**Awakening With Tranquility**

**TRANQUILITY-*PASSADHI BOJJHANGA***

The Pali word *passadhi* describes a state of non-turbulent energy flow, serene, tranquil, stable and calm. It is so congruent with samadhi (concentration) that I routinely combine the two: samadhi/passadhi. In the function of the seven awakening factors, passadhi is the antidote for the hindrance of restlessness and worry. In this way, passadhi cooperates with piti. The result is a “just-right” balance between the activation of the sympathetic nervous system (piti) and the tranquilizing that occurs under the influence of the parasympathetic nervous system (passadhi)

Passadhi is one of the cetasikas, the conditioning factors of Buddhist psychology. In the listing of the wholesome conditioners, it is found in two forms: *kayapassadhi,* (calmness of the senses) and *cittapassadhi*, (tranquility of mind). They are the first of the “beautiful pairs” of cetasikas and are the manifestation of harmonious coordination of whichever mind conditioners are present in that moment of self-organization. The flow of energy through the selfing process is free from turbulence and this promotes clarity of mind.

Achaan Chah, the famous Thai master, used as an analogy a river. He asked his students: “Have you ever seen a still river? Yes? Have you ever seen a flowing river? Yes? Have you ever seen a still, flowing river?” With this series of images, he conveyed the nature of samadhi-passadhi.

One of my teachers on a retreat told us a story of being at a monastery perched high above the Iriwaddy river in Myanmar. Looking down on the river, it seemed to be quite still, with no rapids, not a ripple. Then she noticed boats moving downriver with the current very swiftly, again without a ripple. This seems to me to be a useful way to relate to the practice of vipassana. Samadhi-passadhi is the dynamic and non-turbulent flow of the river, while mental phenomena drift in and out of awareness without a ripple of craving and clinging. However, if one of those boats was anchored or moving upstream, there would be noticeable waves, disturbances of Samadhi-passadhi. Realizing that the ripples are on the surface, and that the smooth but energetic flow of energy is far more predominant than the ripples is comparable to the way vipassana can reveal that receptive, non-reactive awareness is far more present when a mental phenomenon arises than the immediate effect of the phenomenon, *provided that craving and clinging hasn’t created a false sense of personhood around the rippling effect of the thought!* Passadhi manifests a minimum degree of craving, and therefore makes it much easier to not take the ripples personally.

**SKILLFUL MEANS FOR CULTIVATING TRANQUILITY**

1. Cultivate a simple, healthful lifestyle, including avoiding overly rich foods containing fats, sugars and lots of refined carbohydrates.
2. Be clear about what levels of stress exposure are unavoidable and which can be eliminated or minimized in your lifestyle.
3. Meditate on a regular basis. Concentration practice automatically brings tranquility with it, provided that the practice includes investigation of mental phenomena and mindfulness. Tranquility that is out of balance and unregulated produces the hindrance of sloth and torpor. Using Right Effort, combined with active investigation of each breath cycle, cultivates a wholesome balance of energy and tranquility in awareness.
4. Minimizing exposure to restless and impatient people. We live in a hyperactive, “instant results” culture that fosters excitement and agitation. Take a break from this sort of reinforcement. Take a vacation from the news, which emphasizes issues to worry about or be angry about in order to keep us tuned in.
5. Develop a routine of sweeping attention through the body periodically to notice and release/relax any muscle tension.