

Samadhi (60) Letting Go of Unneeded Clinging

Gil Fronsdal

2025-04-25

Keywords:

samādhi, jhāna, vipassanā, clinging, letting go, selfing, fourth jhāna, insight, healing, mindfulness

So, hello and welcome to this, the last talk on the Samādhi series. The idea is that when I'll be away for three weeks, we have guests coming to replace me. Then when I come back, in a sense, I'll do the second part of this series, which will switch to *vipassanā*, to the clear seeing, to insight. The reason for that, or how this works, is that there's a traditional Buddhist idea that the purpose of *samādhi*, to go into the *jhānas*, or deep concentrated states, is for the purpose of then at some point coming into a capacity for deep insight, deep seeing. There's something about the clarity of mind and the softness of the mind and the readiness, malleability of the mind in deep states of meditation that predisposes it to both see clearly, but more importantly, to have the mind let go of any clinging which is not needed. I say it that way, that's not needed, so that's a little bit more welcoming, this idea of letting go.

It's a little bit of a, I don't know, a trick in that there is no clinging that's needed. But until you know that, don't worry about it. If it's not needed, if you see that, let it go, let it go, let it go. The ability to let go, the ability to relax, the ability to calm the over-activated mind is part of what *samādhi* helps us to do. So *samādhi* in Buddhism is not an end to itself, but as a means to discovering the end of suffering, a means to let go of what often is impossible to understand how to let go of.

There are feelings of distress, dismay, depression, sadness, all kinds of deep emotional pain that people carry. It's inconceivable. How can this be let go? This is who I am. This is the nature of the world. This is the consequence of how I live my life, and this is how I'm stuck with.

It certainly can feel like that in ordinary states of mind. There might not be an avenue in to let go of it in a conscious way, but in this very deep quiet and peace and well-being of *samādhi*,

unusual things begin to happen in terms of the ability to let go, the ability to see clearly, the ability to heal. *Samādhi* is also a healing phenomenon. We can't, I shouldn't underestimate how significant it is to allow the well-being, the goodness of *samādhi*, to recondition us from the difficult conditioning we've had growing up or through our lives, which can be so deep that I was really surprised when I sat my long retreats to get the mind so still and quiet, kind of going into the deepest places of my mind and find that there were things I was attached to that I had no idea that I was attached to.

One of my thoughts was kind of in surprise about it all, was how did I let those people into my mind that deeply? That doesn't make any sense for them to be occupied, taken up space in that depth of my mind. That is so personal. That's a place where I should be free. I shouldn't be caught. I shouldn't be preoccupied with these people, these kinds of activities.

It's kind of like being possessed in some way. So *samādhi* really helps. We go through this process of *samādhi*, of deepening the stability of mind, deepening the subtleness of mind, deepening the unification of mind, deepening the calming of the mind, filling out into the vast centeredness, simplicity. That simplicity matures in the fourth *jhāna*, where it's radically simple. One of the things that comes in to highlight better more and more as we go deeper into *samādhi* is when selfing, when attachment to self in any kind of way, attachment to self-image, attachment to ideas of self, attachment to what the self needs, what's right or what's wrong with self, any kind of attachment to emotions connected to self, thoughts, judgments connected to self, we start seeing them in more highlight, and we see that they're not needed.

We see how they diminish us, how they disturb us, how they in a certain kind of way take us away from deep intimacy with ourselves. If we use that word self all the time, it's almost like preoccupation with self takes us away from the self. Preoccupation with self takes us away from a deeper intimacy with who we are. It's a little bit, oddly enough, too much preoccupation in self, caught up in self. For example, in the extreme aversion, narcissism, or heavy-duty conceit, delusions of grandeur, is in fact an alienation from self and losing touch with ourselves in that process.

So deep *samādhi*, we are seeing how this works, and we see we're better off to let go, let go, and not to have any preoccupation with self. The metaphor in the fourth *jhāna*, I kind of see as being expressing this to me in a nice way. As a person sits covered from head down with a white cloth, so there's no part of his whole body that is not covered by that white cloth. No part of the whole body is not covered or sat filled with a clean, clear mind. What I like about

this idea of being covered with a cloth is that the details of a person are not seen.

Someone walking by, they don't see something, they don't see their physical characteristics very well, a lot of the details of who they are, what their gender is, all kinds of things about the person are not seen, but you see the general outline, this is a human being there, and it's not just others but also ourselves. We're not caught up anymore with our particular physical characteristics or our particular emotional capacities or our particular mental activities or what our thoughts are. These recede and settle away. There's this beautiful feeling of maybe a piece of cloth that's very, very clean, untarnished, beautiful, letting a beautiful sunlight come through that's very peaceful and clear, that without even ourselves seeing all the details that we've been so caught up in, maybe for a lifetime. So there's much less self in these deep *jhānas*.

Then because of that, there's insight to seeing when self arises, to see the idea of self. You see very clearly, that's just an idea. That's just a thought. The thought doesn't really represent what's really more intimate, deeper, more full, or more true about what's here in this lived life. Then there might be a letting go.

With the fourth *jhāna* in particular, we are, in the fourth *jhāna* in particular, we're ready for this insight part of the practice. When I return in three weeks, we'll start with that journey together. Just as we've done this journey with *samādhi*. You don't have to have experienced the fourth *jhāna* for this. That's not what I've been expecting through this series. But I wanted to give you a feel for it, a sense for it, for those of you.

Some of you it might be relevant someday, or it is already. Some of you it might just kind of help you trust this process and understand the process and the principles of letting go, of being settled and steadied and unified, that you don't have to go into *jhāna*, but it will help you be prepared to go through something similar through *vipassanā* insight practice. There is a corollary to *samādhi jhāna* in doing deep insight work, and that's called Insight *jhāna*, *vipassanā jhāna*. So maybe we'll have a chance to talk about that a little bit when I return.

I want to thank you all very, very much for coming along for these 60 talks on *samādhi*. I hope that this has been supportive for you and made it interesting for you, this world of *samādhi*. Some of you maybe are novices to it. Rather than making you experts at *samādhi*, my wish is that this series has helped you have a deeper appreciation for this body, mind, heart, deeper appreciation of the natural processes that are at play here, that processes that *samādhi* helps us to trust more deeply. I hope that it helps you settle, be more settled on yourself, more appreciative of yourself, more have greater faith in the process of mindfulness, *samādhi*, medi-

tation, and being present for this life that we live. May this serve for the benefit of all beings. So thank you, and I do look forward to beginning the next series. Peace.