

Intro to Mindfulness Pt 2 (9) Faculty of *Samādhī*

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Hello, and welcome to the fourth talk on the Five Faculties. To translate a little more literally from the Pali, we might call them the “five divine forces or divine guides” within us. *Indriya* literally means the “qualities or aspects of Indra,” the great supreme God of the ancient Indian pantheon.

The idea is that we have divinity within us. There's something divine and special about our capacities, our potentials, our faculties of faith, effort, energy, mindfulness, and today, concentration. Dare I say the word “sacred?” We can take them for granted, we can see them as just human, nothing special about them. But in fact, in Buddhism all that we do is special. This is where the world of the sacred, of liberation, of nobility and dignity begins: in our engagement.

The hindrances we talked about last week are what prevent us from engaging in the world in a free, liberating, beneficial way. They hinder our capacity to engage mindfully with a sense of real purpose. These faculties are the alternative to the hindrances. Faith is the alternative to sensual desire and greed. Courageous effort is the antidote or the alternative to ill will.

Mindfulness is the alternative to sloth and torpor, rigidity, and freezing up. It's not exactly an antidote but it's clearly the alternative to sloth and torpor, which is shutting down and becoming dull, while the alternative is to wake up and be clear. Mindfulness has a quality of peacefulness to it, whereas sloth and torpor has the opposite, a resistance or shutting down. Mindfulness is kind of calm, so it has that in common with sloth and torpor – they are not activated states.

Today the topic is *samādhī*, often translated as “concentration.” This is the antidote or the corollary to restlessness and regret. Restlessness and regret keep us fragmented and agitated. *Samādhī* is that which unifies and makes peaceful, quiet, and steady. It brings things together in a nice way so they operate in a harmonious flow rather than in an agitated, jumping-around way.

Samādhī is more than a laser focus of the mind. We probably shouldn't even think about it that way. One of the translators of the ancient Buddhist texts, Bhikkhu Sujato, translates *samādhī* as “immersion.” I love the idea of immersion because one of the classic metaphors for *samādhī* is beautiful lotus flowers of different colors floating not on the surface of the water, but opening up and floating under the water. The image is that of a very peaceful, calm, clear, and pure body of water where the lotuses are floating there peacefully, completely immersed in the water.

This metaphor is very common for meditators even in the modern world. When they get immersed in the practice, it's like they're dipping under water. If the mind starts thinking, they come up and the head comes out. When we let go of the thoughts, we sink down underwater again. I think that metaphor of being underwater comes from the feeling of being immersed in a wide field of well-being, peace, and settledness, where everything is collected, and everything is held together in a peaceful, quiet, settled way.

Sometimes I like the word “composed” for *samādhī*. When we are restless and filled with regrets, usually we're not very composed, we're quite unsettled. *Samādhī* is being deeply settled here with everything included. Having a laser focus, which people sometimes can do, can push things aside too quickly. People can get really focused and deeply concentrated, but they have done that by pushing aside their distracted minds, their

feelings, and their emotions, thinking that they're the problem. They want to get away from all that and get concentrated, which is a better place to be.

But doing that continues the process of fragmentation and exclusion of parts of ourselves from the whole. The value of mindfulness practice is that it's an inclusive practice. Everything has a place in mindfulness. Everything is to be included, to be just seen, to be allowed to be there and be known, but known in such a way that we're not troubled by anything. It is easy to say and more difficult to do. The idea is to be present for all of it, and in that state, to become settled and gathered together, with everything included. The mind is not laser-focused. Instead, there is a deep settling into the bottom of the ocean. A beautiful, soft, peaceful, refreshing sea or lake around us holds it all.

When we're restless, agitated, or filled with regrets, we can feel how we're divided up and maybe even troubled or agitated by ourselves. In this relaxing, settling, and allowing things to settle back together, we're not grabbing things to hold them and make them whole. We relax and soften, seeing and being mindful of everything so that in the mindfulness there's space and breathing room for everything to be there. And everything wants to settle and come together. Nothing wants to remain agitated.

Samādhi is an action of inclusion, an action of unification. So we start with faith or confidence, which is the desire to practice. Sometimes we practice mindfulness with courageous effort – the courage to say, “This is really important. I'm clear that this is the most important thing I can do because of where it's going.” Then we practice with a clarity of mind, clearly accompanying our experience. We are here to accompany everything, to be present for here, and to stand close to all of our lived experience.

We find a way to stand close to our experience that's calm, where we are a good friend, not bothered, but offering a clear, respectful attention to how things are. This allows things to begin to settle and come together. Then we gather things, we steady ourselves, and we practice continuity of mindfulness. We need the persistence and the continuity that allow things to gather together, gather together, come together. This is a little bit like the way a snowball rolling down the hill gathers more snow and becomes bigger and bigger. (Maybe the cold analogy doesn't work so well.)

The idea is that everything is coming in here because of the continuity of practice – the steadiness, staying here, staying with the practice, being mindful here. Every moment of mindfulness makes breathing room for what's there, so there's space for things to settle into this big ocean of *samādhi*.

Samādhi is what provides mindfulness with a feeling of deep contentment, satisfaction, happiness, and peace. Then it becomes easier and easier and more and more inspiring to practice mindfulness of whatever is happening without being bothered, judgmental, or reactive to what's happening. There is a reciprocal relationship between mindfulness and deeper peace, making space for everything. Everything has a place. This creates greater and greater satisfaction and contributes to a greater sense of wholeness – the wholeness of *samādhi*.

We have one more of these faculties or divine qualities, which we'll do tomorrow. It is usually translated as wisdom, and it's the corollary to the hindrance of doubt, indecisiveness, or inaction. Thank you.