

Samadhi (1): Introduction

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So hello on this first Monday of 2025, and happy new year to all of you, and welcome to this new series that I'll be doing on titled *Samādhi*. And the last few years I've been doing a long series, some of them 50, 60s, sessions long on different basic meditation practices that our Buddhism offers. I've done it in *Ānāpānasati*, mindfulness of breathing, the four foundations of mindfulness. And so this year I'm going to do a whole series on basic instructions and practice of *samādhi*. The word *samādhi* is generally translated into English as concentration.

And it's not uncommon for people to not be very satisfied, calling it concentration, because it limits it too much and narrows the scope of what *samādhi* is. And also sometimes it suggests a kind of laser focus and a kind of intensity that's a little bit in the tense to really stay focused and one-pointedly focused. Whereas the *samādhi* is not a particular way of focusing the mind. It's a whole state of being. It's a whole qualitatively state of being.

Like if you felt deeply at peace and the peace wouldn't be a particular, you know, activity of the mind, it would be something that would be integrated into your whole sense of being, your body, your heart, your mind. So in the same way, *samādhi* is something that's integrated in a complete and whole and all about who we are. So in the same way, *samādhi* is something that's integrated in a complete and whole and all about who we are. It's a state. And to call it kind of a laser focus of the mind actually interferes with the relaxing and opening to this general whole state.

And so today it's a little bit to make some introductory remarks about *samādhi* and this series we're doing. And then we'll just continue. And one of the introductory remarks to say is that *samādhi* is a very important state for deepening Buddhist practice. And it's very important for mindfulness practice. That the depths of mindfulness practice, the full potential of it, actually requires a degree of *samādhi*.

And the way that I understand the teachings of the Buddha, that mindfulness practice and *samādhi* practice, *sati* and *samādhi* practice, are practiced integrated together as being not really two distinct practices, but they come along. Sometimes we might emphasize more the... the *samādhi* aspects of the mind, sometimes more the attentional aspects of the mind of mindfulness. But they're both going

together and they need each other. And they're both accompanying each other. Maybe not any, maybe not if there's a best analogy, but the left and right foot when you're walking.

Sometimes you step with the left foot, sometimes with the right foot, and you need them both in order to walk. If you have an injury, I've had an injury in my foot and it was very hard to walk with the, you know, with the, you know, with the one of my legs so it was like I could bring the back leg when the injured leg up to where my uninjured leg was but the stepping forward always happened with you know the uninjured leg and it was very awkward and slow to walk that way but to walk in a fully integrated easeful way was to be able to go back and forth between the two so um so both are needed both you both use the other and in *samādhi* and mindfulness. If you have an injury, I've had an injury in my foot and it was very hard to walk with the, you know, with the, you know, with the one of my legs so it was like I could bring the back leg when the injured leg up to where my uninjured leg was but the stepping forward always happened with you know the uninjured leg and it was very awkward and slow to walk that way but to walk in a fully integrated easeful way was to be able to go back and forth between the two so um so both are needed both you both use the other and in *samādhi* and mindfulness.

So I don't want to set up a sharp dichotomy or distinction between them. But for this series, it's going to be focusing on the *samādhi* mostly, but a lot of mindfulness will be needed in order to engage in the *samādhi* activities that will be exploring. And as we go through this, the plan is to do this very gradually and very, very small steps. Some of you are already fairly familiar with meditation practice, with concentration practice. And I'm hoping that if that's the case, that the slow steps we make, putting down the real simple elements that add up to the whole, it will be informative to some of you who maybe never kind of... never really tracked this so carefully what it took to be to enter into *samādhi* you understand much better the dynamics the different elements and pieces that come into play.

Some people have minds that can naturally drop into a deep *samādhi*. And I'm hoping that if that's the case, that the slow steps we make, putting down the real simple elements that add up to the whole, it will be informative to some of you who maybe never kind of... never really tracked this so carefully what it took to be to enter into *samādhi* you understand much better the dynamics the different elements and pieces that come into play Some people have minds that can naturally drop into a deep *samādhi*. And some people have minds that are more oriented towards mindfulness and never really kind of appreciate. Both of them, if it's easy, one or the other, might not appreciate some of the different dynamics in the mind and the heart that come into play that maybe you take for granted.

And so to go through this very slowly, those of you who are new to all this, the slow, slow, steady pace of little drops of pieces of instructions at a time, maybe we'll allow you to follow and go along. At some point as we do this, you might not follow the instructions, but maybe then you use your imagination to get a sense, a feel for what I'm talking about, so that you have a general sense of what's going on, and some point in the future, this will become relevant for you. The word *samādhi* is literally the etymology of it in Sanskrit and Pali means more a collecting, a gathering together, a settling together. There are

words that are variations of *samādhi* that specifically means collecting, sometimes collecting firewood to make a fire. The word *samādhi* is literally the etymology of it in Sanskrit and Pali means more a collecting, a gathering together, a settling together.

There are words that are variations of *samādhi* that specifically means collecting, sometimes collecting firewood to make a fire. You're collecting that. Sometimes these related words, you know, just grammatical variations, can also mean to settle, to steady. And so there's a settling, a steadiness of the mind, a gathering of the mind. And the idea of gathering is probably one of the most important aspects of *samādhi*, is that it's not an exclusion... of as it is inclusion.

There's a feeling that all of who we are is now included, but not in a way that's fragmented, not in a way that's going off in different directions, but rather it's gathering together, to work together and be coordinated doing the same, for the same purpose, the same intention. Everything's here and present. Right. But it's a huge process to settle in, to steady it in, to gather in everything. And part of the reason it's a big project is that it goes so much against the grain of how minds often work.

Even in time of the Buddha was hard for people to develop *samādhi* because their minds was, he used the word monkey mind, that just the mind was constantly, the idea of a monkey mind is that, it's like a monkey that's swinging from the trees, that as soon as it grabs one branch, it's already reaching for the next branch. Even in time of the Buddha was hard for people to develop *samādhi* because their minds was, he used the word monkey mind, that just the mind was constantly, the idea of a monkey mind is that, it's like a monkey that's swinging from the trees, that as soon as it grabs one branch, it's already reaching for the next branch. And so the mind, as soon as it's one place, it's reaching for the next place. And so even in time of the Buddha, that was true. And I imagine it's even more true now in the last 20 years with the advent of these smartphones and screens that were on, tablets, and that have in some ways unsettled the mind, that have activated the mind.

So it's always searching, always surfing the web. It's always the next thing, the next thing. And as many people have pointed out that the modern mind has lost its capacity, has lost its span of attention. The tension span has decreased. Get bored more.

There's more like an impulse, like what's next? You know, what else is there? And rather than settled on one thing, just doing that one thing, it's like, what's next, next, next? And now there's been all kinds of studies and research done. On the economics of attention, the attention economy, that there's people who are paid a lot of money to plan and organize and create a content that will get you to click, get you to look, get you to move on, to keep your attention, to have you returned, to look again, what's happening, what's happening.

And, you know, I've noticed, and myself, I'm sure some of you as well have this issue that there's an idle moment. And to grab for the phone to see, is there an email, is there a news, or something? They're constantly being stimulated by what's on a screen. And the idea that of sitting and doing nothing and being quiet... which I think human beings had much greater capacity to do outside of these modern

technological worlds that many of us live in, is becoming an unavailable state. And so, *samādhi* is a return to a deep natural state of wholeness, of a open attention, which is not being driven by a thirst for more, thirst for content, thirst for experiences, thirst for search for serotonin rush or dopamine rush or something that you get, get, get, discover, discover, discover, want, want, want.

And I like to think of it as a process of being turned inside out. It's a challenge to turn the stream, the flow of the mind from wanting and attention going and moving and being outwardly directed or directed towards fantasy and thoughts and anxieties, to turn it around and inside out almost to settle deeply into ourselves and to discover that we get turned inside out and there's a whole new way to live in the world. It's a challenge to turn the stream, the flow of the mind from wanting and attention going and moving and being outwardly directed or directed towards fantasy and thoughts and anxieties, to turn it around and inside out almost to settle deeply into ourselves and to discover that we get turned inside out and there's a whole new way to live in the world. A way where the mind's anxiety, the mind's reactivity, the mind's overactivity, is completely settled and quiet. And the source of our life arises for some deeper place of peace and well-being and wholeness within.

And the mind is now a vehicle of support, a channel for this deep, settled peace and happiness that we're capable of. Rather than the mind being what drives us. So maybe the analogy could be, rather than having what's on our smartphone screen be where we live, we actually live that is settled in a very deep, steady way in our inner life, in our hearts, in our bellies, in our mind here. And that's what drives. That's where the engine.

That's where the source of vitality comes from. That's where we find our peace and well-being. And to make the transition from a scattered, activated, agitated, fragmented mind to a mind that's steadied, stable, gathered, and whole, can be a slow process and sometimes a very challenging process. But it's a really worthwhile process. And so we'll go through this and maybe discover, you'll discover something more about what I like to call the natural state, a healthy state, that many of us have lost track with, that is invaluable for living a wise life.

So this will be the focus, *samādhi*, the gathering together, the healing, of the fragmented self into the whole self for the purposes of a deep peace. So thank you. And tomorrow I'll be back at IMC and happy to be with you on this beginning of the year.