

Samadhi (33) With Support From Pleasure

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So, to continue this series on *samādhi*, at a certain point, as the mind and body get settled, collected, and unified, as it gets stabilized, the means for the support for entering into the temple of deep *samādhi* is through the doorway of pleasure. Not necessarily sensual pleasure, but certainly an embodied pleasure that begins to feel like a sense of well-being, joy, and happiness. And so you're allowed to take in, feel, be nourished by, saturated by well-being when you're doing *samādhi* practice. And so to be oriented towards it in just the right way, to not be attached to it, expecting it, pushing for it, but rather to be open to it, to allow it, to acknowledge it when it's there, to appreciate it. And as it's there, to gently allow it to be a kind of a feedback loop between the joy, the pleasure, and the meditation, and the focus on breathing, focus on your primary object. And so that the joy, the pleasure keeps you connected.

And it's a feedback loop where as you get more stable, more engaged, more fully in the experience of the breathing, of the meditation, you can feel that the well-being shifts and changes, gets richer, gets stronger. And so this is not, it can seem like you're, you know, wanting or, you know, clinging or trying to make something happen. It can, some people get tense, but the idea is to stay relaxed, almost as if you're not expecting anything to happen, but you're allowing it, *samādhi* willing. *Samādhi* willing, let the joy, the well-being spread. And one of the little tools for this is to have a little half smile, turn up the corners of your mouth just a little bit until you feel a sense of pleasure there and let that pleasure be the support to keep you connected, keep you here in the present moment. And some people will shift then from the breathing to the pleasure, the physical pleasure of the smile, and get absorbed in that.

But I recommend that you just use it as a background support, as a pointer, as an encouragement. Stay, stay with the breath. Continue stabilizing. Continue entering into the world

of breathing. And as we do this massage of connecting and sustaining, it almost, it can be in harmony with breathing in and breathing out, where we gently, lovingly connect to the beginning of the inhale. And that massage of sustaining is there as the chest, the torso fills with air.

We feel the expansion, the movement, and the becoming larger. And then we connect to the exhale and sustain the attention, feeling the pleasure of the smoothness, the release, the softening, the settling that can be there in the exhale. And sometimes it's nice to feel the slight pause at the end of the exhale. That's really easy to do. And feeling the emptiness of it, the lack of anything, the relief, in a sense, of just being for a moment or two, and that pause. And because of the pause, the call to breathe in is maybe a little bit stronger.

So it's a little bit more pleasant to breathe in because the body somehow wants it. We're not holding the breath for a long time. There's no holding, really, just a pause to accentuate being there with the breath and enjoying it. And then part of this then is to, this focus on *samādhī*, on breathing and the pleasure of it, is meant to be a way to help the thinking mind become quieter. And the thinking mind is fueled by focusing on thinking itself. The food for discursive thinking, distracted thinking, is we lose our attention in the thinking.

But if the attention goes somewhere else, then the thinking is not being fed so much. It might be there in the background, but it's the preoccupation that being caught in it is not being fed. And often the thinking becomes quieter. But it's also possible to participate in quieting the mind by relaxing the thinking muscle, to relax the tension, the pressure, the contraction around thinking, and maybe softening the mind, opening the mind, making this feeling, the sense of the mind, become expansive and open. And so sometimes that can happen on the exhale. As you exhale, let the thoughts evaporate, float away, so that there's more space in the mind.

The absence of thoughts is not just a pure absence. It's an absence that will kind of make room to feel the joy, the pleasure. It's an absence that makes it, you feel it almost with the experience of *samādhī*, with the goodness of it, with the breathing, with the sensations, with the pleasure. And so there is a kind of art in the *samādhī* of knowing how to give yourself fully to the experience without straining, of giving yourself fully to it while we relax and while you let go. The first time I ever got instructions in *samādhī*, specifically for the purpose of *samādhī*, I was told it was all about letting go. And I thought that was a useful instruction to get, because then I kind of understood not to cling, not to crave, not to be pushing, not to be trying to make something happen, but just keep letting go.

It's almost letting go into breathing, letting go into *samādhi*, letting go into this nourishing, settled, enjoyable place within. And what's really special that can happen is that the pleasure, the joy, the well-being of *samādhi* belongs to a different operating system within us than the operating system of difficult emotions, sadness, grief, depression, distress. It's a different operating system than physical aching and pains in our body. And so because it's a whole different operating system, it can operate beautifully, wonderfully, without feeling that we're being somehow disloyal or somehow bypassing or somehow that we have to kind of fix the emotional difficulties we have first so we can get concentrated. It's more the opposite, that as we get into *samādhi*, it puts us in a much better place to meet and understand and address our suffering.

And this is one of the great possibilities from *samādhi*. Enter into *samādhi*, really use meditation to get really stable and settled and calm. And then when you come out of meditation, glance and look at your challenges you have and see if you can see it now in different eyes, see it from a different context, a different frame of reference. And you might find yourself living in a kind of different world with a stable, quiet, settled body and mind than the world you see when you're spinning in your thoughts and preoccupations, spinning in your suffering, so that it's almost like the glasses by which you see are the glasses of suffering. If the glasses you're seeing is the glasses of calm, well-being, peace, then you can address and understand and have room and capacity to be with your difficulties in a much better way.

So the art of *samādhi* includes the art of being attuned to our body, heart, and mind's capacity for pleasure, for well-being, which moves into joy and happiness. And some of the most sublime forms of happiness can come as we dip into deeper and deeper *samādhi*. And if sometimes the joy or the happiness gets quite strong, be rest assured that there's better things than joy, and there's better things than happiness. So these are just waypoints, waypoints along the way. That strong pleasure, if it is strong, the joy, the well-being, these are just means along the way. They're not the end.

So, so for today, as you go through your day, you might want to see if you can spend more time appreciating the pleasures that are already here. So don't go out and, you know, buy pleasant, pleasurable food so you can have pleasure. Just as you go about your daily life, check in regularly today to notice the pleasures that are already here. Many people are so busy, they don't avail themselves with pleasure that's already here, the simple pleasures of life. Stay closer to it. And maybe staying closer to the pleasures of life will also keep you close to being calm in the middle of it because it means that with staying, giving time for the pleasures means that you're not fueling and continuing the spinning mind, the pressured

mind, the tense mind.

But take time today. Today you have permission, if I'm allowed to give you permission, to spend the day being attuned to the simple pleasures of life as they become available and see what difference it makes by the end of the day. So, thank you very much. And I'll continue this *samādhi* later tomorrow. Thank you.