

Samadhi (59) Effortless Clarity

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So, good morning, and good day, and welcome to this next talk on *samādhī*. We're talking about the fourth *jhāna*. And it's not something that people will experience often and regularly in life. Maybe occasionally it's experienced in very particular circumstances, something like this. But even in meditation, it's not something that is easy to enter into, enter and abide. One of the ways maybe to get a feel for it is through the imagination and through some of the characteristics of it which might appear in ordinary life.

One of those is there's a deep effortless quality that is highlighted in the fourth *jhāna*. Before entering into *samādhī*, there is a kind of effort that's being done in practice, sincere effort, and hopefully an effort that you enjoy doing, that you find a way that is enjoyable and satisfying. You look forward to it, just like you look forward to certain kinds of activities that are fun to do, like playing an instrument or maybe cooking if you enjoy that. Sometimes we put a tremendous amount of effort into some sport or something, go for a hike in the hills, and it takes a lot of energy. But there's a pleasure, there's a joy, there's maybe a kind of effortless quality in the sense that we're not having to work hard against ourselves.

So as we really enjoy the practice and then begin finding a way to do a deeper settling, a deeper quieting, calming, and while being deeply centered and unified and really feel like we're fully here in the present moment, here, centered here in this time and place. And then as we go through the deepening *samādhī*, slowly, sometimes with kind of big jumps, but slowly there's a transition from how much effort we have to make and how much effortless effort there is. How much there's the practice, rather we doing the practice, the practice is doing us. And so to go along with that, to feel that shift, so we're not overriding the effortless part, overriding the way the practice practices us, because we think it's always up to us. We're pushing and striving and doing.

There's an art to knowing when to let up and just enough but to stay really present. Not so much that the mind drifts off, but not too much so that there's a strain. And so this art of kind of knowing how to make this shift, gradual transition, until there's less and less effort from us needed because there's no wandering off. We're just here. We're entered and abided. We're arrived here.

And the *jhānas*, the four *jhānas*, are one way of understanding them. Yesterday I talked about progressive stages of calming. Another way of understanding them, it's a progressive entering and abiding in an effortless awareness. Less and less effort is needed. Until we get to the fourth *jhāna*, and it seems like there's really no effort at all. It can seem like there's no effort in the third *jhāna*, for example. But from the point of view of the fourth *jhāna*, there's still a little bit of orientation of the mind towards the happiness, towards the good qualities of it.

And so in the fourth *jhāna*, the joy of clear recognition, the joy of the happiness of awareness, the happiness that's a little bit activated energy, quiets down even more. And so there's this kind of deep feeling of effortlessness. But it's effortlessness that seems to lead. What's left is a broad, unbounded sense of awareness, of clarity, of knowing, of sensing, of just being, that maybe has very little characteristics to it. It's almost like the awareness is aware of itself.

It's kind of like, you know, I'm nearsighted. And so if I kind of have complicated eyesight now, but without my glasses, I don't see so well. At certain distances, it's all blurry. But when I put on my glasses, everything is clear. And I can see in certain directions, certain distances. The seeing, it's kind of like the seeing sees its own clarity. Well, it is the object that's there that I see clearly, but there's a feeling that it's not so much about the objects. There's almost a feeling that the eyes themselves, now the eyes see their own clarity almost, and so the awareness knows its own clarity, knows its own purity.

Or maybe there's some deep, deep nonverbal knowing that knows these things. It's a deep knowing of what is really special, this effortless awareness that's clear, unruffled, there's no waves, there's no judgments. And so it's very equanimous and it's not reacting to anything and not participating in anything. So a lot of things disappear because part of what the mind is, is an alarm system. We're alert and vigilant for all kinds of things, for what we're afraid of, what we don't want, what we want, and that kind of vigilance falls away. It's a feeling of deep, deep safety.

Generally the *jhānas* are very hard to experience unless somehow we provide our whole psychophysical system with the reinsurance of a deep kind of safety in that time. Because that's another way of describing the *jhānas*. It's a progressive state of feeling more and more safe.

So safe that the idea of safety and danger disappears entirely. And we're just there. And with this clarity, with this purity, with this feeling of very clean, very still, very quiet, there's no thoughts at all.

Though there might be still a little bit, just in the faint kind of nonverbal knowing, that you're not involved in. It just kind of floats there a little bit gently, quietly. It has no power. There's no energy behind it. The mind feels very clean, as I've said, and one of the characteristics of it in the description in my translation, I said, disappearance of mental happiness and mental suffering.

It's hard to know how to translate these two words from Pāli, *domanassa* and *somanassa*. And basically it kind of means good mind and bad mind. It might mean something like a really elated mind or deflated mind, a happily aroused mind, activated mind, or unhappy mind. So the emotional tenor, quality of the mind, is neither elated nor depressed, neither inspired nor dispirited, neither sad nor inspired. It can seem like that's an amazing dullness, amazing blandness. Why would anybody want that?

Well, to be in it, it just feels like this is really good. It feels so pure, so nice, so clear, so peaceful, that maybe describing it as a profound peace, that it's almost as if that's all that's left. Maybe we're still there in some kind of way, with some kind of attention, but the degree to which there's any self-centeredness or self-involvement almost if not entirely kind of disappeared, and an effortless awareness, an effortless peace that we abide in, we feel safe in, we feel comforted in. Like wrapping ourselves after a nice, refreshing bath, bath in a wonderful bath towel that just sits and be completely content and happy as we sit there wrapped in the clean, clean towel, clean body, refreshed body, everything vibrating with an open, clear, equanimous mind awareness.

So I'll read you the description of the fourth *jhāna*.

Letting go of pleasure and pain, with the disappearance of mental happiness and mental suffering, one enters and abides in the purity of equanimous awareness of the fourth *jhāna*.

Once it's pervading this body with a pure, clear mind, so that no part of the entire body is untouched by the pure, clear mind, by the clean, clear mind.

And this is a mind which is un-preoccupied with itself, un-preoccupied with self.

Un-preoccupied with desires and aversions.

Un-preoccupied by fears and distress.

And this makes the mind phenomenally ready for a transformation.

Because as soon as the mind is preoccupied by something, and it can't, it's hard for it to shift and change and be ready for what comes.

So, the fourth *jhāna*. So, we have one more talk on this fourth *jhāna* and the *jhānas* in general. And I'll kind of bring it to a kind of conclusion tomorrow, and talk a little bit about what follows, the *jhānas*. So, thank you very much, and may this day be a day that you feel the preciousness, the joy, the deep satisfaction of the way that your heart and mind can be effortless as it moves through the day. Don't sacrifice the depth of who you are by making too much effort. Let the mind be at ease. Thank you.