

# The Gladness Pentad (5 of 5) The Natural Unfolding of *Samādhi*

December, 9, 2022

## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

immersion, absorption, sacred, concentration, unification, settling, immersed, boredom, contentment

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Today we come to the last quality of the gladness pentad. This is *samādhi*.

*Samādhi* is a powerful word in India. We lose some of its richness, breadth, and depth when we translate *samādhi* as concentration. In its Indian context, *samādhi* has many meanings. It can refer to some of the deepest realizations a person can have. Some people understand it to be a deep absorption and immersion in our experience, in ourselves, in meditation. We immerse ourselves in it.

The quality of that immersion, the absorption of it all, is like entering into a sacred place, a sacred grove, a sacred spot in nature, or a sacred temple. If you will allow me to say it, there is a feeling that this is where

church is. For people who are theistic, which I'm not particularly, this is the presence of God here. It is quite something to be immersed in all this goodness of *samādhi*.

Many people translate *samādhi* as concentration, a kind of laser focus bearing down, or straining to look and be. But it is more like there is a welcome at the center of your being – a warm, happy, loving welcome. Somehow your system, your whole psychophysical being feels that welcome and is happy to settle there, to settle around it. It is like settling around a hearth or a group of people settling around a fire. Your whole being is cozy and comfortable.

Part of *samādhi* is a gathering together of all our faculties. The classic language is that of unification. There is a unified field; nothing is scattered or fragmented. We are not spinning out. There is no outward centrifugal force with the mind. If anything, there is a settling inward or here.

As that settling happens more and more, there are levels to it. The experience of *samādhi* shifts and changes. Sometimes the sense of boundaries and barriers fall away. Even though I talked about this as settling into the center, there is the idea that there is an edge to the space upon which we are centered falling away. Sometimes *samādhi* feels like we are immersed

– like we are swimming underwater in a beautiful clear lake. We are someplace underneath in this vast space. It feels peaceful and quiet. We might look up at the surface a few feet above and see that there is some agitation of the water there. But here, we are immersed in this boundless water world.

*Samādhi* is not something to strain for. Part of the lesson of the gladness pentad is that *samādhi* is built on the previous four qualities. You see this in the teachings of the Buddha over and over again. *Samādhi* follows the qualities before it. Here it follows gladness, joy, the tranquility of the body, and happiness. *Samādhi* follows almost as a natural phenomenon.

We are practicing with a very profound principle of the Buddha. We are not causing meditation to happen. We are not causing *samādhi* or concentration to happen. Rather, we are setting up the conditions that allow them to happen.

In considering this gladness pentad – it is not something we do, but rather something we allow. It is something that flows naturally. There is a naturalness to it. When we have this Dharma gladness, from there, there arises joy; from there, there arises tranquility; from there, happiness occurs. And from there, *samādhi* (concentration) happens.

As we give ourselves to the practice – we do have to practice. I can finally, definitively tell you the practice doesn't work if you don't do it. There is a doing that has to happen. But the doing is showing up, really showing up here, so we can begin allowing here to unfold.

The here unfolds without our reactivity. It unfolds without our straining and wanting and without our minds being scattered and distracted. When we become undistracted and here enough – it doesn't have to be dramatic – there begins to be an unfolding. This deepening is not necessarily our doing, but what we allow for.

If we are always staying the agent, the one who does the practice, we can only take the practice so far. We have to start by being the doer – the one who shows up. But at some point, we also have to start allowing something to flow through us, something to unfold within us.

It is not mystical. It is very practical and simple. This comes when we allow ourselves to just be present and relax. One of the remarkable things that can be a bit embarrassing for some of us is all our grand conclusions about the world and ourselves. We have thoughts of how terrible things are, how terrible we are, the challenges we have, or even how great things are. These happen from the thinking mind, the conceiving

mind that is living in its own thoughts, reactions, and ideas of things. As those ideas and thinking quiet down, we start to live in a different world where our conclusions can be very different.

Consider when we say, “This is boring.” Boredom is an activity or action of the mind. The mind is constructing the evaluation that things are boring. As the mind gets quieter, this centrifugal force moves away from the center that boredom is – the boredom vanishes. We see there is no boredom here at all unless we return to that evaluative, analytical, and activated mind.

This quieting, settling, coming together, and immersing ourselves in our experience here begins to slowly occur on its own. If you have a daily sitting practice, this process might seem so slow that you can’t see it day by day. There is a slow and steady movement that moves us through this gladness pentad. Because it is so slow, we don’t necessarily see or recognize the stages. This eventually allows us to sit down to meditate and it is more like, “Here I am.” There is an entering into or an allowing that might be *samādhī*.

Sometimes in a meditation session, you can almost feel the cascading movement of these different steps, like water moving down a hillside. It is relatively easy for me to talk about, but it does not easily happen. It is very important to not be the kid in the backseat saying: “Am I

there yet? Am I there yet?” Let go of the wanting and trying to make it happen.

Contentment is a very important part of this meditation practice. We are meant to practice with whatever circumstances arise. There is a very profound Dharma principle that I like: the Dharma knows better than you what you should be experiencing. There are no mistakes when you sit down to meditate. Whatever arises in your meditation is what we learn to practice with. We practice without trying to make it different, but rather to wake up and be present with it in a wise way.

If anything, we can learn to relax – relax with it all. Relax with what is difficult. Let the thinking mind relax. As we stay present and attentive, this relaxing, this tranquilizing is really the ingredient that allows the gladness pentad to move through us on its own.

As we relax, we come to some modicum of being settled and present here. We are not so scattered or pulled into the world of thinking and reactivity. As we are able to see and be present, the gladness pentad opens up to deeply seeing how things are. What we see deeply is the nature of suffering.

We might begin this practice because we suffer, and we want to find some relief, some freedom from that suffering. We are not really ready to address this

suffering until we prepare the ground for it, until we have entered the temple in a respectful, kind, and appropriate way. As we enter the temple of *samādhi*, we have new eyes with which to see the suffering.

Yes, we are here to overcome suffering, but don't be so concerned with it at first. Let it be the motivating factor, and part of why you feel gladness, knowing that you are on a path to end suffering. Don't try to fix and navigate the suffering as you begin your practice. Just develop the ability to be present, and when the time is right, when the Dharma knows best for you, you will deeply address your suffering. Seeing things as they are is the nature of it.

So thank you very much for this. I appreciate having this chance to teach and be with you, and to share this with you. I look forward to coming back and beginning again on Monday.

Thank you