

Friday sit with instructions

Gil Fronsdal

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The way I read the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is that it provides a map, provides an unfolding to a greater and greater intimacy, kind of leading us into the heart of who we are. And it begins very broadly. It begins kind of with a whole establishing, sitting down, erect with a body or intentional with a posture. And knowing something that's kind of ever-present, the breathing, something that represents almost life itself, breathing, and then sensing and feeling the whole body, the whole of it, and calming the whole body, the tense body. And then there's the, and this is like going on a road trip here in California and maybe across the Central Valley. At some point you see the mountains, but it's just mountains.

Maybe it's not even a super clear day and you just see the outlines and the grayness of the big massive mountains. And then we get closer and we know not just a general, but we know the posture of the body, posture it's in. We're getting closer to the mountains and we see some of the different shapes of the mountains, the hills, the valleys. And then we get closer to the mountains. Then we see the trees, the rivers. See more detail.

We get closer to ourselves and we see, feel, know, the particular parts of the body that are engaged in activities, the arm moving, the mouth chewing. And we're getting closer, seeing more clearly, not the general whole, but the details. And we get closer into the mountains. Now we don't see the mountains as mountains exactly, but now we see the details of the trees, the different kinds of trees, the colors of the rocks, the outcrops, some of the steep valleys. Maybe we don't even see the whole mountain range anymore. And so we're getting closer and we feel the parts of the body.

We feel the belly, maybe moving as we breathe, or the rib cage, or the air going in and out through the nostrils and the back of the throat. Or maybe we're aware of a subtle vibrating pleasure in the back of the upper arms, through in the face. Maybe we're aware of where

there's particular points of tension tightening in the body, and rather than relaxing, calming the whole body, it's enough just to relax that place of tension, if it's easy. But now we're kind of entered into the mountains, we've entered into our experience. No longer the general, broad category of body, of being here. In the early part of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, there's still a general sense of me, I.

I know I'm breathing in. I know I'm breathing out. But the I kind of falls away as we get into the specifics, get closer. And then we come deeper into the mountains. Maybe we get out of the car. Just like how I did recently, got out of my car and felt like I was walking through a little forest path.

Forest bathing. Not only is I seeing the different trees and the ground and the path, different sounds, birds. But it's also feeling and sensing the vibrating hum of forest bathing. And then coming to a small lake, there's no mountain anymore. There's just that lake and this edge of the lake, the trees, the idea, the sense, the vision, the seeing a mountain has disappeared. It's a warm day and going for a dip.

And now it's the water and all the different sensations and tingling of coolness, refreshment, sense of the water and parts of the body floating in the water. Parts of the body feel the warmth of the air, and parts of the body feel the coolness. Parts of the body feels the lightness of being held up by the water. We kind of enter into. And so when we get to this part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* that has to do with the elements, these properties of sensations, now the mind is quiet enough, still enough, it's not generalizing. It's not thinking about mountains.

It's not even if I'm floating peacefully in the lake, I might close my eyes and the lake idea disappears. It's just the sensations of water and coolness and warmth. Just the peacefulness. I open my eyes. It's just the vastness of the blue sky. So there is a kind of entering into or settling down or dipping into the body's capacity to sense, to feel.

Where for practical reasons the idea of a body disappears, for a practical reason the idea of me disappears, and it's just those who are floating in this sensations, who are connecting to the sensations, feeling the sensations. Allowing that kind of magic or natural wonder of the meeting point of senses, sensations and sensing, the meeting point of the world and you right there in every sensation. And this allows the sensing, the knowing to be more direct, more clear, where we sense and know more and more without the filter of ideas, mountain, body, rolling hills and canyons. Even the idea of trees, lake, even the ideas of belly are no longer needed. They're an added overlay. And it's just the sensations by themselves and the knowing of them, the sensing of them.

And as there are more less and less concepts and ideas, knowing and sensing can have greater clarity, greater simplicity, like there is a vast blue sky all around. Even the idea of breathing disappears, even the idea that breathing is supposed to be a certain way, even the idea of right and wrong disappear. Just sensations. Some comfortable, some not comfortable. Still just sensations. And a sensitivity to it all that opens to a continuity flowing along with our experience as if clarity is gently stroking, flowing, riding on the sensations.

The sensations. And if you can feel the nourishment, the forest bathing of sensation bathing, the nourishment or wholesomeness, the goodness that's here in the simplicity of simple awareness. Now there to be a soaking in of that goodness as a way of supporting you to sense more closely. To go up into thinking, to go into thinking and ideas and concepts right and wrong, activates the mind. It's kind of like going uphill and working. Maybe you can feel the release letting go of work, getting letting go of activation by dipping into sensation bathing.

Hmm. Maybe sensation bathing with the sensations of breathing. If there are strong emotions, pleasant or unpleasant feelings, see what it's like to feel it just as sensations, entering into the emotion by entering into the sensations in the body. No before, no after, no right, no wrong, relaxing any specific tensions in the mind, in the head that interfere with a simple clarity of mind. And if tensions don't go away, enter into the tensions to sense, feel tightness and tension, just in themselves, no right and wrong, no shoulds and shouldn'ts, just sensations. In this process of becoming simpler, going deeper into, it's possible to go and do sensation bathing within particular sensations, almost as if we become the sensations.

Where being receptive and to sensations is too much. Just be with the sensations. Being directed towards the sensations is too much. Being somehow apart from the sensation is too much. Being in the sensation is too much. Just right there, where sensing and sensations occur, arise, show themselves.

Each time that you take the trip to the mountains, you should notice where on the road you are. Are you where you need to see the mountain in the distance, the whole range so you know what direction to go? Are you starting to be in the mountain? The road is curvy and up and down. Are you so deep in the mountains you're out of your car and just with the sensations, forest bathing, just the lake floating, or all the steps along the way. So when you sit down to practice, when you're practicing, check out where you are.

Don't be ahead of yourself. Sometimes we start at the beginning, over and over again, all the earlier steps in this process. We actually spend more time there. Yes. Expect to spend more time there. Just breathing, coming back to breathing, sensing, feeling, relaxing.

And then as we move along, then we adjust. And at some point, the reviewing of body parts means at some point there's a remembering or it occurs to you now, you're ready to orient yourself to gaze upon the details of the experience, not the generalizations, not the why-broad concepts. Now you're ready to gaze upon, to view, to orient yourself to the simplicity of sensations. And along the way, then time to time, you might sense, because of the deeper sensitivity, where the path and the forest is, to where the next step goes, to where the goodness is, or where it seems that this is what's next to know and sense. Here is what's calling awareness. Now here is where awareness wants to go to feel and sense.

This is the way to sense, this is the way to know, where there's freedom in the knowing, or ease in the knowing and the sensing. And so this process of deepening and becoming more intimate has these different phases in it. When it's most intimate, you might actually sense and feel the onward leading nature of the sensation bathing, being absorbed in the bathing of sensations, and maybe even dipping into particular sensations themselves as if individual sensations are their own. Okay. Pool of water you can dip into to sense and feel how sensations within themselves are known and felt moment by moment. Here, always being ready to begin over again at the beginning.

If you find the right place on the path to the mountain, if you find where you actually are, maybe you can also find out to enjoy the practice at that stage of the path. There's a kind of a joy at every and each stage of this path. I hope you enjoy this day.