

Satipaṭṭhāna (61) Equanimity Factor of Awakening

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

clarity, mindfulness, doer, awareness, stability, concentration, freedom, insight, distracted, *samādhi*, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility, unification

Gil Fronsdal

Hello, everyone. We are nearing the end of the five-part series on the Seven Factors of Awakening. This is the next to last exercise in the discourse for establishing awareness. The Seven Factors of Awakening are the foundation for the last exercise, which is to have deep, penetrating insight, to see in a liberating way – a way that awakens. One of the reasons the Seven Factors of Awakening are called factors of awakening is that they set the stage for freedom. They also are qualities of that awakening. It is beautiful that we are growing in the qualities that will mature into our awakening.

These factors of awakening are not ordinary mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity (whatever “ordinary”

might mean.) They are the result or consequence of having really settled into the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness has brought us to a place of stability and lots of clarity, where our whole being – our body and mind – has become somewhat unified and collected for the purpose of being here.

We are no longer thinking about the events of the day, of yesterday, or what is going to happen. We are not caught up in our fantasies, resentments, or distracted thoughts. It is not easy to get to this point, but at some point, we arrive here. We feel a vitality in awareness and in being present in a full way.

There are no instructions about causing these states to arise or making them happen. But one recognizes when they are present, and one recognizes when they are not. We also recognize when they arise and are appearing. Our role is to maintain them, to let them keep developing. At this stage of practice, a lot of that has to do with getting out of the way. If a ball is rolling down a hill, and you stand in front of it and block it, it will not roll. If you get out of the way, it continues to roll down the hill.

So the Seven Factors of Awakening will keep growing and developing if we learn to stay out of the way. Staying out of the way has to do with not getting involved, caught up in, or distracted by our thoughts; not

getting involved in wanting and not wanting; and not tinkering with our experience to make it more and more refined. We begin to let go of the doer. We let go of the activity of being the meditator. We get out of the way and allow something else to emerge and unfold: the Seven Factors of Awakening.

For that to happen, there has to be some momentum in the practice. After having done the practice for a while, maybe a long time, so it becomes like second nature, there is a momentum that the body knows because the body is connected to this practice. We sit down to meditate, and the body gathers itself together because it is familiar with this. It knows this territory. It is like coming home.

As these factors of awakening develop following *samādhi* (concentration, stability, and a unified mind), the tendency for the mind to get fragmented and caught up in any mental inner state or external thing that is arising is diminished. The sense of awareness feels so strong, so precious, so rich in that clarity of being. It seems much better than any of the alternatives, such as being distracted and caught up in thoughts, so we come back to awareness and stay there.

There is a wonderful sweetness and beauty in the clarity of a nonreactive mind. This clarity of mind is not working the practice anymore, not reacting, not fixing or

tinkering. There is no doer operating. There is just the clarity of being aware.

Stability and equanimity are what allow for deep insight. We no longer see through the filter of our projections or agitation – all the concepts, ideas, and commentary we have about things. We start seeing, perceiving, or feeling what is happening in a much more direct way. We start having insights that are freeing.

It is remarkable that these beautiful qualities of being are a byproduct of mindfulness practice. At some point, it is important to recognize when even hints of them are beginning to arise. The recognition of their presence is one of the factors that allows them to grow. To recognize them brings more and more clarity of awareness.

In that clarity, we recognize we have a capacity to choose between what is healthy and not healthy, skillful and not skillful. We know how to stay present in a mindful, relaxed, freeing way. Then we have enthusiasm and energy, which allows the practice to grow. There is the joy of doing it. With that joy comes a contentment and satisfaction that lets many of our anxieties settle and quiet down. Then we have concentration and unification of mind, and we have equanimity.

With the Seven Factors of Awakening, we remain mindful of their presence, mindful of their absence, and mindful of when they arise. Then we can get out of the way and maintain them, keep them going. This is what happens at the mature stages of mindfulness.

Do not worry about being in these mature stages. The only thing that is important is this moment of practice. It is as if you are putting drops into a bucket. Each drop is as valuable as any other drop. Each drop is complete in itself. Each drop of mindfulness, each second, each moment of mindfulness is complete in itself.

Do not be concerned or caught up with attainments or getting somewhere. When the Seven Factors of Awakening start showing themselves, recognize they are here. Know their presence. Know them as they are arising. Learn the art of maintaining them, getting out of their way, and letting them grow.

Thank you very much.