

## Insight (9) Comprehension

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So, hello and welcome to this series on insight. And so today I'm talking about the fourth category of insight of the five different major categories. And so the first is purpose. Personal insight that's unique to each individual. The second is insight into a way of seeing clearly that in any given moment there are two things. There's experience we have and the knowing of it, the recognition of it.

And so the experience itself in the most fundamental basic way is the way it's experienced through the sense doors. And so that sensing and feeling and then knowing, recognizing what that is. So that begins to tease things apart. They're often entangled. And that tangle that we live in, generally sometimes called perception, is there's a third element that makes it really sticky or more a solid ball of knots, is the self who perceives, the self that's experiencing things.

So if I see an advertisement for the next greatest revolutionary technological device and it just kind of appears on maybe the screen, a commercial. And that just comes and goes. And it's actually moving, shifting, changing scenery as they talk about this new device with great ways. But I immediately kind of lock in to the device. And I'm the one who's hearing it. I would like to have it.

If I could have this device then I'll be the most tech advanced person on my block and a lot of people will admire me and it'll be really great. And so there's such a big knot of desires and ideas and ideas of self and the perceiver and what the perceiver wants that comes together almost simultaneous with seeing the device, hearing it being talked about. And so the idea that simply seeing, oh, there's a new tech device. I'm seeing it in front of me. It's shifting and changing angles. And it's my knowing of it.

There's hearing the voice of the person talking about it. There's hearing and there's knowing that I'm hearing. There's knowing there's sounds of speaking. The world gets simplified, can be simplified, so we're not caught up in the concepts, the ideas, the me that's part of it, where it all becomes one big tangle. And so to relax. So part of insight as we go deeper and deeper, kind of like we're going deeper in the *jhānas* or deeper in deep concentrated states, there's a stilling and a quieting and a simplifying of what the mind is about and what we're doing and caught up in.

A calmer state. And at some point we're not adding self and desires and wishes on top of our experience. Each thing is seen in its own pristine simplicity. There's seeing and the knowing of seeing. There's hearing, knowing of hearing. There is desire arises, there's knowing of desire.

There's a thought about how great this will be. There's knowing, there's a thought arising. And so now we're starting to feel and sense a freedom of allowing each thing to be in a simple state like that. That's not possible if it's all entangled together. As we start being that simple with the raw basic sense data coming in and just experiencing it, it starts feeling very satisfying to be present. There's a kind of simple satisfaction, joy.

There's an onward leading movement. Yes, this feels good. This is where now I'm connected. And it's a little bit some of the qualities of *samādhi* are coming into play as well, which makes it feel experientially like this is a good way to be. Now there's more freedom here. As it goes along, we start seeing that the third insight we talked about yesterday, the conditionality, that there's a sensation and that produces certain thoughts and maybe memories.

Memories arise and that produces sensations or tightening in the belly or softness in the heart area or something. We see the conditionality. We see that when there's a loud sound outside, something inside for a moment just kind of cringes. And I'm not the one who's trying to cringe. I can't say I do it. I might say it's happening to me or it's happening with me.

But I don't have to even say that. I see the conditionality, a loud sound, and muscles cringe, muscles tighten. And then they relax. It's cause and effect. It's condition and the effect of the condition, what arises from it. And so we start seeing there's just so much of this conditionality, so much that things that occur that you can't really take credit for it.

You can't really say it's me doing it. This defines me because it's just what happens. There's a breeze against the cheek. And knowing the sensation, those are not me in some kind of usual sense of my personality, who people think I am or who I think I am. I didn't make that

happen. That sensation's against my cheek.

It's just the conditions arise and there's a sensation in the cheek. And maybe there's a sense of pleasure with it. And pleasure is just pleasure arising. Then there might be desire for more pleasure. But that initial arising of that desire for more happened kind of not in any kind of way I can identify with it. It just seems like it's a desire.

It floats up. And it's almost like you say it's not me. It's just a desire. And then it floats away. If all those things are kind of happening in a tangle, then it's me, wonderful me having the pleasure of the breeze against my cheek. It's me that wants to have more.

Of course it's me because it's all happening together in this big bundle of things. And I don't see the genesis of it, where it arises out of something which is not my will. I have a desire without wanting the desire. It just seems to float up. So when the mind is very quiet and still, in meditation, it gets to be a fascinating world. When we don't identify with things, we're kind of seeing the simplicity of different things arising, the conditionality of it.

And one of the things that begins to happen is the fourth kind of insight, which is usually translated into English as comprehension. And maybe we can call it understanding. And this is somewhat conceptual. People usually don't think of it this way. But sometimes people are actually coming to a conclusion. And that is to start seeing that there's so many simple things that are occurring that are not being tied together, sewn together, the Buddha talked about, sewn together into some big bundle of things.

And all these things are occurring because of conditions, and there's no self in it. There's no self-assertion, no sense of self in it. It's just like the breeze against the cheek. I didn't make that happen. I don't identify with that sensation there. Those sensations define who I am.

In a sense, they have nothing to do with me except they're happening on my cheek. I don't have to add anything, build anything. I build a story that I'm the best I have the best sensations. That's the best breeze that anyone's ever had, ever. I should really get the Guinness World Book of Records to have such a wonderful sensation of a breeze against my cheek. All that selfing doesn't go on.

And so to start seeing that all this stuff rises and passes, comes and goes, without self. And then some people now understand, "Wow, there's a lot of experience here that I've identified with before, and a lot of this stuff is just happening without a sense of self, without a self. It's just kind of phenomena arising. It's a natural phenomena that arises because conditions are such that this comes together to make this arise." And some people, because the mind

is pretty still, remember there's some degree of samādhi and concentration, it feels good, it feels true, and people start understanding, "Wow, there's a lot less self going on here than I realized." And some people say, "It's all not self. It's all just conditions of things coming together, causes and conditions." And some people say that there is no self. They'll even say sometimes, "There is no will," because will itself is just any kind of dissonance. It's not a decisiveness decision. It's just something that arises from other conditions. There's no inherent self who's thinking it and planning it. Because in a very deep state, you don't see that. You see this cause and conditions and effect, or conditions and what it brings forth.

And so there's this comprehension, and people will say, "Wow, there's no self here at all, and there's no self anywhere." And, "What a great thing, and there's freedom here." And so people tend to, this is comprehension. This is a little bit like, "Wow, this is great. I want to tell everyone about it." And, "This means there wasn't a self in the past. There wasn't a self in the future. Wow." And corollary, together with this, there's no self in this experience, is the clear feeling that everything is arising and passing. Everything is impermanent. Nothing lasts.

And if I just sit back and let the river flow, all I see is change. And so then people come to make it. So part of this stage of comprehension is to make categorical statements, to make broad categorical understandings. Wow, everything is impermanent. Everything is changing. The basic kind of characteristic of reality is change and impermanence and not-self.

And this is true everywhere in the world, for every person, all circumstances. So there's a kind of excitement, or kind of becoming philosophers, kind of conceptualizing and thinking how wonderful this is. And for some people, because the mind is so clear and settled, they almost feel like, "Now I'm enlightened. Now I understand everything, and this is fantastic." It's a divine revelation for some people to come into this state. But it's not the end of the path.

And it's a little bit of a detour in the sense that if people get caught up in the conceptual aspects, the generalization of it, "Now I know something true about reality itself." It becomes kind of a move into metaphysical philosophy, to make these broad claims, "Now I have insight into the very nature of reality." And so it can be exciting. There's some truth to what we're experiencing and even thinking. So it's important not to think it's just pure delusion. But the idea is to keep practicing.

This is the beginning of the practice opening up in new and important ways. So the stage of comprehension, the stage of understanding something, is more of a general understanding, conceptual understanding, that's distinct from a deeper direct experience, a deeper non-

conceptual experience. And that's the most important insight of the insight meditation. And that'll be what I'll talk about tomorrow. So thank you very much.