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SPEAKERS

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But today is the last talk in the series I've been giving on concentration Samadhi is my, I think is a better word to use. Because Samadhi is who has a wider connotations than the English word concentration. It's a very important aspect of Buddhist practice cultivating Samadhi. And we see it in some of the important lists of practices that Buddhism offers. The preeminent one is the Eightfold Path, where it ends with right concentration. And it's very important in this list that it's prefaced with the word right, right here does that mean right and wrong, but rather means appropriate or suitable, the suitable or the appropriate concentration, for the purposes of a path of liberation? And the tradition points out that there is wrong concentration and wrong concentration. Sometimes people say, well, a burglar probably is very concentrated. But it's not the concentration of concentration you want or they say that it's like a, you know, a cat, ready to pounce on the mouse is very concentrated, but that's not the concentration you want. The concentration of Samadhi right concentration, right. Samadhi is one that is wholesome, skillful, has no greed, no aversion, no hate or hostility as part of it. It's possible to be of hate and be very concentrated. And it is probably you've seen sometimes possible to be greedy, and very focused, it's possible to have lust. I bet a few of you once, at least once in your lifetime, had a certain kind of, you know, moderate amount of lust that you're somewhat concentrated behind it. And but there wouldn't be called right concentration because it doesn't create the suitable state of mind that we want in order to help us to see deeply and to free the mind. And the suitable state of mind is a mind that's soft and open and expansive. And so there's wonderful kind of balance with Samadhi. Between mind which is in fact focused on something or stabilized on some object of attention. And the same time as being focused, is quite expensive and open. And the analogy I like is that of a, you know, a parachute the parachute when you enter into a Samadhi it's like the parachute of the mind is opened. And with a parachute, at least the way I think parachute, I've never been a parachute or I think it works. You know, the ropes and the parachute come down and are very, you know, firmly attached to you. And you're quite connected there quite strongly. But then you have this great big, billowing sail above you, which helps you to float down and it's kind of this expansive feeling and you feel supported. And so it's kinda like a parachute MINE MINE becomes quite expensive and light And transparent and open at the same time, and there's there's a strong stability and subtleness or groundedness in it. And so, what it means for this so called suitable Samadhi, right Samadhi is the mind has to be purified of these temporarily, of any tendencies to be greedy, or to be a versiv or to be caught up in doubt or to be conceited, be conceited, or be proud or be depressed or to be discouraged or to be self effacing and if I'm bad person or something, all those kinds of movements of the mind are not helpful for the suitable Samadhi and they but they can be helpful for unsuitable Samadhi it's possible they get concentrated around any of those states of mind is possibly a concentrated around being considered as possibly concentrated around being shy or have a negative self image or even self critical. And so the idea is to free free the mind from these kinds of unhelpful states. It's Buddhist ration talks about purifying the mind of those

states, so that the parachute mind opens up. So this kind of more expansive and relax and soft mind is there while we get focused. The purpose of this kind of mind is number of purposes. I've talked about them over this series, but one of them is the primary one if the ultimate one is to be able to see clearly. And, in fact, I don't know if I said this earlier. But when the Chinese translated the Buddhist said script in Sanskrit words for Samadhi and Sati, for Samadhi, concentration, and mindfulness, they translated with the words.

Stop and see. The stop was the car. They use the word Constantly character for somebody was stopped the character of mindfulness, or not exactly mindfulness, but Vipassana was to see or to observe, stop and look. But a great thing to do, my mother had told me that kill, stop and look, before you walk across the living room floor with your muddy boots. The so this idea of stopping, so stopping, not freezing, but pausing the incessant kind of rolling along with the thoughts and ideas and stories that mind makes, and stopping and stilling the mind enough, so we can see clearly. And so that's the function is to see clearly.

And then it's worth repeating a little bit. Some of the other functions of Samadhi is in fact to create a very nice state of being, to have a sense of well being well up from within that isn't dependent on any thing in the world calling right? isn't like you've won the lottery or got the best state or Qatar promotion or it isn't like anything in the world has happened. But rather you have a sense of well being, happiness and peace, that it arises because of the state of Samadhi. And to have an experience of probably a greater sense of happiness than most people have in the ordinary circumstances of their lives. That's not dependent on something outside of you. creates a lot of confidence creates a lot, of course, a very important reference point. So we don't expect so we know we don't we don't depend on having to get things in the world just right. So we can be happy. We can be happy without the world around us being just right, that happiness can be found inside and well. And that begins to loosen the attachment or the dependency we have on things in the world being the way we want them to be. And without loosening up dependency, we can't really be free, without loosening the grip or the attachment or the fixation that we have to get something in the world just right. And we can't really be free. And so to begin feeling this inner well being that's not dependent on the world begins to loosen that grip. So that's part of one of the functions of Samadhi. With that sense of happiness comes a sense of serenity of peace of tranquility, also comes a strong sense of confidence, a confidence in just being a confidence that we can just be present and alive without needing a lot of input from the world around us for our well being. It's remarkable thing to discover through Samadhi. Practice. This all this strength, inner strength, inner well being within us. I thought it might I thought I try in this talk to refer to some of the ancient verses, poems, written by the earliest Buddhist women, nuns. To these are people who practiced Samadhi practice meditation practice. And here's one of them is a woman by the name of Dan Tika.

As I left, my daytime meditation place, I saw an elephant come up to the river come up on the riverbank after it's bad. A man the elephant trainer took a hook and said to the elephant, give me your foot. The elephant stretched out its foot. The man mounted. Seeing what was wild before gone came under human hands. I went into the forest and concentrated my mind. So hopefully you're we're easy to tame that an elephant. So they do so some in ancient world they talk a lot about taming the mind. So the mind doesn't so unruly is not just bouncing all over but the mind when you want to get it settled and focused, it'll do that. settled there, there you go. So in, so this idea so if seeing and Stopping, stopping and seeing mindfulness, and Samadhi mindfulness and concentration, these work hand in hand, and, and the balancing going back and forth between our ability to see clearly and our ability to rest the mind is part of the art of meditation. Practice of Buddhist meditation practice. And sometimes we emphasize more mindfulness, the seeing what's going on. And sometimes we emphasize emphasis more, distilling the quieting the focusing of the mind. And so part of the art of meditators to know which one is needed

at different times, but they work in concert, this is very important to understand. So we don't set up a big divide between these two kinds of practices. So one of the places where it's very useful to do mindfulness to see clearly is when the mind is in fact quite unruly, when we're quite challenged by what's happening in our lives. And then sometimes really useful to look at that honest and direct way and really see what's going on there. Look at what's bothering us and troubling us and come to terms with it or find a new way of relating to it. Learn not to be bothered by it. Learn to open up and be more affected by it or not in conflict with it. Learn how to be addressed or at peace. With the difficulties we have to ethics, a lot of seeing a lot of understanding. When that when that's not there, and we're not troubled or mind is not too unruly, it's a great time to cultivate concentration practice to develop and strengthen the mind to be focused and present. When the mind gets with a parachute mind opens up when the mind is quite settled and there, then at some point in Buddhism, then we say it's good to bring back in more of the mindfulness to see again, more clearly what's here. Too much concentration, the mind gets to still it can be mesmerized, or kind of in a certain kind of kind of caught up in the wonderful subjective state of well being and stillness can come with meditation. But the point is not to dwell in some nice state of happiness, joy, tranquility, that can come with Samadhi The point is to use that as a foundation to see more clearly. So then as we get stabilized in Samadhi state at some point, we want to turn towards seeing what's here more carefully. And one of the things that sometimes if it's a smart is quite strong, the person has to come come out of the Samadhi a little bit, in order to be able to see clearly what's going on.

The image that kind of works for me is that of you go you know, you can beautiful you could dive into the beautiful coral blue water and it's so great to be under the water. But, but then you have to come up sometimes in your head has to come up out of it in order to see where you're at. So the same time sometimes the Samadhi is kind of like you dip under the water in this nice state. And then, but sometimes you have to come you have to kind of come out of it, just enough so that you can see more clearly what's actually happening. We're here to see what's happening is the, the, the kind of structure or the texture or the other constructed activity of our present moment experience. Now to take our present moment experience naively as a given, this is how it is. But begin seeing that our present moment experience is a constructed phenomena. It's something that it rises and comes together because a variety of causes and conditions. Some people talk about a deconstruction project, we begin deconstructing our experience because we're seeing the elemental elements, elemental parts, what makes up our experience. So I mean, not enough, this is just make this up and if this is a good example, but I know when I went to see my meditation teacher in Burma, who Pandita if I'd gone to him and said, he asked me, tell me about your meditation. And I'd said to him, oh, I was just miserable. It was so hard. And I was so discouraged. And I was thinking a lot about, you know, what happened in high school. And, you know, and I was I got really angry about my girlfriend back there. And I was like, it was a hard meditation. He would have probably just sent me away for the day, come back tomorrow and try again, good. But what he wanted me to do is I can't have those experiences. But he wanted to begin looking under the surface of that to see how was that constructed? What's going on in the present moment. Don't dwell on the story, what's going on there? And so what he wanted me to say was, I was sitting meditating, and I had some discouraging thoughts arise. I saw it as thoughts. Memories arose, I saw it as memories. As I saw it as thoughts and memories. I can feel my body getting heavy and contracted. I can feel myself getting Sad and discouraged. I noticed the discouragement I felt the discouragement as heaviness in my shoulders and in my chest and I could feel kind of my energy begin to drain away. As I began looking more carefully into the heavy feeling in my shoulders, that heavy feeling started, it felt like it was happening in particular places in my shoulders. And it felt like it was hard and, and kind of feeling dark. And I brought myself in really felt the exact kind of feelings of heaviness and darkness and hardness there in my shoulders. And as I did that, the hardness and the heaviness, loosened up, and as it loosened up, I noticed that some of this feeling of discouragement had went away. So it goes on like that being discussed looking at the deep what's

going on and on, not mesmerized by the story of what happened by date and high school. And you're he doesn't want to hear about that in May, and so it has nothing to do with him. What the process of Meditation, there's nothing to do with a deconstruction process. But as we begin deconstructing, we see we start to break the trance of the stories that we live in. stories can be important place in our lives, I don't want to dismiss them entirely. We want to get underneath them so that people call it a deconstruction process to begin seeing what are the building blocks, and one of the important building blocks for how we construct not just our stories, but our experience of who we are our sense of self or a sense of other our life here now is is can be as clinging attachment, fear, desire, anger, aversion, all these deeper kind of movements of the mind. And we want to get down deconstruct to see those. And then even deeper below those, what are the building blocks for that. And some of the building blocks, you know, like, here's, here's a building block of desire that I saw. It was a very, very meaningful moment for me when I was there, that teacher in Burma, I went into my room into into his cabin and to see him for my interview with him daily every day I saw him. And as I was been practicing for, for meditating for many months there so my mind was very still and very mindful. And I walked in.

And as they walk into the door, just on the right, for three, four feet away was an altar. And on that altar, that shelf was a Buddha that had been there before. So as I walked in and immediately saw it, and I watched very fast succession, I saw my mind recognize the Buddha. See it as a pleasant, pleasant to look at and look and in having that moment of pleasure, I wanted that Buddha so I saw the building blocks in the in the past without that level of concentration or stillness. I would have just walked in there and wanted it. And I wouldn't have and then I would have made a story about why I wanted it. You know, this is like a beautiful Buddha, it would look really good on my shelf at home and people will love people love me because I have a great Buddha. And it's important for people to love me. But what I saw that moment with how simple the desire was, it was simply I saw the pleasure. And I wanted more of that pleasure. So I wanted the Buddha. So that's kind of seeing the building blocks of the experience very simple. So part of the function of concentration practice is to get the mind quiet enough and still enough in the present moment enough. So it's willing to begin this this deconstruction process to begin understanding what's really going on in the building blocks of our moment, moment experience, the building blocks of how we understand ourselves, see ourselves in this world. And when we start seeing the basic building blocks of it, we start having a different understand in relationship to all this, and we begin understanding something about the nature of clinging and attachment that we could never understand from a distance. And you know, people's, it's very easy for people to hear Buddhist teachings, you know, but don't be attached like of clinging and not understand it or feel like these Buddhists are kind of like a party poopers you know, give me a break. And but if you get your mind really quiet and stillness, really good state of Samadhi then it becomes very obvious how wonderful and special it is to investigate the attachment and, and desire want and a good way to go to the other side of it to let go of it just like this is the best thing going, why wouldn't you? It's better than the joy of meditation to let go of attachment, the joy of Samadhi so here's another poll. I think it's well, this doesn't quite get to it, but I wanted to be doing This is by a woman named Uttamā. The Buddha taught the seven factors of awakening, which included concentration. They are ways to find peace, and I have developed them all. I have found what is vast and empty, the unborn. It is what I longed for. I am a true daughter of the Buddha. always finding joy in peace. Nice always finding joy and peace. Kinda interesting to include those together.

Meditate, she says this woman's name is Abhirūpa-Nandā. Meditate, the unconstructed, remember this deconstruction process. So when everything gets deconstructed what's left in the tradition somehow uses the word that unconstructed for that. Meditate on the unconstructed, get rid of the tendency to judge yourself above, below or equal to others. By penetrating deeply into judgment, you will live at peace. So that's a very modern concern, right? The tendency to judge yourself as better or worse than

or equal to others. And kind of the question what's, you know, what's left? You can't do any of those three, right? Nothing better or worse than others superior inferior, that's make sense not to have that. But in America, United States, not to see yourself as equals others. You know, that You know what's left. And what's left is you don't play the judgment game. He just let yourself be, you don't need it. So here penetrating deeply into judgment, you will live at peace. So this is so with the Samadhi practice with a concentration meditation practice. At some point you want to see deeply, and the tradition often use of the word penetrate for that seeing you penetrate deeply. And here's penetrating deeply into judgment to deconstruct it.

Here's a poem by a woman named Uttamā. Four or five times I left my cell, my meditation cell, my my cabin, what, four or five times I left my cell. I had no peace of mind, no control over my mind. So I think what it means she's restless, she's gonna try To meditate and she keeps getting up and leaving and going back and trying again, four or five times, like she's like just not working for agitated. Then I went to a nun, I thought I could trust. She taught me the Dharma, the elements of body and mind, the nature of perception, and earth, water, fire and wind. In other words, you taught her the element. When you do this deconstruction process to see clearly what's kind of the building blocks of our experience. The tradition kind of points to particular things as part of the building blocks. And 111 distinction is that between that those experiences that belong to the body, and those experiences belong to the mind, not to create a strong dualism, like we have in the West, sometimes mean mind and body, but to see as these are both connected and distinct, so we can begin teasing apart what's going on the nature of perception. Now, that's it instigated thing to question what's going on we perceive something, we often take perception naively as just being a given like I perceive accurately, but perception itself is a construct is it is involved in construction. And we know this now from what, you know brain studies have taught us about how we perceive, you know, we get all these data, little sense data come in to the nerve optical nerve when we're seeing for example, and also, you know, electrons and data goes to the nerves go into the brain. And then the brain does this amazing job of reconstructing and creating an image. And that image is not a perfect mirror image of what's out there. But rather, is is a constructive process. We highlight and pick up our environment and reconstruct it in ways that it's appropriate for us so we can get around the world just right. And the one that can make me feel a bit dizzy, I don't quite understand it. My little mind can't quite Still can't quite get my mind around this, that they claim that the eye sees things upside down. But I see things right side up. So how does that happen? So I guess what happens is that somehow, you know, the brain constructs the right way up, right. It's a constructive process. And so one of the things that begins happening when mind is really, really quiet. And still in meditation, we begin understanding something about the nature of this perceptive process, not not those kinds of things, but the way in which we construct our experience. And that's a very liberating, because when we start seeing your role, and how you see and interpret the world, then you can take responsibility for your role and find greater peace and freedom from what's going on. It's difficult to find freedom from with the world in the world. If how you perceive the world is your construction, but you don't see it as being your contribution. Hope that they hope that makes sense. So it's this woman doesn't know there's none is agitated and she goes and talks to a teacher and none who teaches her about this deconstruction process. Then she says, I heard what she said. And sat cross legged seven days full of joy. Isn't that nice? See, she finally got her Samadhi when on the eighth day, I stretched my feet out. The great dark was torn apart. It was her way of saying that our mind became free. So the great dark whenever the dark whatever dark meant for her, just was opened up kind of fell away or was torn or you know, cracked open. So just to use the Samadhi to cultivate Samadhi to learn about how to work with the obstacles to Samadhi to still focus concentrated mind takes a long time to learn how to monitor yourself so that you have right Samadhi as suitable Samadhi Samadhi which doesn't, isn't somehow tinge tainted by greed or aversion or irritation or judgment or expectations or demands.

That is intense. Because if any of those things are part of the Samadhi this mind will go a little bit awry. I've had no other people have had gotten headaches or attention certainly got in conventional sense very focused and concentrated, but the concentration was hinged or tainted by some of these kind of and helpful states of mind. So it's very simple. And then that's why mindfulness is so important. The seeing part you want to see and understand monitor yourself well enough that you can recognize and weed out the extra, the extra stuff that we kind of add to the simplicity of the moment. And this takes a while it takes a while to meditate to calm down enough to begin looking carefully, and becoming really familiar with yourself to really understand the tricks of your mind, what goes on in your mind in there. And it takes a real art to learn to understand these tricks, these kind of unwholesome unhelpful states of mind that arise and learn how not to be bothered by them. How not to be averse to them or be angry that they're or be discouraged because they're there. And so, but but also not to give in to them and allow them to get free rein to do whatever they want. So how both to kind of see them clearly. Not be troubled or irritated by their presence or discouraged Keep practicing and finding a way to move more closer and closer to a mind, which doesn't have unhelpful states going on unhelpful thought, thoughts, ways of thinking unhelpful attitudes, unhelpful intentions unhelpful things and allow these things to kind of fall away. This can take for some people can take years. And it's a beautiful and profound thing to work through and understand one's mind. In fact, some of the Buddhist earliest Buddhist texts that inspire me a lot when the Buddha was defining or explaining how a person is wise. A wise person understands the hangups of their mind. The wise person understands how the movements of their own minds get in their own way. The wise person understands the problems, as opposed to a wise person understands some great cosmic principle about the true nature of the universe. Rather, we understand the true nature of our attachments and clinging. That's what a wise person knows. And because with that understanding, you can monitor yourself understand yourself, then you can learn to free yourself from the negative effects those have on us. And that's a really useful thing to do. If it takes years it's well worth doing. In fact, I know some people who take years to kind of understand them so well enough and do the kind of learn how to have a balanced open attitude and not be caught by these things. It took years to do that and their spirituality is much deeper and more stable than people who for whatever reason, had the capacity to get concentrated quickly.

There are people who have a natural mental capacity for concentration, and they sit down and they just kind of zoom in, and there they are focused and concentrated. But sometimes they don't know themselves that well. And they've kind of bypassed the whole level of personal psychological work that needs to be done to become an integrated whole person. An extreme extreme just to give you make to make that make the point or bolster this point. It kind of extreme extreme example. I mean, I've been slightly criticized lately for tending to use extreme examples. The but you know, I want to say what I'm gonna say respectfully for these people. There are people who have had serious psychological challenges in their life nowadays, we tend to call it trauma Like in their childhood or something. And in order to deal with those very deep, painful, painful suffering, with all the strength of mind can happen have, they sometimes will cut off parts of themselves, or separate disassociated parts of themselves. And people who do this sometimes have a very strong capacity to get concentrated to dip into deep states of Samadhi. Some people discover this capacity, as you know, as children because their environment is so terrible that they've learned to pull back pull back from environment and go into themselves and let go and find a deep peaceful place inside. But they've done that without doing any of the psychological work of clarifying their fear, their attachment, their sense of self and all the kind of things that we want to do. And, but they get very concentrated. And so it conventionally it looks like their meditation is really great. But what they need to do is to kind of pull back and Open up and start looking at this deeper stuff that deeper work that has to happen. So but then, you know, there's no, you know, everyone's different Everyone has their own path. And so doesn't have to be slow, it doesn't have to be that path fast. It has to be your way. And since purifying or clarifying the mind, so you're not caught up in all these unhelpful states of mind is the key thing you have to do. You can't be too concerned,

whether your way is fast or slow. You can't be kind of uptight or caught up in that, because that just messes it up. You just have to kind of take it as it is with your be sincere in the practice and take your way and be content to be practicing. And sometimes you practice looking more deeply, sometimes you practice stilling the mind, whatever is needed at that time. So then, I'll end with us A beautiful analogy is when I visit, I think it's beautiful. My perception is that it's beautiful. I'll take responsibility for the perception is it's from a Mahayana Buddhist text called the Lotus Sutra. sutra. And it's, and I thought of it late recently when it was raining last week. So it has to do with the rain. And the analogy is that, just like in the, in the, in the, in the forest, when the rain falls, all the different species of plants absorb the water, just the right amount of water that they need. So the big trees absorb a lot of water. Little Plants absorb just a little bit of water, but everyone gets the just amount of right water they need. In the same way. When the rain of the Dharma falls on us. Each of us takes up just what we need and then Nice. So we each have our own way.

And so whatever we, whatever we absorbed at the time we absorb is probably just what we can absorb what's useful for us. However long it takes for us to practice is just the right time ever law just the right for us who we are. And so we practice our we find our way in this. And the two and the two most important kind of tools for finding our way in this Buddhist path is to stop and to look, stop and look carefully Samadhi and Samadhi, Samadhi and mindfulness concentration and mindfulness. So I hope that this series on Samadhi support you gives you a little appreciation for a capacity that you have. We all have this capacity to tame the mind still the mind quiet the mind, bring the mind to peace and the inner work. To get that to do that is one of the most beautiful things that human being can do. So, okay, so thank you