

Samadhi (39) The Pull of Samadhi

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Hello and welcome to this next part of the series on *samādhī*. We're in this approach stage of *samādhī*, sometimes called access concentration. As we get more and more settled into meditation, more settled, more absorbed, more intimate, more immersed in our experience, this is what *samādhī* is. Sometimes *samādhī* is felt to be any situation, not just meditation, where we are absorbed in what we are doing, immersed in what we're doing. Some people will describe this as becoming one with what we're doing. Some people describe it as being deeply intimate.

Some people describe it as being kind of one-pointed, gathered together, just here, just with this. And some people describe *samādhī* more as a state, a broad, wide, expansive state that is centered fully here with one thing. Right now, at this moment, at this moment. Sometimes it's called, there's a momentary *samādhī* where we're very established in the present moment. The awareness is fully there for one moment of experience, then something very different, another moment, and it freely takes in the range of things that come in through the different sense doors. So it doesn't necessarily have a single object, which going into deeper *samādhī* really usually uses simplifying into a primary kind of object.

A lot of those different sense doors start kind of receding from awareness. In deeper *samādhī*, a person might not be hearing sound so much, not conscious. They're not incapable of it, but the attention is so absorbed in the breathing that we don't necessarily hear very much or smell. So the whole world of *samādhī*, things begin to shift and change. It is a state shift. There's a radical changing from business as usual with how we go through our lives.

One of the ways that this takes shape is that our thinking begins to change. As we start getting into this approach stage, thinking more and more tends to be wholesome. There's less and

less unwholesome thinking. There might be still some desires, aversions, doubt that come up. The hindrances might still be there, but they're fairly weak now. People who come into *samādhi* should really understand that hindrances, well, have studied them a lot and are familiar with them, so that the subtle pull of them no longer grabs us.

We're able to say, no, not now. Stay here. There's kind of an overriding movement towards kind of a healthy way of thinking, a meditative way, something that's supportive, a way of thinking about just here, just now, being here, stay here, continue here, relax here, don't cling, don't push, don't pull back, stay, persist. That thinking feels healthy. It feels wholesome. To some degree, we can come to this juncture with the approach stage, where we begin to either, it happens naturally, this kind of more healthy way of thinking about the meditation itself, about the present moment experience, or it's easy to make the shift.

It is a shift where we're no longer involved in the usual way of thinking, which maybe for many people is not so healthy, that is not so productive of calm, stability, peace, even well-being. To begin to appreciate, we're actually shifting out of business as usual. It's not a rejection of it, it's not by aversion of it, but it's important to really appreciate that, you know, if you want to go for a nice swim in a pool, generally you go and change into a bathing suit so that you're shifting into a state, into a way of being that makes more sense, that's more appropriate for a nice swim. There is a kind of recognition, oh, we're going into a different mode here. Because otherwise, many of us are so committed to the usual mode of thinking, the usual mode of being, the usual preoccupations. But at least in principle to understand, this is a shift we're taking.

We're going into the pond, we're going into the lake for a swim, in a sense. Yes, it's appropriate to take off my regular street clothes to have my bathing suit. So, yes, it's appropriate to put down our preoccupations about work and family and thoughts and desires and all kinds of things, resentments that we have. It's appropriate for this time because we're now entering into this kind of a new world, a new way of being. This is where this transition really begins to take hold in this approach stage. There's a little bit wobbly still, the mind wanders off and we all come back, be here.

This is where it's really helpful to have this quiet, peaceful way of thinking that says yes, here, stay here, it's okay, you don't have to go off, not now, not now, stay here. As we're staying here with the present and the approach begins to happen, some of that approach feels like an onward leading, like there's momentum, like we're on a slide and we just kind of need to let go to let the slide carry us. It might be the onward leading nature, it might have different ways

it's experienced by people. Sometimes it can be feeling like, you know, I very much follow my breathing in my belly, the movements in my belly. Sometimes it's almost like there's a little thread in there that's pulling, pulling me along. Come here. Follow that thread. Stay right here with this little bit of pressure, little pulling.

It's almost like, almost like, it's not exactly that, but it feels like, oh yes, here's where I'm being absorbed in. Here's where I'm really connected. I don't know if this metaphor works for you, but I've found it helpful for me sometimes that I'm kind of like a kite that's in the sky floating nicely. But there's a nice little thread, a cord that goes down to the ground. That thread, that rope holding the kite in the air, it needs to be constantly taut. You don't want it to be slack and you don't want it to be too tight. If it's too tight, the string might break. If it's too loose, the kite will fall. So the job of the person who's with the kite is to keep just the right tautness there so that it flies well.

Just the right tautness there, just here, stay there, feel that pull, don't pull too hard, don't lean into it, relax. It's always a relaxing, always a letting go, a releasing into, releasing into the onward leading nature, releasing into the immersion, releasing into the lake, into the pond, releasing it down the slide. When my kids were growing up, we went to a lake nearby that had a water slide. It was fun. You could go fast and splash in. The slide of *samādhi*, it's not really a splash. It's very peaceful. But sometimes it could be a sudden shift, like, oh, I'm here. I'm in the lake. Or sometimes it can be a slide that has no bottom, but you find yourself in this peaceful space.

So, subtle, quiet, soft thinking. Not too much, not too little. A different kind of thinking than ordinary, but a thinking that's about the meditation itself. Thinking that's without greed, without trying too hard, without criticizing anything. Just simple. Just the facts.

Just the field notes. Just a little exploratory wear. So that that subtle thinking is part of this gathering together, unification, that all of us is participating, cooperating, in just gathering together into this immersive experience of *samādhi*. Then feeling the pull, feeling the little bit of onward leading nature. Not to get excited, not to push it more, but to always remember to feel and relax. Let go. Almost like letting go into the experience is the way to be with it more fully.

So I hope that this makes sense. Just as I was saying this, in the back of my mind, I wanted to say, refer to it as the poetry of *samādhi*. I don't think I've been in any way speaking poetically, but maybe there's something about the aesthetics, the sensibility of poetry, when it really moves us in a deep way, that comes into play, that supports this onward leading nature, this

subtle thinking, where the poetry of *samādhi*, the poetry of beauty, here, poetry of sweetness, here, yes, this is good.

So thank you very much. If some of you would like to meditate more, a day long, it's not quite on this topic of *samādhi* but certainly hopefully supportive, that tomorrow I have a day long retreat on Friday on mindfulness of emotions and that will be through the Insight Retreat Center. On their menu, you see online retreats. Also, there's a note about it in the What's New section of IMC's website. I think it's from 9 to 4 at California time. It's online. So thank you very much. And we'll do another day tomorrow on approach.