

# 2015-09-28 Unification of Mind

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

settled, meditation, people, mind, feel, concentration, thinking, unified, samadhi, problem, buddhism, practice, sense, concentrated, unification, thoughts, kinds, quiet, breathing, tension

## SPEAKERS

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It can add to that, that this program is I just came back from teaching a retreat and oscillated between saying nothing here, what more could I say? What is it to say? And also, somehow speaking from the retreat somehow and still kind of fresh in my mind. So, this is what occurs to me is, first tell you a story, that this comes from the ancient Buddhist texts suttas that there was a novice monk in the time of the Buddha, who encountered a prince and the prince said to the monk, novice monk, Is it really possible? or How is it? How does one become unified? And the word unified refers to meditations, usually a meditation state of concentration of being settled on oneself. And the idea of unified implies that often people are not unified. You can hear it out there is the speaker system working there. But it's not to that because it's pretty loud in here. Can you check the volume there you check it? Our travel so it's the it's the Does anybody know how to cook you probably don't know how to adjust that. Does anybody know how to adjust a soundboard for treble and bass? Because that's, I think that's somehow it's gotten mis adjusted. I know some people hear so many ideas.

You should know, it's all there. Yeah, I've turned it off.

So let's see. I had to speak otherwise they don't really know what they're less so. Yeah, I keep talking. I keep listening to see it makes a difference, but I can't listen, I have to speak. It's a strange thing. So How See how it's going. It's getting better. It's getting better. Yeah. Let's see. It sounds good up there now. Sounds good. It's a good little bit loud for me. Can we turn down the volume down little bit? Because echoing there, how's this now?

Better?

Is there a reader but I don't know if there is is there a reverb sound effects on this board? But this is better now. Yeah catchy. So yeah. sleeps too loud comes a problem for me sitting here with this, okay. Look at that. Thank you. The

Thank you. Okay, so I've started my story over again. So there's prince who apparently. Anyway, this Prince came in asked, Is it really possible or how can it How is it possible to become unified. And the word unified is a meditation word for a mind and body they get settled and collected with the idea that often people are not collected in themselves not settled on themselves, and they become fragmented. The mind goes off in a different directions. What we're thinking about could be quite varied. How we're feeling could be varied, it can be a dominant feeling, but all these little feelings kind of are there in the background and operating. There can be carry a lot of attention. There's a lot that can be can be going on. And so, sometimes you're working at cross purposes, all the different intentions, we have and

approaches we having feelings we have ideas. And so the mind jumps around a lot. And some of you probably felt that or saw that in meditation that you tried to skip calm and settled and focused here, maybe on the breathing, and the mind had other ideas, you know, all kinds of thoughts came up and you're pulled this way in that way. And so, the idea of becoming unified is on the descriptions and one of the terms for becoming concentrated and implies not just simply a, you know, one pointed focus, but involves this kind of gathering together of our faculties of all of our kind of various abilities. So it feels like everything within us is working in harmony working for the same purpose and working together in the same way. And when that kind of sense of absorption or harmony or full engagement with one thing happens. It feels really good. And so this princess about it, and then This monk says, Well, I can't really say anything because you won't believe it. And so he said, Are you okay? For? If you know, you know, if I can't understand it, then I'll just go, you know, just leave you alone. And it's okay. But I'll tell you so then he, the monk explained to him that yes, it's possible and this is how it's done. And a princess reply was, that's impossible. No one can do that, which was kind of what the monk was afraid of was going to happen. And so the monk went back to the Buddha and told the story to the Buddha. And the Buddha said, Well, you could have told a simile here's a similar You could have told the prince and that is, if you go with a friend to the base of a mountain and you go up the mountain There's a beautiful this stuff you see, you know, mountains and difference, planes, all kinds of things you can see. And you yell down to your friend, come up here. There's all this amazing view from up here. And just come down here and come up here. And you'll see vistas and rivers and mountain tops far away and all this great stuff. And then the friend down below says, No, you're crazy. There's nothing up there to see and refuses to come up. And he said, The prince is like the person who's down the bottom of the mountain. But if you take your friend and hold their hand or something and take them up to the top of the mountain, then they say, Oh, now I see. Now I believe that what's possible now you can pass I can see all this. So the same way, I think it's very difficult for people to appreciate that it's possible even to have the mind gathered and collected and centered in the present moment. Where the mind is not out of control. The idea of settling the mind or the dose of ancient language talks about taming the mind, like your tame a wild horse or wild elephant, you tame it and settled it so that the horse or the or the elephant could be used for different things. So the same thing with our mind if our mind is wild and out of control and thinking but whatever it wants left and right then you can't apply it in a sense which you can apply that a choice to direct it where you're wanting to go, then it can't be used. I cannot work a bonus in the rain and meditation we're trying to develop a workable mind. a mind that is you know can be applied for insight for deep understanding. So I need a little soundcheck because I'm still hearing this echo. I wonder if we can turn the volume down a little bit. See if that makes a difference. Houses now so the better for me Can you hear now? Yeah. So he will keep trying. Yeah, okay.

Okay. So workable mind and as a settled mind or unified mind. And so the way that this is cultivated in Buddhism, meditation practice is usually by having something which is the primary focus of attention. So an object of concentration for example, and the most common one in Buddhism is often the breathing, they focus on the breath. And it isn't so much The point is to stay with the breath. That's the vehicle for it. But, but as you progressed and be kind of focused on the breath, then the tendency of the mind to be distracted by all kinds of thoughts and other concerns, begins to quiet down And it's like the energy that's used to be distracted, is being poured into staying with a breath. And so no energy is not available for the distractions. And so the distractions begin to settle down. And most people who find meditation calming and settling is because they stopped being distracted by all the thoughts that are stressful, that are kind of pulling him out because the mind is not going there anymore. And so as the mind keeps coming back to the breathing, the distracted mind becomes quieter and settles down. And it's really remarkable how far the mind can settle down. As the mind settles, the body settles and the body becomes quite feelings very soft feeling in the body to be concentrated and focused and unified. The other way that unification happens is that it has to do with under wisdom, and that is to understand in a wise way, that it's not useful. For you to start thinking in, you know, in you know in end of

September, how you're going to pay your taxes in April or it's not useful to now to think about what you're going to do this weekend. It's not useful when you meditate to start rehearsing what happened in your high school prom, you know and review the resentments and all the things you start is all these lists of things that the mind can do some of it which is quite useful, that for the purpose of settling the mind is not useful place to go. And this is a retraining of the mind because the mind has a very strong tendency to the reason Am I get so easily distracted by the thoughts? Is it because usually it thinks those thoughts are important and so You know, you might not think it's important, but the mind thinks is important. Something important is going to be attained, get understood, be entertained by if we go in that direction. And so if we really understand No, this is not for my, the best for me to keep going off in these kinds of thoughts I really see with wisdom, how the mind wanders off, and then out of choice decide No, I'm not gonna do that. That helps the settling process. As the mind gets more and more settled, it's kind of like we enter a different world. And the different world is a world that is much softer, and it's one of the qualities of it much more expansive and open. One where we don't, we're not so readily looking at the world as if it has a problem. The idea of seeing the world as or ourselves as having a problem begins to abate. The idea of being critical of ourselves begins to quiet down The idea of being afraid of what's happening being anxious quiets down the resentments, we have begin to quiet down.

Boredom we have begins to quiet down all these kinds of forces of the mind that keep us kind of kind of simmering and agitated, begin to quiet down. And we can, which feels very different to be alive and to be human, without all these kinds of painful activities going on swirling around keeping us agitated. And so we start having a very different feeling a sense of who we are. And it's often said it's very healing, to have had to really settle down and quiet down and feel oneself for a few minutes to be present, without any extra problems without any layer of self criticism or judgment or feeling some of the emotional pain we might have in our life. The feeling of having experienced ourselves It feels really good. Like a feeling of like inner goodness, a sense of purity or well being or okayness. The language I'd like to use is to really feel at home with oneself here. And that becomes a reeducation for a whole system inside that's has learned the opposite. To learn that actually, the world is a scary place to learn that, you know, really, in order to be successful in life, you have to get a lot of things me thinking about what you want to get a person, you know, are these different perceptions we have of ourselves that we're a victim, you know, well for me of self pity, we start feeling ourselves not as a victim, because that's a thought mental construction that quiets down in this unification process. And so as one of the functions of this deeper concentration in Buddhism is to have a radically different experience. ourselves being alive, where just being alive is enough. Where we feel fulfilled, we feel a sense of satisfaction we feel a sense of joy, a sense of inner health, just by sitting here breathing. Nothing has to happen beyond sitting here quietly and breathing. And that's a dramatic lesson for this little mind of ours. And lesson which sometimes we've never learned. Growing up, we've learned through our, you know, maybe the atmosphere of our family to always be afraid or always be angry or worried or always be, you know, competitive or there's all kinds of things we learn that kind of propel us kind of centrifugal force, out away from the heart out away from the mind. And so to quiet down, settle, and feel unified, becomes a reeducation. That Buddhist tradition when they talk about this state of unification that happens in meditation, they talk about it comes with it It brings confidence to a person. And there's a strong sense of inner confidence as well as up. And oddly enough, the less we get caught up in self identification, let's pick it up, get it up in selfish self concerns, the more confidence wells up from inside. And the language of the tradition is actually feeling something welling up from inside. One of the metaphors they use in this as the mind gets collected is that of a mountain of a lake that does not get replenished from the rain does not get replenished from things outside like a river going in. But the mountain lake gets replenished from an underwater spring, the water wells up from inside and fills the spring from the inside with fresh water.

So the same way that we get settled enough enough, we're not so externally focused anymore and settled here, in this feeling of welding up happens inside or being refreshed or being settled.

One of the one of the purposes of this kind of experience that is to overcome must not that many, many of you have acid problems with lust, but it's been known to happen to a few human beings. And, you know, very strong not just, you know, sexual lust, but Aug tremendous drive for sensual pleasure, sensual comfort of all kinds. And in that drive is a drive that sends us looking externally for something we want something outside and extreme forms. It becomes an objectification of other people, the objects that we want that we want to relate to, and what those things are going to do for us. And it's a very hard attachment to overcome that drive for sexual sensual pleasure. And it isn't that it's wrong. has to be eradicated, but to have a kind of be driving us, so there's no freedom is not considered a very healthy thing to do. But the way to kind of so that one of the functions of concentration practice is to bring a person such a sense of well being, and fulfillment and enjoy that sexual and sensual pleasure doesn't have the same seductive power, because we're so satisfied already. Right? I mean, after an orgasm you didn't want to do again, some people, right? It's enough. And so meditation can be as as pleasant as satisfying as an orgasm. Some people say it's much more so because of how deeply deeply settling and relaxing and peaceful making It's me. It feels. And so in this context of this joy and well being of meditation, then I put out desires in different contexts. It also puts fear in different context. It puts a sense of that we're broken or kind of inadequate as a person in a very different context, if we really feel welling up inside this kind of sense of confidence in the well being. So what's required is this unification. And the last thing I'll say about unification, it does involve not being seduced by thoughts. Thoughts themselves are kind of objectification, to be thinking about things. And so the tremendous power or tremendous strength by ways that we invest value in our thinking, keeps us in the world of thinking. And we think that we think ourselves out our problems or we're thinking yourself things. And so to become settled in a unified, we have to there's nothing wrong with thinking per se, but we have to stop investing so much value in the world of thinking. So we can put it to rest, put it aside and allow for this deeper settling or deeper opening or this fuller feeling that can only come when we really have at home deeply at home and ourselves. And then it becomes a different world that we live in. And one of the really wonderful things is to have such a big open heart or mind that that feels like a big home. That then you can invite other people to come and join you. And it was then nice, it's really a wonderful intimate way of being with people and when you can invite them or they can be included in this feeling at home this that's very different than if we objectify people over one on something when people are afraid of people, but just here in this big space So, it is possible to climb up to the top of the mountain and see this great big Vista. And but it does take doing this practice. And one of the functions of the practices is described by this great word unification. So do you have any questions about that? Anything that you'd like to say or anything else? Anything at all? You're welcome.

So what's the difference between unification and concentration? unification is a one of the factors that come into play as we get concentrated, the word concentration in Buddhism is Samadhi. And the connotations of Samadhi are a little different than I think the English word concentration. So it might not be the best translation, the word Samadhi concentration, because many people when they hear the word concentration, think of a laser focus of the mind, like, you know, getting really kind of bogged down and really see it or focus on it. Samadhi is a state of being absorbed or being settled, where we're deeply composed. And so it's more like a whole system that we have all our faculties compose itself on whatever we're focusing on. So we get composed on the breath. And so this sense of being composed is another way of saying unify. So unification is one aspect. Another aspect is the focus the attention on the particular things on the breathing, for example, other factors that come together with concentration are joy, and happiness, and equanimity. Confidence is nothing so there's different factors that come into play in state of Samadhi. And there's different kinds of Samadhi. But all of them require unification. But

once we unify them, we can go through different different levels of Samadhi different levels of concentration. Is that an adequate answer? Yes, please.

In my own practice right now, I'm working on this contrast between being settled in myself and satisfied with what's here and, and just what you're talking about that confidence feeling. And this pull I have for connection to others. They feel so diametrically opposed. There doesn't seem to be wisdom in that I'm confused. And that's exactly where my work is bringing me right now. Can you do that?

Yeah, I don't know if I can help. If I can give you some ideas, goodness, the few things, when there's a really strong tendency within us like this pull towards other people, for example, then that's often a good thing to bring a lot of mindfulness to. So to let this settling the focus of attention, be on the feelings inside the inner experience of this pull that you have. So with the trick of it, though, is not to get into analytical mode and think about and try to solve it or understand it analytically. but rather to really feel what is this experience like and where in your body is it and to allow it and the image I like to use is taking your two hands, as if your hands were awareness and coming from underneath and just holding whatever that pole is or them and then start seeing more deeply feel your way more deeply? What's really going on there. And what's the emotions that come with it? Give me a sense of what emotion comes with it.

Love desire, this thing about connection. It's, yeah. So like reawakening in me towards a number of different people. So it's, it's like, oh, are we hard wired for this.

So the so there might be a strong pull or desire for love and connection. Some of it is our natural tendency, and some of it is attachment. So if you can't let go of it, when you're meditating, it means you're attached. Wherever letting go and meditation doesn't mean there's not an important part of who we are. And if it's something that has been short circuited before, something, we haven't had enough because we've repressed it or denied it or something, then it becomes very important not just to let go of it in meditation, it's almost maybe if that's all we do, it's kind of disrespectful for it. It might need time to be expressed to find a way to live in our lives. But that's giving us a lot of time to live in our life should be outside of meditation. Because if you're trying to, unless, if you do what I said, you bring your attention to the inner feeling of it, and sort of seeing what's there, then part of that might be some inner goodness, some inner nice feeling love, for example, that it might be really nice to make room for and let it grow in meditation, as you're sitting there grows, but some of it might be fear. It might be greed might be other things involved. And the two might be hand in hand. or there might be fear that's connected to the desire for connection. And so if you sit there and really present for a while, you might be able to tease apart these different aspects and then learn how to maybe make space for what's unhealthy and put aside what is not healthy and the other thing though, meditation, so that's one way to do it the other way To really be willing to let go of it, put it aside entirely and develop a concentration on something like the breath. And the little carrot that that can maybe encourage you to, maybe it's okay to do that. And put aside this desire for connection is that you'll be able to connect to people much better after you're settled. So thanks,

Karen, thank you. Yeah.

Yes, please take a wait for the mic.

I've found in in my practice when trying to engage in a more concentration sort of style practice as opposed to kind of attending to whatever thoughts or emotion arise and sitting with them I find with concentration I Go back and forth between feeling like I'm sort of staying with the breath and



concentrated and then kind of getting carried away by evaluating myself and saying, am I concentrated in my doing a good job concentrating? And that sort of allows the practice itself to become almost a whole period of anxious anxiety insurance on kind of its own battle. So I'm wondering, I feel like that might be a common problem, that sort of evaluation. Yeah. So I'm wondering what you have. Yeah. What do you have on that?

Great. So yeah, it's a common problem, tissue. And so if something persists like this, then what you want to do is you want to turn your attention and respectful way and investigate this tendency to evaluate. And again, the best thing about the investigation doesn't have to be so cognitive and not thinking about it so much. You could do some, but it's to feel your way and particularly to feel what is attention associated with it, because you're not going to be evaluating unless there's tension. And there's probably some emotion involved. It might be fear, some anxiety, am I doing well enough? It might be ambition in my sometimes it's competitive meditation, you know, you know, am I doing as well as the person next to me? And so you know, what is the what is going on when you're evaluating? and emotionally? What's going on with your beliefs? Why do you think it's so important to get concentrated? or Why are you constantly looking and What are you searching for? What does it say about your sense of self? Is your sense of self secure? Is it insecure, and so the insecurities come into play. So to really kind of with a loving way, very generous to yourself, to begin exploring what is actually going on when you do a call and also evaluation. And then, in particular, to feel what it's like physically to do it. If you're really that involved with evaluation, probably there's some kind of tension Pressure somewhere in your system in your muscles in your brain somewhere. And then learn how to relax that learn to relax the physical tension connected to doing that kind of thinking. Because if you simply try to let go of it and go back to your breath, and the tension is still there, the tension is like a factory that will just pump out more thoughts. It's almost like the thoughts are the symptom and not the cause. And the cause is the tension. And so to learn to identify the tension or the underlying emotion that can be relaxed, then you can go back to the breathing. That makes some sense. One of the really nice things about this mindfulness practice is that yes, we'd like to get concentrated. But the very things that are making it really difficult to get concentrated. We don't have to be upset about it. It becomes something we bring our mindfulness to this An example. And one of the things we like to do in this kind of practice is to not see anything as a problem. It's just something else to be mindful of. In fact, to see such a thing as a problem is one of the ways of getting in the way of getting unified. Because it's just more thought it Yeah, there's a problem. It's a kind of complicated thought that's not needed. Yes, please, right behind you.

My question relates to I feel that life has a lot of gray areas. I think all of us would agree and be at Buddhism or other major religions have code of ethics that you need to follow our rules. And what I'm finding is that as you go through life or as you go about your life, you sometimes make mistakes or things are done to you. How do you develop what I would call an iterative resilience You know, just keep basically trying or making better, just like with the meditation without feeling like the margin of error is getting smaller and smaller.

What's wrong with having a margin of error become smaller?

Well, you know, you're trying to basically improve basically, on the rules or the things that you follow.

How do you not judge yourself basically, is what I'm trying to say, oh, that way.

Yeah, hope the margin of error gets smaller. For example. I mean, our speech right, I mean, our how truthful is our speech. And so even when some earlier in life we might be much more loose about how

to throw away our and then as we develop in Buddhism, the tendency for people is to become more truthful. One of the reasons for that is not because it's a rule to be truthful. But as we get more settled in ourselves more at home and more unified feeling. We feel the cost on ourselves to be untruthful and just doesn't feel good. So we want to have a smaller margin of error, we want to catch it and notice that it's, I don't want to go there and people are more more sensitive and even the slightest little, you know, untruth becomes too much. And that's a sign of maturity. So, but how not to do to get it being? being hard on yourself? Yes, yeah. I think that the Buddhist approach is to when you do something which you feel caused harm is not to be weighed down by it. And the Buddhist approach is to always be forward looking. In this way, we look at what we did in the past, just enough to learn from it and be inspired to do better in the future.

That should work.

But you don't want to ignore what you did. You know, ignore your mistakes. You want to learn from it. But you don't want to be weighed down by there's no need to be weighed down for it. And in Buddhism, they say that guilt is an unnecessary emotion. Guilt has no place they say in Buddhism,

I agree with what happens is just as you were saying about being truthful, or we could choose any other aspect of being is that it's kind of uncomfortable that you know, you talked about it's a good thing to get that margin of error smaller, but it just it seems like the space within which you can behave gets like smaller and smaller like you have to be so in the straight and narrow, you know, oh, I say. I say they, Well, it depends on what your what your

I think that the idea is that as we become mature in this practice, we become softer or become more open or become A year. And so there's much more room it's much more okay to to have a smaller margin of error. So it's like this, there's an analogy that the Buddha gave is if you take a teaspoon of salt, a tablespoon of salt and put it in a cup of water, the cup of water becomes undrinkable. But if you took a cup of a tablespoon of salt and put it in Lake Tahoe you know this, you can still drink the water supposedly, you know, it's nice to get it doesn't get so salty, right. So when the mind or the heart gets really big, then we're not going to be troubled by the tablespoon of salt so much. No, but we don't want nothing troubled means we don't, you know, accept it or go along with it. There's more space, it's more okay. That's one of the wonderful things about this practice is that as people become more sensitive to their ethical behavior, And more wanting to care for it take responsibility for it. It's more, okay. It's they're more relaxed about it also. They're not carrying guilt. They're not criticizing themselves for it. They're not making an identity for themselves for it. You know, they're not bothering with the thought that I'm a bad person. That's just a waste of thinking to say I'm a bad person. Why? No, rather than just look and spoil, I say anything about yourself at all just say, Oh, look. I lied to my best friend. Let me feel good. Let's see how I can do better. Maybe I've been to apologize and try to do better. As opposed to, oh, shoot, I lied to my best friend. I'm such a lousy, no good person. I keep doing this. And I'm just a failure of a human being and what am I going to do about it? And it's like spiraling to, you know, just like those kinds of thoughts or not helpful. And so the hope the hope is that this practice develops where people have a lot more freedom to hold it all. And the margin of error becomes better and better. It's more more joyful. And it becomes a joyful thing to do betters joyful thing to be more ethical joyful thing to not succumb to all these things as opposed to a duty or a should or some make some sense.

Yes, yes, thank you.

So one more and then we can stop.

I've been kind of practicing Practicing different practices. And I'm trying to figure out what my goal is for meditating. If it's just a still the mind, there is something I was I heard, I've been practicing praying to thank you What? I've been practicing praying, yes, meditation. And I heard that, you know, saying that praying that you're communicating to, you know, whatever, I believe in it, and meditating is kind of listening for the answer. So I'm like, kind of confused, like, do I just steal my mind and kind of go on this, like, you know, space where I'm just at ease, or am I trying to like, you know, paying attention, trying to listen to something internal,

the answer. Those are good questions. I appreciate it. What you're saying. And my preferred way of answering some like that, I don't know if it'll be a fit for you. But is just a little bit slower what other people say the purpose is and what to do just a little bit next you got to you got to get your feet wet a little bit to find out what's going on. But the real answer to your question should be from within yourself. And for you to begin to discover what do you want? What do you want with your life, your precious life? What do you want your life to be about? What's really important for you? And once you have a clear sense of that, then we can talk about meditation, prayer, different options for what can support you, and in pursuing what you think is important for you. Does that make sense? Okay, so thank you. And if I was a little bit calmer or an eloquent unusual asked because I kind of still in this retreat mode. So the words aren't quite there. Thank you