

Samādhi (28) Well-Being and Being Practiced

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Hello and welcome to this series on *samādhi*. I am delighted to be able to share this topic in this slower way. We have been exploring this topic for a few weeks.

As we delve deeper into the topic, always remember that it is good to start, or restart as a beginner, whenever necessary. Sometimes the art of meditation is knowing when it is the right time for us to practice, and to apply ourselves in some way, and when it is time not to apply ourselves. Know when it is time to be more receptive and allowing. Rather than doing the practice, know when we are being practiced. Rather than walking through the airport here in San Francisco, we are now stepping onto the conveyor belt that carries us horizontally through the corridors. We can stop walking. We are carried along.

The nature of our practice changes over time. One of the nice things about practicing regularly for some time is that at some point, some of the familiar ways in which we practice bring the good feeling of a homecoming. I am back in a place where I am comfortable. That begins to open up a sense of a deeper comfort. There is a feeling that the practice is doing me, meditation is doing me, rather than being responsible for every single little thing that happens in meditation.

We develop a meditator's body. This is such a familiar, comfortable, and nice place to be that we feel like it is doing us in some way. We can settle into it, let go, and relax. That takes a while to develop. It is really worthwhile finding it. Slowly over time, the body begins to adjust, and changes, and we find our way.

At some point, as we practice, there comes a phase of practice before entering into this state of being called *samādhi*. We are beginning to approach *samādhi*. Classically, this is called access concentration, or access *samādhi*. I like to call it the approaching *samādhi* stage.

Last summer, I went back to my hometown in Bergen, Norway. As I was being driven from the airport back into the middle of town, where it's such a home place for me, something very cozy began happening in my body. It felt very contented and satisfied. It was like just being here was enough. As I got closer and closer, something began to open inside. Just approaching the center of town, something began feeling confident, comforted, at home, and safe.

In the days that I was there, I would come and go out of the center of town. Each time I came towards the center, I remember having this feeling. Visiting the places where I had lived growing up, oh, it felt so good to even approach it, to be there.

So, this approach, where we begin feeling that we're not the only ones practicing. Our body is practicing. We are being practiced. There's a sense of a state of being that is a bit suffusive and broad. It feels like it's inclusive. It is unifying. It is holding everything of who we are in its broad kind of bubble of pleasure, well-being, delight, confidence, calm, contentment, peace, and spaciousness. I offer all these words not because any single one in them is right, but rather that this approach, this feeling of rightness, this feeling that it is really good to be here, and I don't have to keep practicing. I am being practiced. It's almost like a state of being where just to be alive is enough.

The idea that we are the ones in the control tower, engineering the practice, and making the practice work begins shifting. Something else now begins to be suffusive and pervasive through parts of the body. It may be the torso, the front of the chest, down the arms, in the face or hands, or someplace in the body that starts to kind

of vibrate. They may begin to glow or feel more open. Parts of the body, in a very contented way, just feel like they disappear.

It is like there is no resistance. There is almost nothing there because it just becomes so peaceful in that part of the body. It may feel like a very nice pleasure. Some of it will feel like a joy, a delight that begins welling up. Some of it can feel like a very contented, satisfying feeling of happiness that we are just here.

I spoke about this rhythm of applying attention and staying and resting, and kind of settling again and resting. It might be like petting the cat, and the cat purrs. It is very nice and comforting for the cat petter. We are just doing this nice thing. We are not doing it self-consciously. We are not trying to provide ourselves or the cat with the highest peak of human ecstasy. It is just a contented feeling, happy to be there.

In the same way, we are applying attention to the middle of this sense of well-being with breathing. The breathing is clear enough. It can be at the center of it. It begins to feel like this wider state is somehow the context of attention, the context of awareness. Awareness is continuous with the state of being, as opposed to awareness being created and engineered from the mind. Awareness becomes a suffusive or diffusive feeling through the body.

If you don't want to call it awareness, that's okay. It is like the suffusive feeling of well-being now pervades, influences, or shapes how we are aware. It informs us how we are mindful or know the experience. We know it now in an easy, relaxed way. We are staying there.

The art of meditation, of *samādhi*, is to know how much effort to make. When the mind is distracted and spinning out, doing a relaxed, open, peaceful, calm awareness is not going to work. The effort or amount we want to make with our practice is measured by the question, "If we don't make this effort, is the alternative worse?" We have to do just enough so that it is better than the alternative. We do just enough to be present in an easy way. Then slowly things settle in, and we develop further and further.

As we get into this approach phase of practice, the amount of effort we must make diminishes. There is less self. There is less idea of attainment. It is almost like it doesn't matter if we go into *samādhi*. It doesn't matter how concentrated we get. It doesn't matter if we attain anything. What matters is that it just feels so good to lie there and be there in this contented way.

Sometimes when I take a nap in the afternoon, I feel refreshed after a 15-or 20-minute nap. Sometimes I have no desire to get up from the bed. I feel so contented and happy to just be there, breathing. Being alive feels like it's enough. It is good. There is no idea of attaining anything or proving myself. There is no thought of having something to show for myself. There is no idea of non-attainment or getting away from anything. I am just there.

This approach stage of *samādhi* is when there starts to be a shift between us practicing and being practiced. There is a shift from us creating the focus and the feeling of awareness of the focus, or the presence that we have, becoming easy to do. It is like there is some momentum happening. Something is holding and supporting us. Practice feels more like it is being done from the inside out. We're being carried and supported now. Something is gathering, unifying, and holding it all.

I apologize for offering all these words, but I do that because no single word will work for everyone. Some of this is very personal. I am trying to offer you a little bit of the map so that if there are better words for you to describe how it is, then please go along with that.

We are now at the approach phase. Even if you don't exactly follow or understand this teaching, may it bring you delight and confidence that this practice is good. It is good to be part of it, knowing that there is a wonderful map, a wonderful territory, and a wonderful life to move into and be a part of in this meditation practice.

Thank you.