

## Wednesday Dharma talk, week 3

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**September 17, 2025**

**Keywords:** satta bojjhaṅgā, samādhi, sati, yoniso manasikāra, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, passaddhi, dhammā, equanimity, rapture, mindfulness

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So then we come to the seven factors of awakening. And it's sometimes the word *aṅga* means limb, seven limbs. And I'm very fond of translating this word body as awakening because it's partly a metaphor for all these rich metaphors they have in the suttas that somehow capture something or convey something that maybe occasionally we can feel or sense what they're pointing to. And in feeling and sensing and imagining what they're pointing to, we can maybe be more prone to grow into it. So awakening to be awake is really a marvelous thing. Ordinary wakefulness.

And I hope that all of you have, at least at once in your lifetime, awoken from sleep, from a nap, in a way that you felt really refreshed and very content. And there was something special about the clarity of attention that had no drowsiness, no tiredness in it. Maybe there was a kind of clarity of awareness, clarity of energy, clarity of... bodyfulness that it's hard to point to. Like if you want to, like someone says, you know, being awake is really good. Now cling to it. I mean, what are you going to grab?

Look around and, you know, it's like almost as difficult as seeing the clear air when there's no smog and being able to see really clear. Let's grab some of that clarity and take it home with me. I'll just put it in my pocket and use it later. It doesn't exist in a way that you can appropriate or point to. Clarity is not exactly a thing. In some ways, it's almost like an absence of things, but that doesn't quite say it either, because it's such a rich, phenomenal, wonderful thing to wake up feeling really clear.

And it's not just clear in your eyesight, but it feels like the mind is clear. Maybe the heart becomes clear sometimes. And so to be awake is maybe a very ordinary thing. A very ordinary thing is being used as a metaphor for it. Waking up refreshed. And so I've, now that I'm getting to be into elderhood, it's, I love my naps.

And it turned out that they're quite dangerous in a certain way. I'll take a 10, 15 minute nap and I wake up. And in fact, I feel quite clear, I feel refreshed, I feel very content, very tranquil. But I don't have any desires. I have no aversions for a few little while. Nothing that I feel like I want to do or need to do.

So I do have a long to-do list. But no, what's dangerous about these naps is I'll just lay looking at the ceiling. Who would have thought the ceiling was so interesting? No. But it's not the ceiling, which is interesting. It's just like everything is good in the world for a few moments.

And I feel complete. I feel calm. And there's a clarity of awareness. I'm certainly awake. Certainly I'm aware. There's no question.

But the awareness is interpenetrates that clarity. The awareness is kind of, I can't really distinguish it from the room. Then what I'm in, it's kind of like a new... space, almost, the kind of clarity of awareness that's there. And in that clarity, I see details of things. We have this, I don't know what to call it, but the stucco and the ceiling is not flat.

There's all these different shapes and little valleys and hills and stuff to look at. Or sometimes, if I'm really lucky, the sun is coming in. And I get to see all the little dust particles floating in the sunlight. And it's kind of crystal clear. Like, oh, look at those little... I see the details.

So what's going on? And I would say that my body is not fatigued. There's no sense of being tired. No sense that I need to rest. But on the other hand, my body is not... so energized that I feel restless or anxious, like ready to do something. It just, it's almost like the good energy is invisible.

Because I don't see the tiredness and I don't see the activation. But it's some clearly have good vitality laying there in bed. And I feel happy. There's a kind of a joy. Everything kind of tingles and feels good. And the walls are so special. The dust. I feel so lucky to have content like this nice way. And I'm very, very peaceful. This kind of a peace, a serenity.

Do I have *samādhi*? Conventionally, maybe we wouldn't say, but I feel completely whole. Like all my faculties are there together in some simple, ordinary way. I feel very present. I'm not really thinking about other things, but except just being there and looking at the dust to dance. And I'm a quantumist, maybe a little bit to the degree of passivity.

My friend says before I take my nap, two things when you get up. I'm going to leave you on your kitchen table, your favorite dessert. And also, our toilet is particularly dirty. And would you please clean it? Well, I'm so content that, you know, it just doesn't occur to me to get up to do any of it. But there's an equanimity, the desire for, I don't really have a desire that that's okay, that there's very delicious things. Dessert, but I'm not, it doesn't activate me, doesn't

get me going. And the idea that in a few minutes I have to clean the toilet, there's no aversion, nothing. So it doesn't do anything. It's like, oh no, I know I have to do it, but it's just, there's this equanimity, this balance, this non-reactivity, it doesn't activate something, and it feels very good to be this way.

So... This is my attempt to explain why I like taking naps and why they're dangerous, because I don't get up. I was told that they tried to have or did have a law in Thailand that monks were not supposed to teach lay people contentment because they were worried that that would be bad for the economy. So the seven factors of awakening. They are these really beautiful states, qualities, activities of the mind and heart that sometimes are considered to be the kind of crown jewels of the Dharma. And there's nowhere to find them except in yourself.

They are natural capacities we all have, and as natural capacities they can grow, they can develop, they can appear for us. And the practice of mindfulness is intimately integrated, integrally connected to the seven factors of awakening. So there's something about the practice of steady, ongoing mindfulness, where we get focused and concentrated here in the present moment, really intimate and present, where preoccupations, stories, obscurations that self-ing puts in place for us, where... There's no resistance in the body to the energies of the body, to what's here. That things open up and begin to flow and begin to move and awaken within us. These wonderful energies are wonderful capacities.

And that there's something about the release, the letting go, the allowing, deep allowing of deep kind of energies within to begin flowing. That begins bringing to the forefront these seven factors of awakening. The Buddha, a number of places, taught them side by side with the teachings on the five hindrances, almost as if the hindrances is what hinders the seven factors of awakening. Once the hindrances, those covering stories would cover over. When they are no longer there, then the... the light shines for the plant to grow.

I found a metaphor for the Seven Factors of Awakening that I don't know where it's from, but it likens the Seven Factors of Awakening to a tree. Again, I told you about all these plant organic metaphors for things that grow and develop. So mindfulness is like the roots. Investigation is like examining the soil. Okay. I guess the roots kind of looking and finding minerals and nutrients, maybe. Energy is like the sap that flows.

Rapture is like the flowers of the tree. Tranquility is like the steady growth of the tree. Concentration is like the straight trunk. And equanimity is like the balanced mature tree, standing there still in the wind and snow and whatever. So I don't know if these met these metaphors or how well they work, but I just liked it that they someone was trying to connect it to a tree something in this natural reference point for something is natural within us.

The Buddha connected the seven factors of awakening to the *yoniso manasikāra* and he had this to say whatever states there are that are wholesome, partaking of the wholesome, pertaining to the wholesome, they are all rooted in *yoniso manasikāra*. The Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation I have here, all rooted in careful attention, all rooted in attention from the source of life, attention from profound attention, profound knowing, profound mentality... And kind of, as I said, kind of going off from what Bhikkhu Bodhi says, careful attention. I like to think of it as caring attention. So whatever states there are that are wholesome are all rooted in this different operating system, deep within us.

So here we have, again, a biological, organic metaphor. Okay. For all the things which are beneficial, healthy, wholesome, that we can grow psychologically and emotionally in us ourselves. It comes from this place of the womb within. So they are rooted in careful attention, converge upon careful attention, and careful attention is declared to be the chief among them. So it's the lines of influence are different ways. This attention from the *yoniso*, everything that's healthy within us, nurturing, wholesome, skillful, is said to arise from this place.

And all that's wholesome, in turn, converge on that place, bring us back into that place within. And of all wholesome states, which there are many, here it says, the state, the place, the... activity of *yoniso manasikāra* is chief, is the greatest of all of them. Maybe because it's the source, the profound source of everything else. And then it goes on, when someone is accomplished in careful attention, accomplished in a profound knowing, it is expected that they will grow and cultivate the seven factors of awakening. So here we have this idea that it's, we're connecting to something, awakening something within us, this profound operating system, learning to be rooted there, learning to sense it, feel it, know it, learning how it's different than the surface mind, the surface chatter, the surface arguments and plans and concerns we have.

Different than the kind of way the mind that's caught up in fantasy and past and future. It's still connected to a capacity to think, but it comes from this much deeper place inside. So we learn to see that difference and appreciate that difference so we keep coming to this deeper place. So these seven, the first is *sati*, you know, as you know, usually translated as mindfulness. And in this *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the task is to... these four, what's usually traditionally called the four foundations of mindfulness. The word for foundation, maybe it's a little, you know, it's a little awkward to understand what that means.

One possibility is it means basis. The basis from which it's the station from which, the ground from which awareness flows. So the... awareness based on the body, awareness stationed in

the body, awareness rooted in the body, so that there's a clear sense of embodied awareness. There's awareness rooted and stationed in sensations. A big overlap between the body and sensations, but here there's a distinction being made. Then there's awareness that kind of, they're all kind of awareness which is quite... It has a very natural feeling to it.

Whatever it is, whatever this *sati* is, it's something we enter into, we abide in. Mindfulness is never... Buddha never tells people to do mindfulness, do *sati*. *Sati* is never a verb. The verbs are things like knowing, sensing, relaxing, observing. These different things that are the basis by which a different kind of awareness, the kind of awareness that maybe comes alive with awakening, a kind of awareness which is almost a precursor, almost like feels like it's the preparation or it's a foretaste of what it might be like to be awake.

So as practice develops, at some point... *Sati* arises, *sati* becomes strong. We're not doing *sati*. We're allowing, making the room for *sati* to operate, allowing room for *sati* to be established, be present, so we can abide in it, rest in it. And then as mindfulness, this awareness gets stronger, one of the characteristics of it is there comes increasing clarity. Right? And it's the clarity that can start making distinctions, like in the nap, distinguishing all little dust particles. It's really seeing each one for itself.

So normally, when we are practicing, when we're living our lives, how we know the world, experience the world, is actually a rich, entangled ball of concepts and memory and associations and sensations and projections and plans and attitudes and there's all these things come together and they can seem like just one solid thing. This is the way it is. If I see the same brown Zafu, it hasn't moved, it looks like yesterday and I know it's a Zafu now. But those Zafus, I don't know about them, especially the K-Pak ones. And I look at that and I see painful butts. They become like cement. You sit on them a long time.

And, you know, and boy, I've had so much pain on those. And they should probably be banned from IRC. And I see, like, bad. I see danger. I see, you know, that's what a Zafu is. That's not a lot of detail. I'm not seeing detail. I'm seeing this huge story that's entangled. If I look at the Zafu, I see it has a round shape. I see slightly different shades of brown.

I see the folds, the cloth around the edges, the flat top. It feels, looks very smooth. I see the details. But those kind of details, I'm just seeing those very simply. Without my painful history of the self who's embedded in how I see it. And so when awareness gets established in the present moment, being established in the present so the mind doesn't easily leave, and being aware are almost synonymous. Maybe you can't really separate those two. But as that happens, at some point there's clarity, and we see things clearly.

And the most important thing to see clearly is the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome, what is healthy and what's not healthy. Because every moment we are doing something, even if it's just being aware. And so to know whatever we're choosing to do, whatever we're engaged in, to know, is this healthy? Is this beneficial? Is this onward leading in a good way? Is it healthy? Is it beneficial?

And so by seeing clearly, we also see things, how they are in and of themselves, independent of the projections and memories and complications we add to it. We hear a sound, just a sound. We taste a food, it's just a food. Very simple. And over time, the present moment gets richer by all the little distinctions that we can see, because we're really there to see. And so at some point, the experience of the present moment begins shifting so that some of the details we see is we don't longer see it through the lens, through the projection of permanence, of constancy.

But we start seeing either that the thing that we're looking at is shifting and changing, or the nature of the awareness that's doing the looking is actually shifting and changing itself. We see the details of there's a lot of change here, and maybe we feel the flow of it, and we enter into the flow, we rest in the change, we open to how much things are changing. So what's usually called investigation is literally means something, and the word literally means something like distinguishing *dhammā*, distinguishing one thing from another. And in particular *dhammā*, that means action, the activities that we're involved in. Because that wholesome and unwholesome has to do with what we do. Once we have a sense of what's wholesome or healthy or beneficial, then we're ready to let our enthusiasm, our intention, to engage, put energy into doing the wholesome in a wholesome way.

Too many Buddhists do wholesome things in unwholesome ways, straining and judging and so we're ready. And so energy becomes important. The third factor of awakening. The sap that runs through the tree. The vitality that gets released and operates. That kind of keeps the whole practice almost flowing by itself. And then there's a bit of vitality and a wonderful vitality of being engaged in what's wholesome.

For example, it's considered very wholesome to cultivate concentration, to really have a stable, steady kind of massaging of just simple experience in the breathing or in the body. Then joy arises, well-being arises. Sometimes this wonderful, delightful pleasure begins to flow and glow in the body some places, tingling. Sometimes it can get quite strong. Yeah. Sometimes it can feel almost too strong, the strong thrill, the strong kind of flow of rapture, ecstasy, delight. It can be a wave-like experiences.

And then there's the factor of awakening, that is tranquility. My belief is that something very

profound in us, maybe this *yoni-so*, is inviting us into kind of peace, inviting the whole system, not just to be tranquil, because sometimes tranquility is associated with going to sleep or something if you take a tranquility pill. But it's kind of a peaceful serenity. The word for tranquility, *passaddhi*, also can mean brightness. So kind of a... luminous peacefulness, tranquility, calm. And then there's *samādhī*, one of the beautiful states, because it's a *samādhī* is really one of the most healthy states. They're all healthy states. But it's really because of how everything comes together in harmony. Right? At least that's my hope for what *samādhī* can be. Real state of everything being there harmoniously. No conflict, no resistance. Things all gathered together here for the same purpose, the same intentions, same orientation. Just this simple thing here. Gathered, settled, composed.

And then equanimity. And equanimity is also... I was so surprised when doing my long Vipassanā retreats in Burma to have this experience that equanimity was a very particular thing, very particular state. That's a little bit hard to explain. It's almost like a state of being that's very clear, very clear it's equanimous, maybe the closest thing to explaining it that I can do is that it's kind of peacefully, clearly, not exactly delightfully, but better than delight. I wouldn't say it's happy, but it's better than happy. That is non-reactive. But that's such a poor way of describing it. It's like... you know, contentment might be non-reactive, but to call contentment non-reactivity, you know, that doesn't seem to capture something. So the same thing with equanimity. It's non-reactive, it's kind of just very, very rich feeling of being at peace with whatever is going on, kind of.

These are all qualities that can develop and grow out of this deep yoni. And maybe it's helpful to use that as a reference rather than grow in the mind. Sometimes I worry about overemphasizing the mind, the expansive mind. But there's something all of us that we want to include. All of us, all of ourselves. I see and understand that a lot of what the dharma is about is becoming whole. It's not really a dharmic, from the Buddha time, word. But I think that's a, in terms of modern concepts, I think that a wholeness, this becoming into a wholeness because we're no longer divided. A wholeness because we're no longer keeping part of ourselves at bay or repressed or offline. And wholeness because everything's included in equanimity.

There's no outside. There's nothing which... is not accepted in this wonderful field of equanimous awareness. There's nothing which is not accepted. And, in this beautiful, I think inspiring and wonderful way, there's nothing that's accepted. Nothing's accepted and nothing's rejected and nothing's not accepted. Just everything is allowed in a certain profound way.

So then the way the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* discusses this, and I'll just read that they're all kind of have the same text, same way, description. So you can simply just substitute one for the other

in this, but I'll read it for the first one, *sati*, which I translate here as awareness. Here, when the awareness factor of awakening is present within, one knows... The awareness factor of awakening is present within me. When no awareness factor of awakening is present within, one knows. No awareness factor of awakening is present within me. One knows the arising of the awareness factor of awakening. One knows the arising that has not yet risen. So it hasn't been around for a while. And now we know the arising. Okay. Remember the hindrances? The one knows the appearance, then they know the disappearance. So here again we have the arising. But listen to the next step. So one knows the arising of the awareness factor of awakening. Then, one knows once it has arisen the growth and fulfillment of the awareness factor of awakening. It's a very different attitude, very different idea. We're not here to see it disappear, the arising and passing. We're here to see it grow and develop to a fullness. That's pretty cool. I mean, I think it's just so cool that this kind of idea even exists. That we have, it's so marvelous that we have these beautiful natural capacities that we can't force, we can't engineer, we can't be... even expecting. But we're creating the conditions of practice. We're creating the soil then, putting in the compost, putting on the nutrients, watering the seeds. So something can begin sprouting. And the sapling grows. We care for it, protect it, tend it. It grows into a small tree, a big tree, eventually flowers and bears fruit. And eventually... is like a balanced mature tree.

So at some point, as we go through this *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and we're introducing this now on the third week, of a four-month-long retreat, and with all that we've done before, now, maybe there's something in you that can bring in Erika feel for a sense of some of these factors of awakening that are here. And to appreciate their value, appreciate their usefulness, they're important. And to respect the naturalness of them. It's not for you to appropriate. It's not for you to claim. It's not for you to make a self out of them. It's not for you to huff and puff. And it's for you to allow and open and make room for it, to recognize them, to know when they're not there in a certain kind of simple way, so you can be more sensitive to when they poke up. Oh, look at that. I mean, now there was a dog barking outside, and as my mind went to that, to kind of, not exactly listen to them, but my mind kind of went to open to the sound.

And as that mind opened to the sound, there was the awakening factor of awareness. There was kind of a delightful kind of feeling of just kind of open, receptive, free kind of presence of non-directed awareness that was being filled by the barking of the dogs. It wasn't dramatic, but I could appreciate it because I was talking about all this. There it is. It's that simple. Oh, look at that. There's something here that wasn't turning my attention to the sound and really listening carefully and really, which is a fine thing to do. This was not knowing, this was not



sensing. It was kind of more like an opening to a wonderful capacity of being aware.

To paraphrase from the poem called The Four Quartets, an experience of simplicity costing nothing less than everything. The seven factors of awakening arising out of a simplicity of being, not out of a complicated strategy of practice. A resting in a simplicity of being here. Maybe even with a reverence for a profound source within you. That can give birth, that can give birth to these beautiful states. May your simplicity, your reverence, your care, and maybe devotion to present moment attention, give the nourishment to the seven factors of awakening, so they may grow in you.