

Samadhi (45) Spreading The Joy

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So, good morning everyone, and good day, welcome. Welcome to this talk. This is the fifth talk on the first *jhāna*, and continuing talk on a wider series on the *samādhi*. And *samādhi*, as I've often said, is a state of being. It's not a particular mental activity of being concentrated or hyper-focused. And so it's a state of being that we enter into.

As such, it's a radically different way of experiencing ourselves than usual. We're always in some state, and even the expression in English, "that person's, boy, is that a person in a state," has usually meant that they're kind of, something's really unusual about them or odd about them. But we're always in some kind of state. Unfortunately, we take some of the states we're in as being normal and ordinary. That doesn't just how it is. But often we're fragmented, we're stressed, we're de-stressed, we're preoccupied, we're caught in things, and that feels normal.

There are certain attitudes or even emotions which persist that can feel like this is just life as it should be because that's what we're used to. But when we let go, when we let things fall away, all the extra, all the unnecessary activity of mind, even unnecessary activity of heart, even unnecessary activities of the body, and let all that fall away in a, at least metaphorically, upright position, stance, way of being, what we're left with can be a state of well-being, a state of confidence, a state of, it's enough just to be alive. There's no tendency to want to judge it or interpret it as being something is wrong or inadequate. It just makes things become better and better. It just feels good to be alive, good to be here.

And it's a state of well-being. So that's one of my definitions of *samādhi*, is a profound state of well-being in which we feel immersed. And so the first *jhāna* represents a very particular kind of *samādhi*. There's other many forms of *samādhi*, of immersions, but the particular

one that is very, very significant and powerful and can be a game-changer for some people. In the ancient Buddhist tradition, the Buddha said that once a person is in the first *jhāna*, in that sense of well-being and peace and letting go of so many attachments, that it's kind of the first taste of what it's like to be awakened, to be free.

Some people might even confuse it with full liberation, Buddhist liberation, because it's so special and so nice. But it gives us a first taste. It can be quite inspiring. Oh, this is possible. It's possible to have this. Who would have known that such a thorough feeling of well-being, that feels like a homecoming were possible.

There are plenty of people who will say, have said, that this is not possible to have this level of *samādhi* and well-being. But there is. It is definitely possible. So in this first *jhāna*, the state is one that's often characterized by the five *jhānic* factors that I talked about yesterday. And so there are the initial application of mind, the sustained application of mind, of attention. There is joy, my translation of the Pāli word *pīti*, P-I-T-I.

And there is happiness, my translation of the Pāli word *sukha*, S-U-K-H-A. And then there is said to be some overall state, the state of absorption, of immersion, that characterizes, I'm calling it becoming one, sometimes called one-pointedness, sometimes called unification. And so those all kind of come together. In the first *jhāna*, there's various strengths by which it can occur. It can be very mild, and so mild that the difference between the approach state and the *jhāna* is not so clear. It kind of, we slide back and forth between them even.

But other times it's quite strong, and it's very clear that this is, you know, now we're in a new territory. And the degree of strength that it has has a lot to do with the degree of joy, the strength of the *pīti*. And there can be a range of strengths to it. In the classic teachings, there's five degrees or ways that *pīti*, this joy, can be experienced. I find it kind of inspiring to hear this list of all the possible ways. You don't have to have them all, but sometimes it's nice to know that these are in the range.

Stronger forms of it, people can get sometimes afraid of it or scared, like, wow, this is intense. So the first one is minor. So it's just maybe subtle or minor. It's not like something that's so dramatically different than what a joy that one has in daily life. Another one is momentary, that it just seems like it sparkles. It comes and goes, maybe with every breath.

It comes and disappears, comes and disappears. It's just there for a moment. It kind of sparkles or sparks someplace. Then there is something called showering. And this is where it feels like there's a shower of water pouring through us in some way, a flow pouring through

us, moving through us. It's a stream that's moving through us.

It may be like sand going through an hourglass. We're at the thin edge of the hourglass. It just moves, flows, and flows. A stream's going. And that stream can be quite intense sometimes. It might go in different directions.

It might go up the spine, up the head. It might go down into the feet. Different things. And sometimes when it gets too intense, the sense of the stream, that sometimes people find it helpful to relax the body even more so the stream becomes softer and wider. Sometimes people even kind of redirect it so it's more grounding, like down the feet. And then there is something called uplifting joy.

And this is quite inspiring. And this is kind of almost like people feel they get very light sometimes. They feel like they're being lifted up. And sometimes, actually, the posture will change because this lifting up sometimes straightens out the spine. And it's like everything's alert and present. But, you know, it can feel like we're lifted off the cushion even because everything's so light and inspiring.

And it's kind of, you know, a wonderful experience. And then there's pervading. The showering sometimes can be quite intense. I've had the experience of it feeling like huge cascading waves. It's just kind of like you could feel the wave coming and then crashing down. And sometimes I've had it after meditation, and when it happens, I have to stop what I'm doing.

Just kind of pause and wait for this wave to crest and break and pass. So there's all kinds of very unusual things that can happen with the intensity of it, mostly when people are in retreat. But the one that I like is this last one called Pervading. And this is the instruction the Buddha gives, is to let this well-being, this joy, spread. And that's the only instruction he gives, as I said yesterday, is to let it spread, let it be suffusive, almost like with every breath is a massage that spreads it further and further.

Every breath is like the wind, the air of the bellows, letting the fire get warmer and warmer. And let it spread so there's no bottlenecks for it. There's no place that gets contracted. There's no tension in the body in which the flow is blocked, which can cause a little bit of challenges for people. Just relax. And so it's a continual relaxation, continual opening, opening to the well-being.

Feel it fully. And that's kind of continued letting go, continued falling away. And that prepares a person for the second *jhāna*, which we'll talk about when I pick up again. And so it built into this. So what tends to happen when the first *jhāna* gets strong is that the joy factor can

predominate, but the happiness factor is still there as well. And so these two together, they're kind of like a combination of joy and happiness that arise together, but it is possible to also distinguish them.

And the distinction is that the happiness is more, I like the word sublime. It's more calm. It's more settled. It's more content. Whereas the *pīti* has kind of, the mind is a little bit brightened and excited by it. With happiness, the mind actually quiets down even more.

There's a pervasive feeling of well-being, more than a pervasive feeling of inspiration or a little bit of excited joy. So these are the five factors, and they can be very minor, and you don't have to be in *jhāna* to have these present. And there's an art to recognizing, even if they're here very subtle in an ordinary mind where you may be somewhat distracted, preoccupied, there's a way of discovering that these are already here in some way and you're allowed to feel it to support you to get absorbed, to get into the meditation, to let, for temporary, let your everyday concerns, preoccupations fall away.

And it's sometimes called the happiness that leads to more happiness, the joy that leads to more joy. It's to feel even the subtle feelings of calm or well-being that begins to come when you meditate. There's an art not to cling to it, not to try to make something happen, but to register and let it kind of be massaged or open to it and support you to let go of your everyday orientations, preoccupations, just to be here.

So next week I'll be back at the Retreat Center and IRC for a more private event we're doing down there. And then I'll be back the following week, and Matthew Bensilver will be coming next week, and I think that'll be quite refreshing to have him as an interlude. And then I'll be back, and then the following week we'll do the second *jhāna*. And the idea is to spend a week on the next three, so that you can have some sense of what these are about. And I thank you for attending and listening and practicing together, and I very much look forward to being back in about 10 days, 9-10 days. So, thank you, and...