoyment is, to allow yourself to enjoy yourself as you meditate, to go with the enjoyment, to see what is enjoyable right here. So even focusing on the breath, there could be some sense of pleasure or enjoyment with it does not always exist. But to be tuned in to the possibility of pleasure and enjoyment as we're meditating, and then to kind of go with it or use it as a kind of biofeedback system to help us get more concentrated or get more concentrated.

Enjoyment and joy is very, very helpful for developing concentration. You have to have the wisdom to know that you can't always enjoy yourself, but when it's happening, go with it. That's one of the ways to develop concentration. So there's a lot more to say about concentration, and at other times I've talked a lot more about it. But as the part of the purpose of this evening, it's for us to try out the mike. And for that purpose, I need to stop talking.

So you can ask some good questions about concentration, or some questions, and then I can

try to follow up with that, to talk some more about it, or something else, whatever is on your mind. Yes, you have to hold the mike. Is it too loud? It seems that it would be the cultivating concentration would make sense to do at times of real calm, because I think in other times I'm on a theme right now about not wanting to go into this thing called avoidance and denial, avoidance and avoidance or denial. And I think it's a great practice to cultivate concentration. But if it's used at a time when there's something up. Is that just kind of avoiding? So I'd like to hear what you say about that.

Or I think it's a great question. It's my belief. I don't have a statistical proof, but it's my belief that anybody, everybody who develops some ability to concentrate or tribute to meditate some successful way will sooner or later use their meditation as a way of avoiding something. It's just comes with territory, because human beings don't often want to experience things which are unpleasant. So there are times when it's actually useful to avoid what's going on. Sometimes it's a tactical retreat for a while. I think, I'm not going to look at this or deal with it because it is too difficult to agitate.

I'm going to kind of regroup myself. And when we're more regrouped and stable, then I'm going to look at it. Then it's more useful. So there aren't you no times like that, but I think it's very wise. What you're saying is, be very careful. There are times when developing concentration strong states of concentration are used as a way to avoid a lot of things, whether intentional or unintentionally.

And I've known people who've done other forms of meditation practice besides mindfulness meditation, like a mantric meditations, that get them into deep states of concentration. They've done it for years and years, and they come to a mindfulness retreat. And since that's what they're doing, that's what they're supposed to be doing there. We tell them, Look, I won't you stop using your mind, or won't you pay attention to what's going on in your life. And sometimes it's a huge shock for them. I had no idea what I was avoiding. What out? You know, I didn't all this conflict and issues inside, and I was getting myself calm and peaceful and all the time. I knew how to do that, but it was just an avoidance.

So I don't know what to say except to concur and say, you know, you have to have the wisdom to see them, see what's needed. And if concentration is being used as an avoidance mechanism, unless you've another question about it, I was at the nama, and in the back behind you, behind your left. So I've been working on concentration meditation, and I've developed a very great skill of being able to count and think at the same time. And I'm having a hard time breaking myself off of that. I wonder if you have any hints. But I think any meditation

practice has a danger of becoming mechanical.

Any practice we're doing. And so, and then, you know, it's become mechanical in a sense, or automatic pilot. Then the mind thinks and goes off. There's two things I can think of, I tell you now. One is that it's important to get a sense of that when it happens, and then make a correction, make it more alive again. So it's not just an automatic pilot or mechanical or whatever the term might be for you, but it infuses the counting with real life, the kind of life that you're infusing your thoughts with, the kind of life energy involvement, our interest, or so it becomes more alive, more central to your being.

So it's really something you're embracing the counting your breaking the breath, you know, in a full way when you find yourself being split that way. And so that could be a wonderful art, just to learn that full embracing of something. And that's part of what concentration is, this full embracing of this thing. The only thing you can do is a temporary measure, which I've done sometimes a little bit is sin. You're doing two things at once, right? You're counting, and in a sense to counting, and you're thinking, I so keep the counting going, and then it at other track. That's thinking, I recite the alphabet, and so you counting your breaths, and so you count.

You count the rest up to twenty six, right? So and So if you have, you not. And then you go at the same time. It's doing saying one, you're saying two. Sometimes you saying two, you're saying b, three, c, and you keeping you sit going. And then when you get to a, b, you find out whether it's twenty seven or twenty five. And you do that for a few rounds or do that for five minutes, probably you find yourself more concentrated in that part of that split will kind of fall away, or that you forget about what you're thinking about, thanks. Or you can hold the mike a little further away than whatever eight inches.

Also, maybe now, or at the end, when we finish also, we want some feedback about using the mike. Whether you think it's good, like some people think it's great because they have these hearing devices, that helps them to go through a system there. Like Ken uses it, and a few other people see there. We have someone there, and not there. You see, with people, we are like four people, just as I, you know, and they appreciate it. But also some people are intimate, we think, might be intimidated from using it. And so if you're one of the use people, let us know, because that's the so far to know.

Also, as we kind of experiment, when we want to do this at all, it also slows down the but it's good to slow things down and passing it around. Yes, Mitras Passitumita I just recently sat with a teacher who made a very clear distinction between three things, and in a way that I

thought I hadn't heard before. Maybe I was wrong, and I'm still a little bit confused about it. And concentration is one of those. So he made a distinction between *samatha* practice, which is concentration on an unreal object. So it can be a mantra. It can be a visual thing. Or for him, it could be breath based, so subtle. So for him, it was almost like an image.

Then there was a mindfulness, which was like an of choiceless depending on So I'm sitting, and if I hear a voice, and I'll say hearing, and then next thing that comes up. Wherever my mind goes next line, don't try to stay with anything in particular. Just beside open space and whatever comes of it, I name it. And the third thing was and which was recommended for me because of my body pain was rising and falling of the stomach. So actually, I should say even mindfulness. You're supposed to basically stay there. So its sort of like an anger rising and falling of the stomach, and you say rising and falling, but wherever your mind goes, you sort of go there and then come back.

But for me, it was said that unless it's really pulling me away, impossible, that I should really try not really go and note something. Even if I hear a voice not even go. I mean, I notice it's hearing. I have all my faculties open, but really try and really stay on that ankle much more firmly. And which is what he called concentration, the *samādhi*. So do you make that distinction? And why is that three way distinction particularly useful? Why is it not? If I made those three there was that particular distinction. But I know about these three different categories of meat meditation. There are other categories also.

The first is a classic *samādhi* practice, concentration practice, that as taught by Metta tradition. The second choices awareness practice is sometimes understood as being very mature *vipassanā*, because very hard to do with the mind is not stable and settled, to be open to things gone choicestly. Sometimes it's likened to *shikantaza* practice, sometimes to *dzogchen* practice a little bit, perhaps, and a certain kind of Tibetan practice. But it's kind of just a kind of being, just allowing things to arise in awareness freely as they actually occur, without trying to do anything or having a technique. And then the third is the classic way that the Mahāsi practice is taught, that the Mahāsi side and the Burmese system admit of mindfulness meditation that I learned when I was in Burma.

And that which is indirectly or directly, I guess, is what is taught at Spirit Rock. Though that Spirit Rock doesn't limit itself just to the rising fall of the abdomen. But that's the way of practicing here, and you're developing what you're trying to do there is to develop a very sharp, penetrating mindfulness of the objects of awareness. So rather than taking the surface concept, idea, what things are, you want to get underneath the surface of what we experience,

really see it deeply. And so it would need a lot of concentration in order to do that. And so the Mahāsi technique tends to choose one area: the rising, falling, the abdomen. It could be somewhere else, but that's what they cut, choose.

And you develop your mindfulness in that particular area, so that at the same time you're developing a lot of concentration. And so concentration and mindfulness go in tandem. Classically in Buddhism, concentration and mindfulness are practiced separately. One way of you doing it is you practice concentration practice first, and then you switch to mindfulness practice. In the Mahāsi, they don't do it separately, but you do it together. And so you choose one area here and yet rise and fall in the stomach and abdomen, and then you develop concentration on mindfulness together.

And then if something else happens, you note it briefly when you come back here, and keep developing concentration in the abdomen until the world of poison opens up. So the kind of concentration you are talking about right now would be which of these different kinds of concentration an apple applies to any one. Concentration is a faculty that's needed for any activity we're involved. I think that as the talk went on, I tend to I was time more talking about maybe developing concentration for its own sake. But concentration is an important element of even doing any meditation practice that you're doing. And sometimes you work on it directly, and sometimes it comes it follows along in the wake of what else you're doing. OK, so I hope this was useful and interesting to hear about somebody. And next week we'll talk about wisdom. Thank you very much.