

Concentration (Week 4 - Part 2)

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Now, when you know, there are categories or different levels of these *jhānas*, and in the Buddhist tradition they enumerate eight. Sometimes they have nine, but for our purpose we talk about eight. And now, different teachers of *jhāna*, these absorptions, have different criteria for what constitutes a *jhāna*, what qualifies. So if you read different books about this topic, you'll find different teachers have different ideas about it. Some people, as its agents, it's not really fair to judge it, judge different people, but they have. Some people, a friend of mine can of value different teachers of *jhāna*, and he says, This teacher, he has *jhāna* light.

What qualifies for him is *jhāna* is really light, and he allows the student, the practitioner, to still have some thinking going on in that state. And then his teacher here, he's *jhāna* heavy, and not only is there no thinking, but there's no self-awareness. You don't even know. You don't even realize what happened until you come out of the state. And so it's that power. You're so absorbed that you can sense lost re. We're really present, but you're not exactly aware what's going on.

When you come out, then you can review what happened and you realize what was going on. So there are different teachings, different ideas of what it is. Probably my theory is that because I haven't studied, these teachers don't know what their story is. But my kind of theory these days is that each of these eight *jhānas* can be experienced at different levels of intensity. And so some people are experiencing it at the mild intensity, some at a strong intensity, but it still involves the same qualitative shift. So the eight *jhānas*, eight absorptions, some teachers will refuse to talk to the students about them.

Students will say, Have I reached the first *jhāna* yet, in the second or third? And there's a someone wrote in an article recently called *jhāna* without numbers. And there are sometimes rather unfortunate things that happen about *jhānas* and ambition and measuring: where am

I, and I'm this level, and where are you, and I'm better than you, and all this neurosis around anxiety, around *jhānas*. Now that some teachers don't talk about it at all, but rather what they focus on is paying attention to what are the mental factors that come into play as a person gets concentrated, and then beginning to help the student work with those factors so the concentration gets deeper and deeper, without putting it into some measurement, some categories for a second or third absorption, but it ought be. But the principle behind going deeper into the states of absorption is going from more from coarser mental activity to more refined. And so as we go deeper, what we learn to do is to let go of coarser and coarser, relatively coarser and coarser mental activity, until the mind gets more and more refined, more still, more rarefied.

And it's amazing, the rarefied, all states that can arise, that can occur. So at the first absorption, then there are five factors, which are at present, that are important, that are recognized. And these are the five that we focused on: excess concentration. So it's an initial and sustained application of attention to or happiness, and one-pointedness. Of those five, the coarsest is the initial and the sustained application of attention, which takes intention, takes directing the mind to doing so in order to go from the first to the second. That doing is of the mind has to fall away, and mostly in its kind of relax.

It various ways. Different teachers have titles, different systems of how to get a person to go from one to the other. But it kind of relax that course, that not that course, but the relatively coarse. That's the coarsest thing to relax it. And then it will open up into the second, and that's characterized by the presence of, for now, we can just say the other three. And in particular, joy seems to be really strong, and so it's characterized by a lot of joy.

And some teachers will actually encourage at this point, the student, to cultivate and strengthen that joy, and really pervade it through the body, kind of just kind of, like, work through the body, and expand it, and grow it, intensify the joy. And this is where the joy can reach levels of rapture, a phenomenal rapture that can happen. You know, it's better than any kind of rapturous kind of experience that you could have in a non-meditative life. Some people don't have, you know, peaks of rapture in this. Some people, it's much more kind of mild. But there's as a joy. That's part of it.

The tradition has five lists, five different kinds of joy that can happen. I don't remember all of them right now, but there's momentary joy, just like there is a cascading joy. There's a kind of flashes of joy. It kind of flashes, sometimes flashes all over the body. There is a pervading joy or and are different kinds of joy. That's wonderful, like Eskimos have all words of snow, supposedly. The Buddhists have all these words for joy, and this cascading joy.

You remember, once I was going through very deep states of concentration like this, and I had a lot of this joy coming up, and the sitting ended. It was time to have lunch, and I went to the dining room, got my food, and managed to get my food. And sometimes when you win, there are some people, when they go into these deep states of altered states, the sense of being altered stays with them after they come out. Some people seem to pop out pretty easily, but some people stay in it. So I was kind of in it. You know, I managed to eat my food and sit down, and then the act of being focused on picking a fork of food up into my mouth, you know, takes some concentration right to do that.

And so somehow my, seemingly my system kind of locked back into the concentrated state, and had these waves of joy just wash in my body, and it was so intense. I had to put the fork down, and I sat in the dining room for a long time without being able to eat, because this is not just, you know? So it gives you a little bit of sense of, you know, what can happen. And some people get frightened by this, they never had something so powerful. You know, what's this going on? Sometimes the symptoms of this rapture, this joy, the Pāli word is *pīti*, which is p-i-t-i. And sometimes it has some physical symptoms in the body which are not people normally wouldn't identify with joy or rapture.

And it's a little bit strange when you go to a teacher, and they say, These things are happening in my body, and I say, Oh, that's good. You're having a joy, having read what. And so that might happen to you. Maybe sometime in, we sometimes there can be shaking in the body, sometimes there can be the body jerking in the body. Now, is anyone, I tell you, because it's not so usual. And if I tell you, then you get frightened and think, You know, Oh, this is supposed to happen it ever. But I'll tell you what went. When I am one of the retreats, I sat in a room. There was a good, nice teacher there I sat with for a month, but he had a little bit, a little bit strange in the way he was guiding me, and I showed up there. I was introduced himself as a Zen priest in Japan. I had my Zen robes, and so I guess he had a lot of hope for my ability to get concentrated, is a good live one here, you know.

He's and I had to go the little hut, and I sat alone day after day. But every day I had an interview with him, and so the interviews went along fine for a while, and after a while he started saying things like, Are you shaking yet? Are you bouncing around yet? I don't know. Nothing's happening now. Have any specialty report and final? Oh, just a few weeks ago, there was a Brazilian woman here, and she was just bouncing off the walls, you know, as if you know the symptoms of rapture. Some people, when they have a strong rapture, feel as if their body is floating like this, gets really light, and comes like lifting. Maybe that's where some of the stories are. People kind of saying they can fly. When they meditate just before

come, seems to lift if you open your eyes. Maybe you.

So one of the one or some teachers, when they want people to work with in a second *jhāna* with a lot of joy, when you really get not to go through it too quickly, but stay there stabilizing and get used to it until at such a point where you begin thinking, realizing that this joy is a drag. Can you imagine that this is a drag? It's like too much. It's like all this energy happening all the time. It's like always being kind of wired or kind of now the kind of feeling really good. And that's kind of like if you always have a smile on your face. You know, I've smiled so much that I got tired. You know, there's enough of this smiling, please. You know, you get so tired smiling. So like in some social situation where no smile miles also, and so to con like, It's too much after a while.

And so that's that. When you felt feeling, That's too much. Then some of the enchantment, some of the attachment, some of the, you know, with a joy begins to fade. And then, at some point, a person lets go of the joy. And then what's left is a happiness. And the happiness is much more sublime, much more satisfying than the joy. And you know, it's much, much better now.

There's a kind of progression that happens, you know, that's going on here. And I once, in one retreat, tried to bypass that progression because I thought the joy was kind of getting kind of old. I know it was kind of like, you know, relative, right? It was kind of like more near. The surface is kind of not so deep, so I could feel the joy was going to start happening. I don't want anything to do with this. I just wanted, I want to go for the deeper stuff. So I kind of held the joy at bay. Can you believe it? You know, not go have this joy, you know? No, thanks. And I was doing walking meditation when this was going on, and I just kept keeping it down, and after a while I start getting a headache and so violent that this is ridiculous, okay? I do let it happen.

So the joy happened kind of so let it happen just. And then as soon as I let it happen, it passed really quickly too, and I dropped into deeper states. I didn't, don't you know? It was all this time spent repressing my joy, you know? It's just a waste of time. So this progression goes on. And then, or at some point, you can stabilize in happiness, and to some point, you're trained to let go of the happiness. What? Not the whole point. But there's something better than happiness. And that is a state, a fourth absorption, a state of equanimity, profound equanimity, and where there's no pain. There's very little or no pain in the *jhānas*, but in the fourth *jhāna*, there's none at all.

There's here, in such tremendous equanimity, there's a tremendous balance. Sometimes, of some people, the sense of the body disappears. One of you, you can. Your eyes are closed.

You can't know. With your eyes closed, you can't try to look around or feel around to see if you still have a body. And you can't. You know, there's no evidence you have a body any more. You know what? Your body you can open your eyes is still right there, right? Hasn't gone anywhere but at empirically the way you come of sitting there, you can't identify a body. Sometimes at this, if it hasn't, it doesn't happen earlier. Sometimes at this point, sometimes the breath seems to stop or has stopped, and you don't even notice your breathing. Sometimes there's no breath tapping it at all. And so a tremendous sense of peace of coolness, of equanimity. And you might have to take my word on it, but it's much more satisfying than the happiness that you had just let go of. So it's pretty great.

Some teachers who are into this kind of stuff will stop at that point. That's enough. You get to the fourth *jhāna*. That's more than you need. It's fine. Now, let's get males do the real work. You know, this is just kind of this kind of warming up. Now let's start doing the mindfulness work. He's a switch over to *vipassanā*, and that'll talk about next week. It'll be about how the concentration practice isn't integrated with the post practice. Some teachers will have the students continue and go further into what's called, so these first four have it as a group of four, are called the *rūpa jhāna*, and *rūpa* means form.

But for this purpose it might be better, well just say it. You know, you can forget it if you want. Here a *rūpa* might be better translated as concept. It's a meditations of conceptual meditation in a certain way. Then you go into the *arūpa*, or formless *jhānas*, or conceptless *jhānas*, no sense. I'm not sure anyway. The next four, the five, six, seven, eight are called *arūpa jhāna*, the formless *jhānas*. And here it's partly formless because there's no body, there's no form, there's no objects any more that you can identify. And the first one is infinite space. So you're sitting there, and your body disappears. And when your body disappears, what's left? Space. So you let go the equanimity, and you let your attention get filled or sink into or disappear into the sense of just in space that's left, and you become aware of infinite space. It's pretty far out. Something like acid, you know, you like, it is far out. But it's legal, sir, so far.

And then, in order to know that there's infinite space, there has to be consciousness. So then you let go of the sense of the experience of space, and turn into consciousness, and how consciousness feels like it's infinite. Then what's left in its infinite consciousness, boundless consciousness, and you've heard sometimes in spiritual tradition to talk about having cosmic consciousness or infinite consciousness. And I don't know what those people are talking about, but Buddhists will often say, Oh, what they're doing is falling into the seventh *jhāna* of his infinite consciousness. And it feels so far out, a lot of these stages of the *jhānas*. Sometimes people come and say, is this enlightenment, or they're convinced I got unenlight-

ened because it's so, you know, it's so compelling and so different from ordinary life. So then there's infinite consciousness, and then from infinite consciousness, if you let go of consciousness. I mean, first you had space, right? And you let go space. So the conscious is new to space, is left, right. But if consciousness. You take away consciousness. What's left? What's left? Tell me, Well, what do you say? Nothing, right? So nothing is left. So then there's a state of no thingness. There's nothing, Diane. You can't talk about space, because space is cut like a thing or consciousness, nothingness. Now what happens? I let go of that. So the mind is getting more and more refined, more simple.

In a sense, you can say there's less and less activity going on in the mind, and there's a lot of things we normally take as being natural or, you know, just inherent part of the mind are actually involved. Functioning of the Mind Example Time or in Space So the sense of time kind of pretty much disappears in these states of absorptions. The sense of space, spatial sense, disappears because it's activity of the mind that creates time and space. So what happens when there's no that activity, time and space disappears. It's not far off. And when you let go of no thingness, the state of then there's a state called neither perception nor non-perception, because you can't say there's perception there, but you can't say there is no perception there. You can't speak, kind of like, I can't quite say what it is, but it's The Mind got very, very simple.

Now, you might be asking, What in the world is about? And why should Buddhists want to do this? You know, and it's so different from ordinary life. One is because, like you know, like Hilary said, Sir Edmund Hilary, you know, because it's there. Another is that there are benefits from the states of concentration, especially the first four are very, very healing there, phenomenally healing states. And if you can access to them, it's kind like you're accessing kind of separated yourself from the world of suffering, of pain, of illness and sickness, and into a state of tremendous sense of well being. And you can sometimes almost feel that the healing of the goodness comes of moving through the body in so new states of concentration.

But the best reason for it also is it starts to recondition the mind. Most of most human minds are conditioned phenomena. For the most part, we have certain kinds of stimulus and we develop certain conditions in response to it. If every human being you meet for the next year yells at you, and then a year from now you walk down the street and you meet a new person, you're probably going to brace yourself to be yelled at again because you've been conditioned by all those thousand of people during the first year. But maybe the person is going to whisper, right? So you don't know what's going to happen. But the mind is conditioned in some way, and so we condition ourselves in all kinds of ways. Some of them are very unfortu-

nate, and it's really amazing to begin discovering how much how we see ourselves, how we see the world around us, our perceptions of things, our values or attitudes, are conditioned phenomena, and not inherent and natural part of the whole system.

And some of that conditioning is very unfortunate. We've had a tremendous feeling of, you know, you know, of neurosis and anxiety and psychosis and feeling of lack of self-worth, and feeling of self-criticism and self-hate, and a lot of unfortunate things can be conditioned in our mind. It's as we get into these states of absorption as this, the suffering of the psychological states are replaced by a tremendous sense of well being. And that well being is like you're being bathed in goodness and it's reconditions. It re-educates the mind, re-educates the kind of the cells in a cellular level. They say sometimes, and it's very helpful for some people to have that re-education process, and to realize they get a sense of themselves, a perception of themselves, as having a capacity of having all this goodness and joy. And it begins kind of loosen up the grip of the old identities of who we have, who we think we are.

And the final thing, the reason for these deep states of concentration is so that the mind is stable enough, clear enough, focused enough, and simple enough that it could identify the most subtle, the most tenacious core places of clinging in the psyche. Somehow you address those. And it's one thing to address, you know, our clinging to the clothes we wear. You know, that's kind of relatively easy, right? But there's a deep clinging in the psyche that's usually not known by the mind at street level. Sweet Consciousness how we work while we walk around that is really only accessible when the mind is really concentrated. And so this deep concentration gives us both the stability to see it and gives us a sense of well being. So when we look at this part of us, look at the clinging and letting go of it, we're doing that from a position of feeling good, feeling delight, and feeling some seeing something beautiful. If you see the depths of clinging and the need to let go of it. But you're feeling really afraid in general in your life. You might feel really afraid to let go then. So it's a really wonderful system we have you. It brings you up to the edges of deepest clinging, but you have the sense of well being all around it. As you do that, and then it gives you access to the deep states of clinging, and then the opportunity might arise to let go.

And now, it's possible to let go at the deepest levels without doing these absorption stuff. It's very deep absorptions. Some teachers, well, don't really care if you get absorbed or not, or don't even teach you to do that. Or some teachers occasionally even tell to avoid doing that. I just focus directly on doing the *vipassanā* work. Some teachers will say, No, you. Before doing it, possibly we should do this absorption work. Get that under your belt first. There's different theories, and different theories are useful for different people. So it's not like one

shoe fits all are different. There's different minds. Some people have really good concentration minds, and people have really good your mindfulness minds. So it all depends on it. We know what's suited for each temperament, in each kind of person.

I wanted to give you the image of each of the first four *jhānas* that's used in the ancient discourses of the Buddha. The first *jhāna* is maybe I don't remember it in order. The first *jhāna* or the first *jhāna* is like having a soap powder. The ancient won't eat soap powder like we have flour, and in order to make soap you would moisten it and knead it until it got equally moist throughout and got this workable, pliable kind of kneadable ball of soap, kind like, or making red dough to get just the right amount of moisture in there needed. And it's pliable and workable. So first you're kind of saturating the mind with moisture, so the mind is pliable and workable, soft, luminous.

Then the second *jhāna* is like, it is. This joy that arises is like, this is like, the mind is like, a clear mountain lake or pond that has no water coming in from the surface like no rivers going into it, but is fed from the inside, from the bottom of the pond, by this cool, refreshing spring. It's the waters flowing up and suffusing through the pond to the lake shore. Is an inner kind of suffusion in your kind of movement, refreshment. And the fourth *jhāna* is like a lake, but here the mind is like to a lotus pond, which is floating on top, has roots going down into the refreshing, the refreshing of refreshment of the pond, but is kind of a little bit above it all, floating peacefully on top. It's not in the currents. And then the fourth *jhāna* Equanimity Part That's where the image of a being wrapped in a soft cotton blanket, and it's become a soft white clean pure cotton, links kind of enveloped in it. It's very soft. It's very nourishing. It's very comforting. It's very pleasant. And there's also, in the being wrapped, there's no stimulus coming in from the environment around. When nothing's coming in, pinching on us. We're not aware of sounds or much or sounds or, you know, smells or, you know, things outside, because we're kind of contained in this very peaceful and tranquil state.

Some people fall into these *jhānas* seemingly accidentally. They're sitting there minding their own business, and what happened? How is that? And then they pop out. Some people are a bit frightened by this, because here so different. Some people are delighted. Some people get really attached to it. And some teachers say, I have to be very careful with the *jhānas*, because you can get really attached and get in trouble. I've known people who've got seemingly stuck in them. And some people say, Teachers say, Don't. You can never really, that's never really a problem. You can get temporarily attached. That's a good attachment because you have this really good thing going. And then as you continue practising, you'll work through the attachment. You'll self-correct with time.

So for most people, these absorptions are not something you can just sit down and, you know, sit half an hour a day and expect that in a few weeks. One, two, three, four, five, right there. Most, there are a couple of kind of people who have tremendous capacity for concentration, who can do it very easily. But it's a very rare person, an ordinary or regular person. Usually it takes a lot of dedication, a lot of effort. Usually something happens on retreats. You go on long retreats, and that's where the deeper, these deeper stages may begin happening. Some people will go on *jhāna* retreats, the specific retreats, that are condition for developing concentration. Some people who will develop a daily sitting practice in a very consistent basis, day after day after day, and sit long enough, maybe an hour each day or day after day. Sometimes, maybe after many years, their mind is stable enough and concentrate has abilities there, so maybe they can gain touching into some of these *jhānas*. Some people will develop their capacity to get concentrated in a deep way on retreat, and then once they learn it there, then it becomes easier to do it in daily life. It's more accessible case, the door's been open, you know, the route, so then you can kind of do it more easily afterwards.

So the last thing I'll say is, for the purposes of liberation, for the purposes of mindfulness and the posture, it's not essential to go into these deep states. But one principle that some of these five factors come into play as you have concentrated can be applied and used for developing concentration well before getting into the joys. So one of the things to do is, if you want to develop concentration, is to try to cultivate or develop or arouse or evoke or turn into feelings of well being, of joy, and then let that joy grow as part of the effort of being concentrated, you are encouraged to feel joy. When you try to develop a deep concentration, it's not always easy, but it might take a long time. But at some point, when you start feeling some inkling of sense of well being or delight joy that might be associated with the concentration, let it be your cheerleader that's cheering you on, encouraging you on. This is great. Keep going. And like a bit kind, like a bit feedback system, you can't stay. I'll stay focused on the breath, and I can keep using the breath, keep working the breath to see if I can let this joy grow. As joy grows, it's incentive to stay focused on the breath. That makes sense.

Today, I didn't give you any chance to ask questions? I hope that was OK. Has a lot to offer. I hope no one's confused or discouraged. But I kind of late wanted to lay it all out so you'd know what that's about. And next week, gone, we'll talk about the integration, a few other things, but I Integration Concentration emphasis with posture work. Thank you.