

Dharma *Samādhī* (3 of 5) Tranquility

July 8, 2020

SUMMARY KEYWORDS *pīti manasa*(?), gladness, joy, happiness, concentration, flow, state, abide, stream, current, ease, holding, resistance, bracing, preoccupied, anxious greedy, stress, wholeness, planning, fantasy, hand, clench, release, embodied, relax, peace, calm, settled, bed, water, nap, food, nourishment

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In my mind, there are two themes for this week. The explicit one, the main one is what's called "the five Dharma *samādhīs*," or the five qualities of Dharma *samādhī*. The use of the word "*samādhī*" here is related to the fact that this is not just about individual qualities of heart and mind that arise. Something else arises and moves through us, something that we open to and it fills us and becomes more the state of who we are. Because *samādhī* is a state of being more than it is a particular laser focus of the mind, these five qualities can become more like states that we abide in.

These five states are what I'm calling "gladness, joy, tranquility, happiness, and concentration." They begin to sort of have a life of their own. As meditation deepens, they begin to emerge and have their own momentum as they flow through us and fill us.

So the first theme is these five qualities. The second is the way that these qualities are a natural function, a natural flow or unfolding that can happen. This flow is sometimes associated with the Dharma moving through us, so much so that I like to say that not only do we practice meditation in the Dharma, but we're also being practiced by it. At some point something kicks in, something alive within us begins to unfold, open, and mature us. This is not exactly our doing, but we enable it and we make room for it. It is phenomenally inspiring and faith-producing to feel this Dharma flow, this Dharma stream or current beginning to awaken inside of us.

So as not to make this idea too abstract or supernatural, I associate this Dharma flow with getting out of our own way. When there is a lot of stress, tension, resistance, or agitation, we interfere with the natural flow of all kinds of things. Our stress hormones, our muscles, our whole physiology, and our psychology work a lot better when they are relaxed and at ease. Agitation, resistance, and freezing up gunk up the system.

Meditation helps us begin to let go and relax the agitation, the holding, the resistance, and the bracing ourselves. It allows us to come into a kind of natural wholeness or fullness so that our system can operate in a healthy way. This feels phenomenal, especially because many of us spend a lot of time not in this natural wholeness, because we're preoccupied, afraid, anxious, greedy. We are often caught up in planning, fantasy, feeling there's never enough, and wanting more.

Meditation allows us to let go of all the desires, fears, agitation, and stress that often preoccupy the mind and have a negative influence on our body. Meditation allows us to experience what feels much more like a natural state of being. This feels so good. It can bring a sense of gladness and joy.

I think this natural state is a simple, not a complicated thing. To give you a slightly reductionistic idea of this, for example, if you hold something tightly for a long time, your hand clenches around the object and gets really tired and sore from holding it. When you finally release the hand, it feels good to have the release. Not only does the relief feel good, but you can also feel a wonderful flow of blood, energy, tingling, and warmth. It feels delightful. The energy has been freed up and something else is moving through you. There's joy and gladness in the hand.

Or when we go for a long hike in the mountains and we're really tired, when we finally stop walking and sit down, the body can feel a certain relief from no longer working, as the muscles begin to relax. As the muscles relax, sometimes they feel happy to finally not be working so hard.

So there is a natural feeling of delight, joy, and gladness that comes when the chronic tensions we have begin to settle and quiet down. Just as the hand feels a certain kind of energy when we open it up and the energy gets

released, there's a release of energy and flow in our whole system – a unified feeling of being that begins to flow and feels so good. It can be inspiring to be engaged in this process of deepening, relaxing, and opening to this capacity we have for natural wholeness. We can feel the Dharma is moving through us. Even if you're not there, just knowing you're in the neighborhood of this can be gladdening – "Oh finally, I'm here in the neighborhood. I'm sitting down to meditate. This is where the Dharma is found – this embodied Dharma that is found within us."

So gladness arises, and joy can arise. The joy develops more the more we are unagitated. *Pīti*, the second quality of Dharma *samādhi*, is often associated with the mind (*pīti manasa?*). However, when it's strong, it's often felt very physically in the body. There can be a lot of tingling, energy, and all kinds of wonderful sensations in the body.

As we settle more in meditation, as we open more, and as we're more present for our experience, the physical side of *pīti* (joy) begins to abate and quiet down. This is a further deepening. We come into a deeper natural state where the extra agitation of joy relaxes. Joy is a little bit agitated and energized. (Maybe it is much less energized than how we live in daily life.) At some point, when the joy is there, and we're content and happy, feeling safe, feeling that it's good to be here, the mind is not as inclined to think about and be concerned with other things, because it feels so satisfying to be here.

That is a condition for the body to begin to relax in a very deep way, deeper than ordinary relaxation. Then a feeling of tranquility can well up. In Dharma *samādhi*, this is specifically called "the tranquility of the body." It often feels very physical, and different people will feel it at different places in the body. There can be a kind of flow, a warmth, a glow, or maybe the presence of a very slight pressure. It feels tranquil and peaceful. I sometimes feel it coursing down my arms through my elbows and arms a little bit. Sometimes I feel a very strong physical feeling of tranquility in the area just above my diaphragm.

There is a very strong feeling of being embodied. We can use words like "peace, undisturbed, tranquil, calm, settling, being settled," and maybe "relaxed." "Relaxed" is nice because there's also the verb, "to relax." One could use "tranquilizing," but that has an unfortunate medical connotation.

When the third step in the Dharma *samādhi* arises, it is quite compelling. There's no doubt that this is tranquility. It can feel like drinking something sublime, like drinking refreshing, cool, wonderful water on a hot day, or lying in a soft bed after a busy, hard day. Waking up after a nap approaches that kind of tranquility. The body becomes so relaxed and at ease.

The Buddha said that the food, the nourishment for this kind of tranquility is tranquility itself. So we begin tuning into where we feel calm. It's very easy to miss part of what's going on when we're so concerned with what we're thinking about and focusing on.

Perhaps there is more calmness in your body than you avail yourself of. Maybe it's not difficult to touch into a place where you're a little more settled or calm. Or maybe you can calm yourself a little bit and relax your shoulders or your belly. Throughout the day, make tranquility and inner peace or calm a theme to keep coming back to over and over again. Find it, come back to it, and relax. Take the chance, for one day in your life, to make today the day that you specialize in, explore, develop, and familiarize yourself with tranquility. Become a good friend with your capacity for being calm or tranquil.

I think it'll probably be a day well spent. You have many more days after this to be agitated if you want, but maybe for one day, make this your theme and stay close to it. If you have a friend, maybe you can share it with them and see what you learn about tranquility.

This will be the preparation for happiness. That is the way these things flow. Gladness flows to joy, joy flows to tranquility, tranquility flows to something called "happiness," and happiness flows to concentration. I look forward to being with you again tomorrow.

Thank you