

# *Satipaṭṭhāna* (60) Tranquility and *Samādhi* Factors of Awakening

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## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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Today I will cover the tranquility factor of awakening and the concentration factor of awakening – the fifth and sixth factors. The way the instructions are in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, it does not say to evoke these factors, to make them come forth. It says to recognize them when they are present and then to support and maintain them.

I think the reason it says this is that the Seven Factors of Awakening are a byproduct of doing mindfulness practice. As the practice begins to have some momentum, it brings forth within us a clearer and clearer capacity for awareness.

Mindfulness practice brings forth an abiding, a living, in a state of awareness. It is a way of being aware that is, perhaps, very individual how different people recognize that they are aware. Some people may be more with thoughts. Some people are more with other perceptive ways of being. Some people feel awareness is more like consciousness, a broad field or state of attention.

There is a heightened sensitivity that comes naturally. If you are deeply relaxed, you cannot turn your awareness off. In a relaxed and quiet state not distracted by thoughts, awareness will be there. There is no way not to have it. This somewhat natural state can become strong and pervasive.

Now it has gotten light outside, so we are in light in this room. If we come in here and it is dark, we do not see anything. Then, slowly, the light – the sun – comes up. Slowly, the room gets more and more light until, finally, the natural state of the room, when the sun is up, is to have light and we can see. Like light filling the room, the whole room is then in awareness in an effortless way.

So, the sun of awareness dawns and grows within us. Awareness becomes stronger, and there is a heightened clarity of what is happening in the present moment. This heightened clarity lets us distinguish between the trail leading to suffering, stress, and reactivity, and the trail leading to peace, wisdom, and

happiness. To be able to see that distinction can bring a lot of joy. We know where the path is. We know the trail to take. We know what trail to avoid.

It might not be easy to avoid old habits. But at least we know there is a difference. Some people don't even know. Slowly, we break our old habits. We begin following a healthy way of being: the trail to happiness and peace. This brings a lot of joy associated with being able to practice: "Finally, I have meditation. I know meditation is a good thing. The way I was living my life didn't work. There's no peace or freedom in preoccupation and being lost in my life. Meditation seems to be a path of happiness, of following a trail toward something really good. I feel so much calmer and more settled when I meditate. And it affects the rest of my life, the rest of my day."

A certain delight and happiness can arise through knowing the possibility to practice. As we really start coursing in this practice more and more, there is a way that joy and delight get stronger and stronger. It becomes not just an evaluative joy, like, "Oh, I'm so glad I have this practice," but a joy that comes from being absorbed in the practice itself – just coursing and cruising in the practice.

It is like the analogy I have given of petting the cat. As we keep staying with the practice, the cat within us

begins to purr. Just a wonderful delight and joy come up. Some people are surprised by the strong feeling of joy that wells up as they meditate. Sometimes it can be somewhat intense. Some people call it rapture.

At some point, the movement of this factor of awakening is that we are following the path of tranquility. The whole body-mind system begins to calm. The excitement, enthusiasm, and inspiration of joy quiet down. Joy becomes a happiness that is more embodied, like a deep contentment. It is a sense of being cozy and connected in some soft and embodied way. That happiness is the foundation for the sixth factor of awakening, *samādhi*, translated into English as “concentration.”

This is important to realize because some people think they are going to develop *samādhi* (concentration) by huffing and puffing, straining and trying. But rather, the dharmic way of developing concentration is to have in place conditions that support the mind wanting to get settled, unified, absorbed, and focused on something. That is a mind that is embodied, tranquil, and has a certain kind of happiness in it. That happiness is the foundation for deep concentration.

The concentrated mind is just happy to be here. There is no question about being present here and now, because it is the better alternative to wandering off in

thoughts about our daily concerns or the past and the future. Being connected here – this body, this mind, this heart – feels so rich and satisfying that, of course, we want to settle in. Of course, it is natural to settle in, relax, and give ourselves over to the process of meditation. The happiness that comes with this path of the factors of awakening brings together all the fragmented parts of ourselves. The unfragmented way of being is *samādhi*. We are absorbed. We are all unified, connected, and collected. This is the *samādhi* factor of awakening.

What is remarkable about this is that we have been doing *satipaṭṭhāna* now for some time. This is the sixtieth talk on it I have given. We have gone through all these exercises. I have said this before, but I believe it is worth saying again. We are building on the momentum of having done the practice all along.

Even if you go back to the very beginning and just do the first exercise with breathing, it is a powerful thing to do. If you do it consistently, just keep showing up, taking your meditation posture, and engaging over and over, there is a natural process that begins opening up and moving through you (or you move through it). Eventually, this can be recognized as the factors of awakening.

When practice is really strong – for me, it has mostly been on meditation retreats that I feel this – sometimes the predominant experience of the present moment – by far the predominant experience – is the Seven Factors of Awakening. What a cool, wonderful thing to do! To not be anxious about what is happening tomorrow, or what happened yesterday, or be angry at anything. Just to be really peaceful and settled. All the focus of the mind is on these beautiful qualities of mind and body, the Seven Factors of Awakening.

So there is a natural process that unfolds. But it requires practice – practicing well, practicing sincerely, practicing settledly. Learning how to practice mindfulness, how to bring attention, how to recognize what is happening. Learning how to relax deeply, how to get concentrated to some degree.

Learning all this – all these aspects of the path, the world of meditation, so that, more and more, we can trust that there is a natural process. There is an emerging, an unfolding that can happen, that we allow for. If we feel like we are the agent responsible for everything that happens in meditation, we are actually shortchanging the process of meditation.

A lot of meditation is letting go of thoughts enough, being settled enough, that we can trust, open up, and allow for something to move through us. The Seven

Factors of Awakening is one way of discussing this. I talked about tranquility being a bridge between joy and happiness. And it is. Then, I went from the tranquility to the concentration factor of awakening.

So where is happiness? Other lists go from joy to tranquility, happiness, and concentration. The Seven Factors of Awakening leave out happiness, not because it does not happen in the process, but because, for some reason, it does not need to be there. Or maybe, the number seven was a special number they wanted. So they chose the most important parts.

This is what we have covered so far. There is awareness, often called mindfulness. There is the ability to differentiate in our practice between what is healthy or not healthy, skillful or unskillful. There is the energy, the effort, then, to choose the healthy path. There is joy in being able to do that. Then, there is tranquility. And then, there is concentration.

Tomorrow, we will do the last factor of awakening, equanimity. Thank you, and I look forward to our time together.