

Dharmette: Samadhi (9) Recognizing Self-Made Limitations

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Hello to this Thursday talk and the ninth talk in the *Samādhi* series. And the last three talks kind of focused on the hindrances. One of the purposes of those talks was to help you see in yourself the ways in which you limit yourself through being caught in the hindrances. The hindrances involve some kind of thinking, some kind of projected concepts, ideas, onto the world, onto others, onto ourselves, some kind of being caught in preoccupation. And in doing so, we, in some degree or other, lose touch with ourselves. Of course, people might not feel that or think that because they think they are their thinking.

They are their aversion. They are their desire. And so there's no problem. They're really in touch with themselves. They know exactly what they want. They know exactly what they don't want. They are their fear. And so, you know, that's who I am.

But if we go deeper in, we can feel how these hindrances, being caught in the thoughts and the ideas of desire, aversion, fear, doubt, regrets, that all these are a kind of limited world. We narrow the focus to those preoccupations. And the important thing to understand as we go into *samādhi* is that we become partial. We become fragmented. We become divided. We become a limited part of a whole of who we are. And *samādhi* is a process of becoming whole.

The classic language of that is unification, gathering together all the parts of ourselves so they can be working and connected in a harmonious way together. And so today and tomorrow, I want to talk a little bit about how the process of identification does the same thing. And classically, that's the steps that Buddha takes. To develop, to go into this deeper, deeper quality of being, he first talks about overcoming the hindrances. And when those have settled down enough, then the next stage is something even deeper that still involves some kind of concepts, ideas, projections, some kind of limiting ourselves. But now it's deeper, and sometimes we don't even see it as a kind of thinking, a concept.

And that is the ways in which we identify ourselves, who we are. And there are different ways that we establish, this is who I am, at least in the moment, that we kind of have a... In doing so, we limit ourselves, we shortchange ourselves. We're not available to the whole and fullness of who we are.

So, you know, this morning I brushed my teeth. And if I had thought, wow, Gil, you are like really skilled at brushing your teeth. You're like a really good tooth brusher. And maybe the world has never seen someone so good at brushing teeth. And I just really know how to zero in on the different teeth, get them really clean. Boy, am I good?

And I'm, you know, this is so important that I'm going to have to come down to IMC this morning and really let all the people on YouTube know, like, this is like... That's really an essential element of who I am, a toothbrusher, and how good I am in it. You really need to see that, and understand that, so you appreciate who I am and to affirm and confirm my very being as a toothbrusher. Well, it's ridiculous, and I apologize to talk in such a silly way, but it's intentional to be focused on this simple identity of being a toothbrusher.

I kind of lose touch with a lot of things. I lose touch with maybe all of you. I lose touch with a sense of the world and the wider sense of who I am. I lose touch with the fact that at this moment, I'm not brushing my teeth. And I have more important things to do at this moment, to sit here with you and try to share the Dharma. And to share it in a way that I feel connected to myself, to my body, to the very sensibility inside, the quality of inner life that I've learned through Dharma practice.

And so that can be that in many ways. Some people get very identified with their physical appearance. And that becomes their way they limit themselves of who they are. And of course, if you ask them and say, are you your hair, they don't really say no. Of course not. But functionally, people can be, that's how they define themselves, as they, their sense of well-being and how they want to be seen by others can be through a physical appearance.

Some people identify themselves very much by their comfort, how pleasant and unpleasant, how comfortable and uncomfortable things are. And it's a crime against humanity to be uncomfortable, and we have to fix it, because that's who we are. Some people very strongly identify with their values, their ideas, their concepts, their judgments that they have, and some people identify with their stories, and their fantasies of the future, their stories of the past. And some people identify with this kind of quality of just emness, or this quality of consciousness, or cognition, the one who knows.

And in the early Buddhist tradition, each of those ways of identifying yourself has the risk of

sacrificing the whole. And it's not necessary to be locked in and be defined only by this way and then live through that way. And, well, I don't want to convince you this way. The reason to talk about this is the degree to which you understand it. The idea is to learn to see and recognize in yourself how you're living in a truncated way, how you're, by being preoccupied or caught in some identity, then now you're left out a lot of who you are.

And that's the discovery process that prepares us for *samādhi* to realize the limitations we put ourselves under. Because if we try to develop *samādhi*, while we're in those limitations of identifying ourselves in a certain way, we actually stand in the way of *samādhi*. So, for example, if we identify ourselves as a poor meditator, that just, even if there might be some truth to that in some kind of way, it doesn't matter. If we identify ourselves that way and stay living that identity, hold it on like a badge or hold it on like a coat, then we're limiting ourselves from this moment, the fullness of now. We don't need to live through the lens of being a bad meditator or a good meditator.

We don't need to live moment by moment all the time through the lens of being a victim or being someone who's ill or someone who has certain challenges. We want to respect everything about ourselves, everything. So it's not like pushing any of this away, but the gift of *samādhi* is to learn that we don't have to limit ourselves by any of this. And so the task for today is not to break free of that, not to be different than who you are. But can you begin feeling your subjective experience in such a way that you can see that you're living in a partial view?

A partial view of your direct experience, partial view of yourself in your direct experience, that you're prioritizing certain things over other things, that you think some things are more important. And of course, in the moment, there are things that are more important than other things. And so to be fluid and move between that, of course, that's the way to go. But to not carry something with us, and keep ourselves limited and boxed in to one different mode.

The Buddha, he had an orientation to identify people by what they're doing in the moment. And that's enough. I'll end with a short Zen story. There were two Buddhist practitioners who were talking about the respective meditation teachers. And so the first one talked about all the miracles that their teacher could do. They could fly through the air, walk on water, see through walls, do all kinds of kind of disappear, reappear in different places, all kinds of amazing things, supernatural things.

And then the other one, who was a Zen student. The first one was not a Zen student, some other form of Buddhism, but the Zen student said, oh... Well, my master, when she walks,

she just walks. When she eats, she just eats. When she cleans, she just cleans. And the first one said, oh, you have a great master. Oh, and bow down deeply.

This idea of just being what you're doing and enter into that with your whole being, that is how you can be. Identify yourself in the moment. Right. And if you're sweeping, you're the sweeper. Be that fully with the wholeness of who you are. Not to limit yourself by past, future ideas.

So that when I'm sitting here with you giving a Dharma talk, let me be here fully for this. Unconcerned in this moment, what a great toothbrusher I am. That would limit it. That would not be relevant in this moment. So may you not limit yourself. And if you do, great.

That's what you want to see happen because the task for the next 24 hours is to become an expert, really skilled, really attuned to noticing what it's like to be limiting yourself to the objectification, to the partiality, to a particular preoccupation, which doesn't allow you to be fully here for what you're doing. Learning that, don't overlook that. Don't feel like you have to be anywhere else. Don't feel like you have to be whole. The task here is to understand how you limit yourself, how you limit yourself maybe with identity. So thank you very much and continue tomorrow.