

# Samādhi (15) Feeling the Sweetness

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Settledness, simplicity, steadiness, spaciousness, concentration, state of mind, meditation practice, health, beauty, mindfulness, primary focus, breath, counting, absorption

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So, welcome to this 15th talk on *samādhi*, in this ongoing *samādhi* series.

Perhaps this week, you may have noticed how seldom I use the word concentration. The quality in the phrases that I used and emphasized each day this week, is not concentration. *Samādhi* is simplicity. *Samādhi* is settledness. *Samādhi* is steadiness. *Samādhi* is spaciousness. Today, *samādhi* is sweetness.

Maybe the closest thing to concentration in those five qualities is steadiness. Be steady with your presence, be steady with your awareness, and be steady here with your practice. These five qualities don't have to be separate. They can be part of the same state that we are in. We can be sitting in a state of simplicity where meditation is not complicated. It is not an engineering feat. It is not a complicated thing to do. It is almost like an undoing, a not doing, more than it is a doing.

It is a settling into something and not concentrating on something. It might be that the consequence of settling is that we settle so fully in a relaxed, full way that the world around the place we settle kind of falls away or recedes into the distance. It is almost as if we're concentrating on the settled place. Rather than poking it from the control tower, it is more like we have settled into it like we would settle into a nice soft mattress or a comforter on top of a mattress. It just feels so good to lay down and settle into that. We are fully, completely here in that small little world where the body touches the comforter on the bed. The rest of the world falls away.

We could say we are concentrated there. For some people to concentrate on that experience immediately causes tension or strain or gets us in the control tower. To settle into it becomes something that becomes embodied, something that includes the whole body. It is the fullness of it. It is the steadiness, holding steady – there is something in us that loves being steady. It is kind of like a commitment, a devotion, or a simplicity of being, just this. When we are steady, something can relax and settle into it.

I love to go hiking. If I just keep walking steadily, at some point, something settles in me. I arrive and I am just there in the walking, steady in the walking. I have to walk steadily for the gathering of the different parts of myself – the distracted mind, and concerns of the day to fall away. I am just steady. It's like the steadiness allows something to gather around it.

Spaciousness is such an important quality for *samādhi*. To have a sense of being spacious, open, lots of openness, makes room for the sweetness that can arise in *samādhi*. Maybe some of you don't care for the word sweetness, but in *samādhi*, there is a pleasure. There is a sense of well-being. For me, one of the most wonderful words for the state of *samādhi* is beauty. There is a feeling of a beautiful state that kind of radiates out. The breathing has gotten quite beautiful, and it radiates a sense of beauty into the body.

The most classic way of talking about *samādhi* is that there is joy and happiness. Some people use the word gladness. It is like each of those is a deeper and fuller experience that is more and more satisfying. Some people use the word “satisfy”. There is a feeling of satisfaction. It is really good here. Some people like the word goodness, this feels good.

Sometimes I have liked the word health. Settling into a good state of *samādhi* feels like an embodiment of health. At times when I have been sick, if I could settle into a state of *samādhi*, it just felt like there was this healing energy that coursed through the body. It felt so good – the healthiness, the health of it.

I am not saying that this is easy. I am not saying that it should happen today or tomorrow, but this is one of the characteristics of *samādhi*. As we settle into the practice, it is good to start becoming sensitive and aware when some of these good feelings begin to arise. These are good feelings which are symptoms of *samādhi*.

In the teachings of the Buddha, it is interesting because he puts happiness as a precursor for *samādhi*. This seems a bit odd because many people are suffering a lot. They are meditating in order to not suffer so much, to be free of their suffering, or to work through it. Now to have *samādhi*, we have to be happy to begin with.

We always have the mindfulness practice to fall back to. For five years now on YouTube, the primary practice I have been teaching is mindfulness. For those who have been following, the recourse is to just go back to being mindful of the experience until something settles and we feel able to be present with what is happening in a simpler way. Then we can develop this quality of *samādhi*.

A lot of *samādhi* has to do with having a primary focus of attention, a primary place to settle, a primary place to be at home and to relax. The idea is to be absorbed in the experience. Maybe there is something we do in our lives that we get absorbed in. It could be a reference point. We feel a well-being in doing it. As we do this simple thing that we get absorbed in, the difficult thoughts and feelings that are in life fall away.

For some people, it is reading a book. It is doing a craft or playing an instrument for others. Some people feel this going into a shower. Everything else falls away and it is just nice to be in the shower. Some people start singing in the shower. Being with a friend, walking in the park, or listening to music works for some people. There might be something that we already do that gives us a sense of what it is like to have these qualities of simplicity. Becoming simple enough just to listen to the music, to do this one thing. There is a settledness in it, where we are not preoccupied and agitated by other things. We are just here with this. There is a steadiness, and an absorption, just this here.

There is a spaciousness around it. We have not limited ourselves in a tight way. We are relaxing as something opens. Sometimes with *samādhi*, things will get smaller and narrower before the spaciousness opens. Don't look for spaciousness too early, just when it starts becoming available.

Partly I am choosing the word sweetness because it has an S in it and completes the pattern for the week. If I wasn't wanting to stay with S's, I probably would have chosen beauty for myself.

These are some of the characteristics of *samādhi*. They are not necessarily easy to tap into or touch into. They can be very subtle. If we already have a disposition in the mind to orient ourselves to what is difficult, our problems, or the pain we have, sometimes inadvertently, that is where the *samādhi* goes. Concentration goes to those things. Concentrating on the problems or things where there is fear or aversion or something that is not so healthy can make the difficulty feel worse.

We do not want to ignore it. It is possible with *samādhi*, to shift the primary focus to breathing, to the settling place. We shift the focus to settle, to keep settling. We are not betraying the difficulties we have, but we are placing them in a different context. It is a delight to be able to sit in a state of *samādhi*, of goodness, of health where the difficulties we have might just be like jellyfish floating in the vast ocean. They aren't the ocean. They are just there. They are recognized and held by the goodness of *samādhi*.

In the meantime, I encourage you to count your breathing. That can support the steadiness. It can support all these qualities, provided you find a really nice way for the mind to do the counting. Find a way to count that might be gentle, soft, beautiful, settled, and spacious. There are different ways of counting as I described. See if you can find a way to count. If you find yourself being able to settle into the counting, you might see if counting from 1 to 10 and then starting over again begins to support the settling in, and the steadiness. It may help you to start becoming absorbed in this experience of breathing, of *samādhi*.

So, thank you.