

## Samadhi (23) Supported by Pleasure and Well-Being

**Gil Fronsdal**

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So, welcome to the next talk on *samādhi*. But before I do it, I would like to repeat the announcement I made on Monday that IMC, partly inspired from what this YouTube community did three years ago—raising money for the refugees from Ukraine—IMC is inspired to do this again for children in areas of great crisis who are facing famine and illness, injuries of all kinds. The way we want to do this is by making donations to Save the Children, a wonderful organization that does wonderful work in the world for children for many decades now. So we started this week the fundraising drive, and we're about a third of the way to what I'm hoping is the inspiring goal for us. If you're interested in joining together and participating in the kind of collective effectiveness of a community doing something with each other, you can go on the IMC website. The homepage has a couple of places where you can get to the Save the Children donation page that we're using, which is specific to IMC.

There's a red banner on top of the website, and there's a What's New section of the homepage. There's a notice as well. So thank you. And in talking about that, the gathering together of a community and the power that that can bring—so in meditation, the gathering together of ourselves into a unified whole, entering into a state of being that's called *samādhi*, gives the individual a certain power that can then be used for good in the world. It brings the power of love, the power of peace, the power of being settled, and the power of being present in a very full and embodied, complete way.

This gathering ourselves together of *samādhi* is supported by pleasure. Supported by the pleasantness or the happiness that can come from meditation. There are times when meditation teachers have de-emphasized the joy and the happiness that come with meditation. One form of that de-emphasizing is by telling the practitioner, when they feel some joy or

happiness or pleasure in the meditation, that now there's one more thing for you to let go of. But I think I would say it differently. It's one more thing not to be attached to, but don't exactly let go of it.

Stay with it. Maintain it. It's one more thing to open your hands, to hold kindly and supportingly so that something there can grow and develop. It's almost like not clinging, not being attached, not being resistant, not being afraid of the pleasure and joy that comes in meditation, is almost like we're opening up, or there's an opening up like a flower that opens when it's going well. We don't say the flower is letting go of itself when it opens, but it is no longer bunched up and tight.

The reference to flower works well for some people who talk about the beauty that can arise in *samādhi*. That's sometimes a more useful reference point than pleasure or joy, where some of us can have a complicated relationship to that. Maybe we have a certain standard of what joy means or what pleasure means that gets in the way of us appreciating what's here. Or we appropriate the joy. We hold on to the joy or the pleasure like we want more. The beauty of meditation—it's difficult to appropriate that.

It's difficult to grab onto beauty because it's kind of amorphous. It's kind of like it's not something that can be destroyed the more we cling. It's almost like an open hand disappears if we grab onto the hand to hold on to. We like that open hand so much we don't want to share it with anyone and we make a fist. Well, the open hand is lost in that process. So beauty can be that way.

Some people can feel the beauty of maybe of breathing. There's something very sweet that can start happening. Maybe the word sweetness is another way of talking about these positive, positive feelings that can start coming from meditation. It's okay to evoke it slightly, not to make it a big project, but a classic instruction is to have a little half smile on your lips. Sometimes that brings kind of pleasure sensations around the lips, around the cheeks or the face. Sometimes it begins to shift some whole inner feeling that we have.

It kind of reconditions or recontextualizes something that maybe creates an alternative to how we might be shaped and affecting our body or heart or mind by doing with our mind something that's the opposite of a smile. Sometimes it can be an automatic pilot with resentments or anger or aversions or finding what's wrong or being critical, self-critical. It can be so common and so frequent we do this that it just seems like the natural state or way of being. We don't even know that we're doing it. But it has a very strong conditioning effect influence on our whole being. Sometimes it's nice to do, within reason, a slight kind of re-

orientation towards what is good right now, what is pleasant right now, what is nice right now.

Some people find it useful when they sit down to make sure that they're sitting in a place where no one's going to disturb them, where they feel safe. Maybe even look around in the room, the door's closed and no one's there and there's no monsters under the bed. Actually feel the safety of it. Some people feel very little safety in their life. So that the fear doesn't get the upper hand, it might be good to actually take time to feel the sense of safety that might be there. Some people take time to feel gratitude at the beginning of a sitting.

Being reminded of things that we're grateful for is an antidote to some of the other non-grateful ways in which we're operating. Some people like to evoke a sense of contentment. Contentment is in the family of well-being, happiness. So to find the ways in which you feel content in your life as opposed to discontented. To kind of bring into the meditation some kind of appropriate way, not forcing it, not Pollyannishing it, but some appropriate way to start kind of evoking and bringing forth and being connected to a well-being, a pleasure in the pleasant present moment.

For some people, that pleasure that can come from meditation comes from starting to be absorbed in the focus of meditation, such as the breathing. Just staying continuously with the breathing means that we're no longer concentrating, absorbed in thoughts and feelings which create the opposite for us, opposite of joy, opposite of well-being. When those begin quieting down and settling, and they're not fragmenting us or irritating the heart or the mind, there's a natural sense of being more peaceful, more settled, more calm. As we kind of stay continuous with the breath, there's something that gets evoked that is clearly a feeling of pleasure or joy that is not in the breath itself, but it is in the way the mind is getting organized and absorbed with the focus of attention.

It turns out that there's something about the brain that when it gets really peacefully absorbed or attentive, gathered around a thing, that it seems to release—maybe it's releasing hormones or something. It tends to release something. Something begins to be evoked and pleasure and joy that comes. Maybe partly because with that kind of absorption, there's no longer a feeling of unsafety. There's no longer a feeling of discontent. There's no longer a feeling of being oppressed or being put upon or no longer being reminded of all the responsibilities we have to accomplish, all the plans we have to do, the to-do list.

All these things that make us fragmented and cut up and tense begin kind of falling away. Just that feels good. There's the pleasure of relief. Ah, just here in a simple way. Of course,

it's not like this direct kind of highway to pleasure, but it's helpful to realize that pleasure, well-being, contentment, gratitude can coexist with the opposite. It starts kind of creating a different atmosphere, a different influence on ourselves when we kind of begin centering ourselves on the more subtle sense of well-being.

Again, not to push everything else away, but to appreciate that we will take care of the world, ourselves, better when we're really centered and calm and peaceful in a way that *samādhi* creates. *Samādhi* creates a kind of capacity and power and ability to meet the world in a full and open way and direct way so that we can care for the world out of, from the place that's the best in us. We don't want to care for the world from how we are aversive or angry or greedy or afraid. There is possible to care for the world, care for ourselves from beauty, from peacefulness, from love. That's the kind of wonderfulness of *samādhi*, that as it grows, we have the ability to respond to the world in that way.

So, thank you very much, and I hope that on this day that you'll smile more. I'd like to offer a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but a little bit serious, that if you find a nice way to smile twice as much today as you normally would, probably you'll have half as much feeling that you have problems in your life. May you smile, and may you share your smile and your sparkle with those around you. Thank you.