

Samadhai (38) Samadhi with Love

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So, hello and welcome to this continuing series on *samādhi*. And now that we've been doing it for a good number of weeks, I'm now bringing you into the approach stage *samādhi*. And it's approaching a deep immersion, a deep kind of clicking in, a deep kind of settling into just here. It's almost like a physiological shift and change. Like we become so fully here that the mind, you know, is clearly at home, clearly settled, clearly has no inclination to wander off. And it's a deeply satisfying immersion into something wonderful.

And so the approach stage is beginning to appreciate this movement to immersion, movement onward to really being here. And part of that is to begin recognizing the symptoms of *samādhi*, the feelings that feel good about *samādhi*, that are the encouragement, are the symptoms of the very things that awareness wants to stay connected to. Mindfulness wants to stay here, wants to know this. It's like standing in the sun on a cold day. And the system, the body, almost like it wants to stay there, with it fully facing the sun so we get the maximum amount of heat on the body.

And so there's something in our whole system that wants to be here because it's so good, it's so nourishing, it's so good. And classically, or often, there's a lot of attention given to the joy, the pleasure that can come as we get into this approach stage. And it's being kind of absorbed into the pleasure, the joy, that is kind of the avenue to this deep, deep immersion of *samādhi*. But sometimes that emphasis on pleasure and joy is a little bit too technique-focused, a little bit too, maybe, much desire involved, a little bit too narrow scope of what the full immersion can be.

And so in this last meditation, I introduced the topic of love. The Buddha did describe beautifully states of *samādhi*, deep absorption in the *Brahmavihāras*, in these divine forms of sub-

lime love which we are capable of. The first one being kindness or goodwill or loving kindness, and then compassion, sympathetic joy, and a particular kind of equanimity, a particular kind of love called equanimity. But there's this kind of sense of tenderness or rightness or goodness or a kind of a love that's there, this is good, this is—uh. And so to begin feeling that there's care, there's love, there's gentleness, there's a friendliness, there's a feeling of goodwill to what's happening.

It's not greedy to enter into *samādhi*. It's not narrowing down to just feel pleasure for pleasure's sake or joy's sake. It's just a little bit too narrow. The love, the goodwill is a support to keep it all very light and to keep it from being selfish, keep it from being about me, myself, and mine. It gives kind of a wider space, a wider goodwill, a wider sense of not contracting.

For the Buddha, when he talked about just a penultimate kind of obstacle to really going deep into the well-being of *samādhi* are the five hindrances. One of them, which is ill will. And so this idea of ill will getting in the way, even the subtlest little not liking, subtlest little not for this, not this. There's plenty of experiences we can be having in meditation that are unpleasant. The body can ache, the mind can be challenging, and the heart can have its difficult emotions. And we don't want to push them away or think they don't belong there, but there's a way of including them so that we're not preoccupied by them.

And this is where love can hold it all. And this idea that awareness itself is love, mindfulness itself is a kind of love. And one of my favorite reference points for this, well, favorite and also maybe sad reference points, is that I've learned as a teacher and talking with a lot of people about their lives, that when they were children, if they were not really seen, if the parents kind of ignored them or never really stopped to get to know them or saw their difficulties, saw their challenges, saw their joys, that they were kind of overlooked by the busyness or the preoccupations or the alcoholism of their parents. That not being seen as children is equivalent to not being loved, not feeling that they're loved. And there's something about the act of seeing.

As adults, there's something about the act of people stopping to listen, to really listen out and hear that is so nourishing, so good, that when people listen well, it's because there's a kind of a deep care, a love here. So this love of *samādhi*, this love that can be part of awareness, doesn't have to be a dramatic thing. It doesn't have to be something that people write songs about, but rather it's something very soft, something very gentle, something very modest, something that is very kind of pervasive and fluid. But it helps with this, yes, this is good. This is really nice to be here. Of course I want to be here.

Of course I want to enter into this world of experience. If the experience itself has this wonderful light, inviting awareness, if experience itself comes along with this inviting sense of love or care that is not added to being aware, but is part of being aware. You know, it's possible to be aware unselfconsciously. It's possible to be aware of things that we're not really focusing on. We go through the day talking with a friend, walking through a park, and we might step over a branch or a lizard in the path or something. We might kind of avoid a rock or something.

We're aware of the rock. We're aware of all these things, simple things in the park, but we're not focusing on them. The degree to which we know it is almost effortless because we're involved in the conversation and looking around. And so we have this capacity for very, very simple, unobtrusive or undemanding kind of awareness that in the same way we can do that for care and kindness. Maybe there's an earthworm on the trail as you're walking and you wouldn't step on it if you just continued the way you are. But it's the most natural thing in the world to step aside, to put the foot down a little bit different place so you don't hurt the worm.

It's a kind of care. It's a kind of love. But it's not self-conscious. It's not just a big thing. You don't even realize it. Two seconds later, you probably don't even remember you did it. It's not in your mind.

So to immerse ourselves in the simplicity of awareness, simplicity of care, don't make *samādhi* a difficult, big, complicated thing. It's a dipping into the pool, into this immersion, into this state. So we're looking for the symptoms of *samādhi*. And one of the symptoms is that the mind wants to be present, wants to be there. And when that awareness kind of wants to be there, look for the love, look for the care. And that then is part of the funnel that keeps us kind of there and wanting to be there.

Look for the joy. Look for the pleasure. Look for how the satisfactory feelings. Maybe there's kind of a, the body feels much more light. Then it has no weight. Maybe the body feels very spacious and open. Kind of be in that space, feel it, be it.

Maybe there's a delightful tingling or a vibration or a sense of vitality, aliveness that comes. Be in that, feel that. These are all symptoms. Sometimes people have experiences of light, the eyesight filled with luminous, with maybe a white field of light or a clear field of kind of light. Maybe it's colored light. Don't focus on them, don't get mesmerized by them, but that's part of the kind of delightful things, the symptom of *samādhi* where you can kind of accept it and appreciate how yes, I'm on track, this is where I want to be. Let the color, the colors, the

lights, let them be there on the periphery. Let them be a part of the goodness of it that wants to keep you right there with the breathing, staying there, staying connected.

So with the approach stage of *samādhi*, it's helpful to start appreciating the symptoms of *samādhi*, what's shifted and changed, the calm that's arisen. Sometimes the mind can feel very incisively—is that the right word—precisely or penetratingly sharp in its attention, awareness, right there. And it doesn't have to be any kind of strain, but this is good, to be there sharply, precisely, right there on the breath. Or it can feel like awareness is like petting a cat, and the breath is the petting almost, or the awareness that's resting on it, and something begins to purr inside. And so the symptoms of *samādhi* and one of those being love, care, and that's one of the great gifts of Buddhism, of *samādhi*, of practice, is to feel the almost the oneness of awareness and love that you can carry with you the world so that whatever awareness touches is also touched by love, with care, with kindness.

And you'll lose touch with that. You'll get caught up in your thoughts and preoccupations. But know that you've lost it. Know that you're no longer doing it. Maybe just recognizing it, that difference, can bring you back into this relaxed way in which awareness love, awareness that is love, can then return to becoming part of how you walk through the world. May you love, may you walk through the world with awareness love. Thank you.