

Samadhi (43) Becoming One

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So welcome to this next talk, the 43rd talk in the series on *samādhi*. And these talks are certainly building on the 42 earlier talks, so they make more sense in the context of that. So the *samādhi* is an experience of immersion, absorption, that involves a number of characteristics. And one of the forms of *samādhi* that they're emphasizing in Buddhism is called *jhāna*. And there are four *jhānas*, four of these kind of almost quantumly different states of absorption or concentration. And these are states of mind or states of being.

So that we want to be careful we don't use the word concentration too much. And the idea is that it's a laser focus of the mind. When the mind gets tight and narrow and focused and penetrating, that all too easily narrows the field too much. It's a wide open field that settles into *samādhi*. And the first *jhāna* is generally taught that are characterized by five primary kind of activities, mental states that are going on.

And those five are called the five *jhānic* factors. And so those are the initial or the connecting attention, the sustaining of attention, joy, happiness, and the fifth one is the Pāli is *ekaggatā*, and sometimes it's translated as one-pointedness, and sometimes it's translated as unification, or I like to call it wholeness, a gathering together. And so one way to kind of bring those two different ideas together, well, say before I do that, the idea of one-pointedness lends itself to narrowing attention to a single point and getting tense in the process. A lot of people who practice one-pointedness on something will try to penetrate or have this laser focus that's very tight. And it can lead to headaches even.

It can lead to some kind of tension building up. And some of the negative consequences of *samādhi* are born from any kind of tension involved as we practice *samādhi*. And sometimes people are not aware that they're tense. There can be a lot of pleasure, a lot of goodness.

They can even get concentrated with that tension. But sooner or later, that tension will create some kind of unfortunate byproducts that can interfere with healthy *samādhi*.

So the word one-pointedness is a little bit risky. Unification or wholeness or gathering together—maybe it's a little bit abstract for people to understand. So the word that maybe kind of combines these two in a nice way might be becoming one. *Eka* means one. *Gata* can mean like going to, becoming something. The state of one, maybe a kind of oneness. But becoming one.

So all of what we are becomes one, becomes absorbed with the breathing. There's no sense that anything is being left out, but there's no awareness of what's outside. So it's, you know, if you close your eyes, maybe laying on the couch and listening to some really nice music, and pretty soon the couch disappears, the room disappears, the time disappears, the future disappears, the activities of the day disappear. In a way, maybe even you disappear because you have become one with the music. You've kind of centered now in the music. The wholeness of experience now is defined by music.

But you're not narrowly focused on the music, zeroing in on it. There's a feeling that the mind is quite expansive. It's like the mind has become the music, become one with the music, but the music is broad and wide and everywhere in a certain way. So with *samādhi*, there is a becoming one, but you can't do that with tension. It has to be very soft. So it's almost like a feather that slowly lands on the ground and then is centered on the ground there, becomes one with the ground maybe. I don't know what feathers are thinking about, but becoming just there.

So that kind of more like gently settling in and very light feeling. And so to find a way to be with breathing, to be with the sensations, and becoming one with it, becoming simple with it, becoming whole just with this experience of breathing. And so these five mental factors all work together. They're all there, and they're kind of part of the whole. So at this point in the first *jhāna*, there is a kind of activity going on. We are still engaged in doing some kind of practice.

But the way we engage, it almost feels like we can enjoy it more. So this applied attention, connecting attention. Yes, we're here. Ah, connect. And then sustaining. I sometimes liken it to getting a massage where the masseuse puts their hand, and it feels so good to have the hand touch us because we know what's going to come is a kneading.

And so the kneading, or maybe it's more like the rhythm of kneading and letting go, squeezing

and letting go of the massage. So there's this kind of rhythm of making a connection fully with the breathing and then sustaining it, riding it, feeling it. And so the mind is gently involved with this. There's a little bit of intentionality, a little bit of participation. But the sense of participation is just a delight. It's so good to do this.

Maybe it's like being really thirsty on a hot day and then drinking cool, refreshing water. It just feels so good to take those sips and the gulps and have it, you feel, ah, this is good, this is good. Each sip feels good in new ways, like the rhythm, ah. And so that speaks to this applied and sustained attention is related to some of the sense of well-being that can arise. And I'll talk more about that tomorrow. But there's a sense of the pleasure, the joy, the delight that comes almost as if it's like the rhythm of massaging and applied attention and sustained attention is almost like blowing on a gentle flame, keeping it going, keeping it going.

And so it's not work. It's not like we have an agenda. It's not like we're trying to make something happen. Ideally, it's just really good for its own sake. And so as we go deeper into these deep absorptions, it's very important, the more we go into it, to not have tried to make anything happen and do something and try to do better. But it's more like just really enjoying what's here now. Just to be content with that. And that allows for a deeper settling that we'll see.

So there's five factors then. The first four is connecting attention and then sustaining. Then two forms of well-being, a joy and a happiness. And I'll talk more about these tomorrow. And then today the emphasis is on this *ekaggatā*, this one-pointedness, a becoming one, this unification, which is a simplification where we allow the mind to become simpler and simpler, unconcerned about anything but just this process of the *samādhī* itself.

And we might be very aware that there's a field of openness, field of goodness, field of joy. And we're just allowing everything to be there. Everything there mutually supportive of this process of being content just to be with the breathing. Just the simplicity of just breathing in and breathing out. Nothing else needs to happen. And in some ways the world disappears. Like on the couch listening to music, your cushion disappears, the room disappears, yesterday disappears, tomorrow disappears. Maybe even you disappear in just simply staying there with the breathing.

So you might see as you go through the day today, if there are certain activities you do that lend itself to this kind of becoming one with the activity. So it could be something like washing dishes or putting the dishes away in a way that, or cleaning the kitchen floor or folding the laundry or chopping vegetables or making your bed or, you know, putting your clothes

very nicely away in a drawer, where you just give yourself over to that activity, not to get it done quickly to move on to more important things, but that this is the place to become one with this activity.

And often that means that somehow we do it with care. We do it so it feels really nice. It looks like folding it in a neat kind of nice way, the T-shirt before you put it in the drawer, is not because we're fastidious, but because that's what *samādhi* does, to be fully involved with what we do, is to do things in a way that are harmonious, beautiful, pleasant, enjoyable. And see in the course of the day whether you can begin experiencing some of the benefits of *samādhi* in being absorbed in what you do. And probably your heart will love it, if you give yourself more chances through the day to become one, whole, unified, one-pointedly absorbed in what you're actually doing in the moment.

So, thank you very much, and we'll continue. Thank you.