

Samādhi (25) Pleasure for Samādhi

February 14, 2025

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Calm, ease, breath, freedom, wholesome, health, concentration, mind, access concentration, liberation, suffering, compassion, hedonism

Gil Fronsdal

Hello and welcome to Friday, the fifth day of looking at the pleasure of *samādhi*.

Entering into *samādhi* is deeply supported by being attuned to pleasure, the pleasure that comes with meditation. It is not the pleasure that we can get by having wonderfully soft clothes to meditate in or the most perfect sensuous cushion to sit on. It is the kind of pleasure that begins to radiate or flow from the inside out. We start being sensitive and attuned to the very simple pleasure of being calmer. It might feel relative in that we are a little bit calmer than we were, and that feels good. There is a certain pleasure in that goodness. It may be a pleasure in the relief and hope that it provides.

We might feel a little more at ease within ourselves. We are more at ease with what is difficult. That sense of a bit more ease is pleasant. A feeling of stability or calm after being agitated may begin spreading through the body. We feel like we are not going anywhere and are settling down more and more into ourselves.

There could be some joy or delight that begins. There may be a sense of ease in breathing. One of the great and meaningful experiences for me when I was quite young and beginning to meditate was discovering a breathing that was free. It had its own ease. Breathing was breathing itself. Sitting quietly in meditation or having tea, I felt complete freedom in the breath to breathe itself.

I had never imagined that experience before. I thought my breathing was relatively free, that I wasn't involved in it, but there were so many ways in which my mental and emotional life was somehow involved with the breathing. It was such a great pleasure to have all that settled enough so that the physical breathing was just breathing itself.

Many kinds of pleasures come with meditation. Some feel like they are healthy, beneficial, and supportive because they feel wholesome. They feel like they are good for us to feel. We don't tighten up or bear down on it. We don't try to pump it up and be selective like this is the one. This is the pleasure to really focus on and build up.

Instead, we trust it. We absorb it and let it register in our system. I find a very subtle, pervasive joy useful. It can be felt throughout the body. Becoming more and more embodied and present in our whole body is phenomenally useful for *samādhi*.

When people try to concentrate only as a mental exercise, they can get a certain kind of concentration. There can be a kind of satisfaction from this. In the bigger picture, this is not so useful. It is not part of a movement towards becoming more peaceful, settled, or free. There is something about opening up and settling into the full body and feeling the goodness and pleasure of that. There is pleasure in breathing. There are all kinds of pleasures. Each person will find their own.

The mind is more interested in being present, if it's enjoying it, and if there is pleasure. We can certainly develop strong mindfulness in the present moment with things that are unpleasant when we have to. That is valuable to do. It just makes it easier and nicer for the mind to want to be there, and to partner with the body. It partners with meditation. The mind begins to gather and becomes really interested. "Yes, this is good. This is where I want to be."

Some people might complain that this is hedonistic. It can be if the sole purpose is to just savor or indulge in the pleasures of meditation. It is not meant to be that. It is meant to be able to dip into, or drop into, a state of health, well-being, or harmony. That is the pleasure that comes when we're at ease in a deep, peaceful way. This pleasure arises when we're not in conflict, agitated, chasing things, or running away from things. This comes when we are not judging and making commentary about everything happening.

The whole psychophysical system begins to come into a healthy place. I think of *samādhi* as health. It feels good. It feels pleasant. There is a pleasure to it. It is leading us in the direction of becoming good people. We are moving in the direction of becoming kinder, more compassionate, caring, and intelligent. We are more attuned people. We are attuned to the world, to ourselves, and others. *Samādhi* provides a tremendous amount of benefit for how we will walk in the world if we allow a shift in our stance or attitude.

In Buddhism, *samādhi* is the means for liberation – to become free. To become free of suffering is one of the great goals of a human life. It is a great goal to support other people. It is a great goal of compassion. To know and discover for oneself how thoroughly and fully we can become free of suffering makes it possible for us to be attuned or attentive to how that's a possibility for other people.

We are not overly influenced by their behavior or the quirkiness of people. We see them with different eyes. We see them with deep love and care, knowing what is possible in them. We know there is goodness and beauty within them that can be grown and become full. We feel a kinship with people, and a deep kinship with *samādhi* because the strong lines of separation between us have softened.

So, it is not hedonistic. It is going along and supporting pleasure. This is a piece of the puzzle that needs to be understood to begin finding a way to settle in and get concentrated in a *samādhi*-type way. We will keep building on this as we go along. Hopefully, spending this week exploring pleasure will support us as we go further. At some point, pleasure becomes a pervasive feeling of joy. It becomes a pervasive feeling of very deep, peaceful happiness. The pleasure shifts and changes as we go along.

The next step, which we'll talk about next week, is the final preparation for dipping into what is most clearly called *samādhi*. In the teachings of the Buddha, to really become absorbed into *samādhi* there is something that is sometimes called access concentration. This pleasure supports a kind of attention, a kind of awareness that now begins to become in the groove of the present moment. That will be the topic for next week.

So, thank you very much, and I look forward to coming here on Monday to continue.