

## Insight (7) Appearances And Recognition

**Gil Fronsdal**

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So, hello, welcome to this series on insight, the meaning of insight and how it's practiced in the insight meditation practice. And in some ways, insight is less interesting than *samādhi*. It doesn't have the excitement, the thrill, the great promise of wonderful feelings of joy, happiness, and peace. And there's a way in which it has more of a cognitive role. It has to do with a clear recognition of something. And for some people, that's kind of boring.

Why would that be interesting? But in this insight meditation understanding, clear seeing, clear insight, allows something very deep inside to release. It can allow a lot of letting go along that way. But the deepest forms of release, the deepest forms of freedom, are touched with very profound insight, which we'll get to as we move along here. But that process, the path of insight, is a process.

It's a path. It's a journey, in a sense. And the different kinds of insight that the person can have can be kind of put together as a journey, as a progression. And sometimes people follow that progression, but sometimes it's in a different order. So yesterday I mentioned that one of the important of the five forms of insight is personal insight. And to understand something unique about yourself that helps free something, helps you be wiser, helps you to resolve certain kinds of issues, not be in conflict with yourself or the world, or settle something in a deep way.

And these personal insights are phenomenally helpful. And some people have a profound need to settle aspects of their personal life so that they can come to meditation to settle further. So in a sense, this journey begins by enough self-understanding to be able to engage in a process of meditation that's not involved with the stories of our life, not involved with our history, our biography, and who did what to who, and things like that. Those are important,

but at some point you want to settle them enough so you can really start being in the present moment. And what we're beginning to move into in insight meditation is to see something which is universally true for everyone. And that doesn't mean that it's unimportant.

It means that actually we're getting into the underlying foundation of what builds our personal world, and rectifying it, cleaning it up, finding freedom in it. So the next insight, the first of these universal insights, has to do about seeing the difference between the role of the mind and the role of sensations. To see that there are sensations that we have, and then there's a mind's recognition of it. And those are two different things. The tradition calls this appearances and name. Name and appearances. *Nāma* and *rūpa*.

And so the appearances here, primarily you can understand it as being the direct experience we're having in the present moment, which comes through the sense doors. And so the sense experience is happening. And then there's the recognition of what that is. And those are two distinct activities. So I'm very fond of how the intimacy between sensations and senses is enhancing. If I put my hands together like this, I feel the warmth, the pressure, the smoothness, the texture of the palms of my hands touching.

And I also feel the play of sensations as kind of somehow, with some random way, attention moves around the different parts of the palm to feel different things at different times. And I feel a teeny bit of moisture, ever so slight. And a teeny bit of stickiness as I move my hands a little bit. And so all those sensations occur in the very location of sensing. Sensing and sensations arise together. They almost can't be separated.

So they're really, in a sense, part of the physical bodily experience. The recognition of what's happening there, the knowing of what it is, is an aspect of the mind. To know that my hand is touching my other hand, that's an act of recognition. I've done like this with someone else's hand, and I've known that it's their hand. It's such an innocent, ordinary, non-event almost to do that kind of recognition. But that level of recognition is going on all the time.

Now I feel a slight tiredness, a little ache, ever so slightly, in my muscles, my arm, from holding my hand up like this. And knowing, I can know that ache and know enough of it to wonder, should I rest my hand? Have I had enough holding my hand up? And so the recognition then allows for consideration, allows for wisdom to operate. But it's two different things. It's possible to have sense contact without the recognition.

Sometimes that's confusing, or sometimes the recognition is inaccurate. We see something and the mind projects something onto it. And we think we're seeing something, but it's not.

I've seen people from the back who have the same hairstyle, the same height, maybe the same kind of clothes, and assumed I was seeing my friend. And so I wasn't seeing accurately. The recognition factor was kind of jumping ahead before I had all the information.

I've seen, as I've often said, a stick on the ground in the hikes I do in the hills here, and for a moment will think it's a snake. And so sometimes the recognition is not accurate. But it's a distinct mental activity, the recognition. So as the mind gets calmer and quieter in meditation, at some point the insight is to see. These are two different events. There's the sensation and there's a knowing of what it is.

And sometimes with sounds, I don't know what that is. There's a recognition, not knowing. And then at some point I know. And there's a recognition, oh, that's what it is. And so maybe recognizing a bird, and I don't know it at first. And then at some point I recognize, oh, that's a woodpecker, or that's a dove.

And so this act of recognition is going on all the time. And to see it as two different events, to paraphrase or to adapt to traditional language, is to have clear seeing. It's a clarification of our view, clarification of how we see. These are two different things. Why is this important? Because it sets the foundation for the deeper insights.

If our recognition and the sensation are entangled or caught up with each other, then things get confused. The act of recognition is a kind of a concept. And concepts have a kind of enduring value. They're kind of enduring life. A concept can be unchanging. And so we have concept of a circle. And that never changes.

A circle is a circle. A circle never becomes a square. And so if I see the stick on the ground as a snake, the concept of snake is more or less a concept that doesn't go away. And unless I take a second look at the stick, I could run off down the trail and never change my view of what I saw. I would think it's a snake. But if I see that the seeing and the recognition are two different things, then I'm more likely to see more clearly that these are two different events. And in fact, it's a stick.

If I'm walking down the street and I see someone who looks like maybe my friend, but I don't really see it as a person, and I recognize the seeing and I recognize the thought "friend," and I see there's two different events, then I can question, "Is it really my friend?" But if I see them as the same, as if inseparable, the seeing and the recognition, then I might not question whether I'm seeing accurately. I might run up to my person and give them a hug, and the person is not my friend. And they're totally surprised. There's something about the entan-

gement of the way that we recognize something with the sensory experience we have that gets us in trouble.

We sometimes live with the recognition, the activity, the judgments, the desires, the fears, all the things that come along with recognition pile on right away as if that's the way it is. We have judgments about people. So if we see someone and the seeing of them, the recognizing of them as someone who is an angry person, not a nice person, for example, it's almost as if seeing and not a nice person are one and the same thing. As we begin seeing as two different things, then we can see more clearly. And we see each event as its own thing. And now we can begin to have wisdom.

Wisdom can operate much better in seeing that distinction. So in the course of insight practice, this difference is invaluable. And it isn't that we have to work hard to make ourselves see this way. As the mind gets quieter, as the mindfulness gets clearer, then at some point this becomes easy to see. At some point we see, "Oh, there was a sound and recognition of hearing, recognition car." And those are two different events.

Sometimes it's quite lovely to not have the recognition really operating. And the mind is just kind of very relaxed. And sometimes it's invaluable to have the recognition. Insight practice works partly by the support of recognizing the present moment. The recognition keeps us here. Stay here. Don't wander off.

Recognize what's happening. As we do this, we start recognizing better how we wander off. And then we have maybe more personal insight of what's driving that. Don't get lost in the personal insight. They're useful. But for the purpose of meditation, they're useful for the way of helping us not get caught in that world.

Stay present. Stay here. Let the recognition keep you in the present. And over time, as you calm and relax and soften, you'll start seeing the difference between recognition and appearances. Appearances and recognitions. Sense experience of all kinds and then knowing the recognition of what that is.

And being able to see that difference is invaluable. We'll continue with this tomorrow because this sets the stage for the further kinds of insight that are important for insight meditation. So, thank you.