

# 2014-02-03 The Four Jhanas

Sat, 9/12 12:17PM • 42:14

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, states, mind, concentration, feel, thinking, lotus flowers, feeling, deep, lake, joy, samadhi, meditation, stay, water, experience, image, present, rapture, point

## SPEAKERS

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On now. So can you hear me? Everybody Everybody can hear. So maybe you could turn it up teeny bit. So let's see, is that easier? Great.

So in January, I started a four part series on concentration Samadhi. Samadhi practice. And I gave two of those talks. And now tonight and then next week, I'll give this last two talks of the series. And when I think of Samadhi, the Buddhist word for concentration or concentration states, I think of sweetness. It's very sweet. Sometimes I think of it is there's variety of different cost situation states. And those states have different textures and flavors to them, depending on the state. Some of them feel very sweet, some feel lately I've been thinking of that being a silicon like silk or satin the feeling the inside. Just feel so nice to feel sad and maybe Imagine you're in incites felt just like smooth satin, and then that's all there was. smooth, smooth satin feeling.

So the, we live in many different states of mind. And the ordinary states of minds themselves are variable, sometimes there we might call like moods, and different kind of moods. And it goes up and down through the day and then A wide range of states of mind by gracias moods, quite a wide range of states of being that we can abide and be in. And in meditation, when we close our eyes, we then have access to an expanded range of states that you can be experienced. And sometimes they're called altered states of consciousness. And they come in a variety of different ways. There's many different ways and make the experience because there's many different functions, functionalities of the mind that get mobilized get activated and work together. And as they work together as a system, different ones of them might dominate and so different depending which one dominates or which comes together, which is they're not they're those states of mind have different flavors or textures or feelings to them. Some people are confused by the different kinds of states that might arise because they're so different than people's ordinary daily states of mind. The some people, even though they might be quite rapture, some of them quite intense, are would rather not experience them because of the intensity or because they don't recognize themselves in those states. Some of the states of consciousness have very, very little thinking going on. And when we mostly orient ourselves to the world orient ourselves to ourselves, through our thinking. It can be frightening, even or very unwelcoming, to not have those thoughts operate.

Sometimes people go into deep states of stillness and then those deep stillness. Again this is so the landmarks for We understand our lives and not there. And so people get frightened. Some people hear about the different states of consciousness that can come with Samadhi. And some of them are so pleasant, that are sounds so wonderful that people get very desirous of them and just want them. Some people are very eager to have signs of progress in meditation practice. Because if you can have you know signposts, like I gotten to this stage in this stage, this stage and you know, you're making you're

being successful. And so it can be very alluring, very, very to watch want to have those signposts. There's also a distinction that's made between sometimes between the practices of mindfulness and the practices of Samadhi. And that the practice of Samadhi that the argument is sometimes made. These are very distinct practices. And one is the right way and the other is not. And you should, you know, and some people get different people, there's different divides and people take one's being important to the other are important. And I'll talk more about that next week. What I want to do tonight is describe to you some of the key states of Samadhi key states of concentration, that are celebrated in the Buddhist tradition and are considered to be important by some people as foundation stones are stepping stones for the process of liberation. And one of the reasons to learn about them is to recognize them when they come. So that if you fall into these, some people have to get the use of language or falling into sometimes that means you fall into them, that you are not frightened by them. When you fall into them, you recognize And little bits for what they are. And you recognize them as being on the map of meditation practice on the map of helpful states of mind. And so you maybe cultivate them, encourage them and move through them in a useful way. So without being frightened by them or being confused by them or without being lost in the States, what are they?

So if we take the ordinary state of mind, to be a mind that's fragmented or distracted, this is distracted by so distracted by its distractions. It doesn't know it's distracted. so caught up that you know, just kind of like a black hole with a black hole. The idea being that it's so much gravitational force that you get close to black hole light falls in and you can't see anything. Or you get close to these black holes in the thinking, mind, fantasy and aversion and desire, whatever, get close enough the strength of them, you fall into those and you get lost, you don't even know you're there. And so important part of concentration practice is to overcome those distracting forces. So the mind is not lost in its thoughts. And so the it's one way or the other as we do concentration practice, because we want to come to a point where we don't have to make any effort anymore to avoid succumbing to our thinking. And that's a turning point in the world of meditation. The and so for many people, most of us when we sit down to meditate, the mind is busy and wants to go off and we bring it back mind goes off and we bring it back. And it takes some effort to do that. Or if you're able to stay present, you have to kind of give a little A little effort to stay there because, you know, there's a strong tendency to want to go off. As this meditative mind gets stronger, and as the forces of distractions get less and lessen, it becomes easy to use you to stay present at some point where it's relatively effortless to stay, because the mind has no tendency to go off, the mind doesn't want to go off, then you don't have to make any effort to stay present. So at some point, there's a transition that happens when the mind is no longer distracting itself in his thoughts and concerns. So the way to get there there is in meditation is first you have the period of preparation, sitting yourself up preparing yourself, and there's a whole series of things you do period. So some of them are just very ordinary, like you sit down to meditate to do something which gets you kind of going into it. Sit up straight, take some deep breaths, some people like to do some chanting, some people will.

Remember something inspiring some people will do metta loving kindness practice. Some people will set their intention very clearly sobriety things we do to kind of get established and settled. One of the key ones that I found is to use my body to connect my body and have a relatively good posture that at least from the inside, feels like I'm rooted, I'm present, I'm here, to use my body as a reminder to be here. And then to switch the focus of attention the best we can from thinking, to sensing and this is a very important transition. And some of it has to be done consciously and with choice. We choose to switch the focus of the mind from its thoughts and concerns what happened at work, what's happening tomorrow. Remember, we're thinking about it. Instead of thinking about things, we want to sense what's going on. And sensing as you can imagine, it only happens in the present moment. And because you know, there's no set here, you can mean you could sense tomorrow, but then you know, you have to

think about that thing tomorrow. We can't feel tomorrow, you have to feel now. So two cents. And so big incense, so and so whatever the focus of attention we're using for concentration, we want to start sensing the experience and sensing. So for example, if you're staying with the breath, you want to sense the breath, you want to feel the experience of breathing, or you some people use the idea of an inner sight. You see something sometimes there's an odd kind of kind of see where the mind's eye something. But the feeling is sensing in order to make that switch to help us make that switch from thinking, to sensing to be present. So as we so then we focus on If the breath and I've used the breath as my primary concentration object, and so sort of focusing on the breath, and there might be some supports to kind of help stay there and keep the course with the breath, and one of them is counting the breath. So counting, you know, I used to count the count every exhale, gotta count. And I'd counted 10, or tried to count to 10. And if I lost count, on the way to 10, I wouldn't worry, I just started getting one. If I got to 12, I knew that I kind of wasn't so present. And that started getting one and whatever. But you know, just, I was just started one if I needed to try to get to 10 started again in one, and that counting gives a thinking mind something to do. That takes a little bit of effort. We have to remember the count and, and fills the space to some degree of the thinking mind so you're not so light liable to be thinking as much you're engaged in something as here. At some point, it becomes quite clear that the mind is not caught up in its thoughts. It's not caught up in, in the hindrances not caught, not caught up, and it just really feels like it's going to be here. It's present. And when it starts to become present in here, then the tradition encourages us at that point to feel some delight. Some relief maybe, there Wow, I'm really here. My mind's not going to wander off so easily. My mind has finally been tamed, unruly wild mind is now tamed, it's quiet down, it's calm down. It's not racing off everywhere. And I'm just here and you really kind of feel I'm here. This is where I am. And so if there's some, some delight or some relief or something In appreciation of this state, then the idea is to go is to keep focusing on the breath. But allow yourself to as you focus on it allow, what I find very helpful is to have a quality or a sense of allowing myself to open up are allowing myself to fall into this state of concentration in the state of being present, focused on the breath, and feeling some kind of good feelings that begin to come up. So feelings of relief of delight of pleasure, feelings of appreciation, feelings of

well being the big incoming, some of that come because we're relaxed, it's very important to relax in this process. There's a free freeing up of certain kind of energy in the system in the body. And so there starts becoming feelings of well being and I liken it to As long as I'm staying with the breath, kind of this rhythm of breathing in breathing out, it's kind of like petting the cat. And the cat begins to purr. First the cat doesn't just you're a strange person to the cat and you're petting it and the way to look at checking you out, and then eventually realizes you're okay. And it relaxes and starts to purr. So eventually your whole system, if you stay focused and not not caught up in your thoughts, the whole system begins to purr. And it starts feeling kind of nice, sweet feeling of being concentrated and being focused. Some people the sweetness is not so sweet. Sometimes it comes with a lot of sense of pleasure, sometimes with a sense of rapture even. And some people sometimes it can build and become very, very intense, sometimes with a lot of energy in the system. But first it starts off just generally kind of sweet and Nice and settled and focused. And then we were petting the cat. We're kind of massaging the pattern, Miskin massaging and feels good and feels good. At some point where we have to kind of keep petting it, but they keep coming back and stay, the mind is theirs, it's going to stay there was only going to stay present. Because we keep making the effort to keep working at it. At some point, we don't have to work at being present anymore. Because the mind is just present, it's not going to go anywhere. And so the effort to stay present, can fall away. No more effort there. And when the effort to stay present and be present falls away, it's kind of like that energy that's was used there can go somewhere else or that focus of attention that went into that kind of effort is now available to sense and feel more fully what is here and it's kind of like then the we open up to greater feelings of rapture and the feelings of rapture or joy can get instant Longer at this point, the mind gets Stiller and quieter it just very very present very

still. But there's a feeling of upwelling energy and movement usually some people will feel it in different parts of the body a very common places to feel it in the face. Some people will feel strong pressure and their forehead, around their eyes sometimes in their mouth feels like it's all puckered up because isn't but it's just kind of feels like so all this kind of blood flowing, their energy flowing there. Some people feel in the chest some people in their hands will feel tingling and warm and nice. Some people at this point will feel very light the body feels very light and kind of floaty kind of feeling. Sometimes. Some people find that their body they get very hot actually take off our clothes because all the heat that comes along meditative hot flashes and the And so at some point, as the meditation deepens and deepens, the intensity of the rapture decreases, and then as it decreases, the mind gets quieter, even still are still there. And you're gonna have sense of purity and confidence arises. And that purity and confidence with that comes a deeper feeling of well being, that the tradition calls suka or, or happiness. And it's a variable how people describe it what it's like, but it's more sublime than the joy. Some people when they feel the joy of meditation, these states arise, especially if it's quite strong. Will this is the best thing ever. This is go as you know how you did. This is you know, I want this forever and to You know, some people, it's literally people will say, this is better than an orgasm. Because it's the you know, it's just like a who wants an orgasm when you have this, because it's, you know, it's quiet and that kind of intensity and that kind of feeling. So, but you know, after a while it gets old or it gets tiring this intensity. And so at some point is enough of this. And some people actually start having certain aversion to it because when it's intensity, like, Don't give me this anymore.

And I've, I've, you know, actually resisted it at times, because this is like, I don't want this and I want to bet I want some things even better. So I thought I hold this at bay not having not experienced more superficial joy, I want the deeper stuff. And not knowing that I had to go through the joy to get to that deeper which this clinic called sukha. This deeper, the sukha this more deeper, sublime well being is often felt as a kind of a something very still and quiet versus much more peaceful I can hit like a deep contentment or satisfaction or warmth as opposed to an energy that's flowing and active. And then as the we open up to this deeper as we fall into a deeper as the momentum of concentration helps us to get still learn Still, the at some point the sublime happiness or contentment or warmth falls away or fades away. And then what's left is a very deep state of peace. That's tradition often calls a state of equanimity and because in a state of equanimity there is no no no longer any pain you don't feel anything uncomfortable anymore in this state so I'll just feels no no, no no discomfort, no pain. But since this joy And this happiness that was earlier has also fallen away. There's no pleasure either or no happiness either in it. And so neither pain nor pleasure, but it's not neutral. It's, you know, one of the most you know, so this sounds paradoxical and one of the most pleasant things you can experience, even though there's no pleasure, it just sublime it just so sweet and wonderful. And in this, you know, sense of, you know, profound spacious, open peacefulness and stillness that's there. And here, especially, it depends on which systems of concentration practice you're doing because different systems, different people, people teach different ways. But in this deep state of equanimity, there's a feeling of sometimes people's sense of their breathing stops, it feels like the breathing comes to a full stop. And some people that point get frightened because you're supposed to breathe to stay alive. And the first time it happened to me, it happened kind of I didn't notice, you know, it's like does bear repeating I was just I was just hardly thinking, and I'm just there and present and it just kind of being pulled into this world of being still and quiet. And then suddenly, somehow I haven't breathed for a while, took a deep breath. And that pulls, you know, pulls you right out of the state. And, but in fact, in these deep states of meditation, it's possible to go without seeming to breathe at all. Partly because we don't need a lot of oxygen in these states. I don't know what percentage of the energy and the oxygen helps us with the energy and bringing energy to our system. I don't know what percentage is needed for the brain, but the majority of the energy of our our system goes to powering the brain. And so when the

brain It's really quiet and still it doesn't need so much energy anymore. And so without the energy, the breathing can get quieter and quieter.

So that's kind of very roughly how these, the primary states are, there's four of them, and they go from, we enter, we kind of fall into them, it is a kind of a shift changed. Often people will feel like a shift comes over them. And that transition happens. A change of gears happens. And it's not generally something people feel like they can control. They set up the conditions for it and they're doing their work and then at some point, lo and behold, there's something begins to turn over or, or fall, open up or fall over. I was teaching With Libra Easington this last week, who's a teacher's is kind of concentration a lot a lot. And he used the expression, you go over the cliff, which is kind of a frightening image. But you can you can Oh, here we go. Or maybe it's more like more like you're on the roller coaster and you've kind of gone up and up and up, or do you go down, you know, maybe that's frightening too, but kind of if you feel kind of a shift or a change, and so that so there's four of them these shifts. So one is to go into what's called the first Samadhi. The first jhana called jhana in Pali. And the first one is, is characterized by having this joy and happiness, but it has this effort effort still needed to be present. The second one, the effort to be present is no longer there. Not to work at it anymore. And then the rapture, the joy part stands out and highlight when the joy, the third one, the joy falls away and the happiness stands out in the highlight. And then when the happiness fades away, then the deep equanimity deep peace and stillness stands out in highlight. So there's these kind of shift changes, and this was the sequence that it takes. So the Buddha gave these analogies before this, it's the analogy sometimes kind of give you maybe more sense of what it is perhaps are going to interesting perspective understanding these states. So the first state is that of the analogy is that of taking a metal bowl and this is part of it and you know, the ancient world, they would have, if you go take a bath and the public baths, I guess, there was a soap attendant who would take the soap powder. I don't know what they used for soap back then, but they had it was dry. powder and they still have that in India dry powder so you know you took soap from here anyway so dry dry powder and they would sprinkle it with water and oil and then they would need this flour of powder until it became a ball of soap powder or soap and then they would make sure of a saturated all the way through so though all the moisture was saturated all the way through it's kind of like making dough for bread I suppose you take the dry flour you put water and you and you need it they need it and mix it mix until there's no more dry flour anywhere and all hopes together well and you needed your work it to work it and so there is still this working. There's effort being made still in this first state. It's it's kind of kind of doesn't require much effort. The minds not really mine is not going to Go away easily just you're there, but you're kind of still focusing on the breath. For example, they're focusing and kind of stay present, be there, stay there, encouraging yourself to hold it right there.

And that's the needing to being there with experience the or the stroking of the cat in a stroke and stay there kind of make the image to make the effort there. And the what's the what's really nice about this image of needing the flower until it's all saturated. The instructions that are given here is you take the feeling of well being and joy that's coming up in that point. And you you spit take your time to you hang out with it and let it spread throughout the body, but it kind of become infused into all your pores. So sometimes it is kind of joy arises and first since it arises some places In the body, in the face or in the hands or some playing the chest, but the idea is to make it all pervasive. So it becomes kind of really established and strong. And then the next image is still with water. It's interesting images are water coming to water.

The next one for the second jhana second stage, you no longer have to do any work. And so nothing's needed from the outside. So sprinkling from the outside the water, leading it to select there's work from the outside being done. And the image of nothing coming from the outside is that of a lake that has no rivers of streams that come into it. And so it's not being fed by that and there's no rain happening. It's



just that and but we're at rather where the water is coming to replenish the lake is there's an underwater spring that's gushing up from the floor of the lake. And this this current of water flows up from the spring and Fill in the lake. So now the movement is internal, it comes inside ourselves, as opposed to inside the system inside the Samadhi inside the concentration state, as opposed to us still a little bit little bit the outside working it and doing it. And that's it. And this feeling of the upwelling spring in the lake is this rapture that arises just bubbles up. But sometimes it's very strong kind of gushing through the system. And sometimes it actually feels like a current of energy or current of joy or something that happens can be quite, quite intense. So the lake is still it's not being and there's nothing coming from the outside. We're not really listening to anything or hearing anything or being input from the outside. There's nothing coming in no input from the outside in terms of the mind making the effort outside the state. It just, it's there.

And then the next image for The third jhana is that of a very still Lake, very still quiet, peaceful lake that has no current inside, no spring inside just just very still. And in this lake, there are lotus flowers floating. And lotus flowers have different colors. It's quite beautiful. And apparently some of these Lotus plants can flower underwater as well as on top of the water. And so in this in this simile, a lot of the lotus flowers are beautiful lotus flowers are floating just under the surface in the water. So it's very still cool, very cool, very refreshing, nice water very still and peaceful. Nothing disturbs the water. And it's very beautiful things these lotus flowers that are blossomed are floating there. And it says no part of the flower is not touched by the water. And so the water is this piece For state and so and the lotus flowers maybe is the feeling of happiness this sublime feeling of well beings contentment that's there or perhaps it's you, you're the lotus flower and no part of you is not touched by this peaceful happy place It is also suffused you kind of feels you It's everything is there and you're being touched by it. So peaceful quiet.

Then the next image, the lake is no longer there in the water image is no longer being used. But now it's a person who's sitting covered by a white cloth, a completely clean, new white cloth. And the no part of the body is not being touched by this white cloth. So I'm not sure exactly how this image works but the if you've maybe as a kid if you ever covered yourself with a white sheet and have to hide or something from your parents in bed or something my son when I go to bed when he goes to bed when I'm home, he still likes to hide under the covers so I can come and find him and then you know he's been doing it for a long time and I seem to always find him there but he loves this game. Or, or you know, you you make adult kid makes a little house under the table with putting sheets over the sides of the table, it's cozy in there and then maybe it's a lot of light that day and so this nice kind of clean white light kind of kind of comes in still light comes in and under the table through the sheets. And then, you know, we've completely covered also means that you don't see anything. And so it's all you see in the state. If you see anything, you just you see light white. Often there's a feeling of just a light golden light or white light that scene or very still, there's not open again, there's not an input from the outside and the senses and seeing and feeling stuff, everything gets kind of peaceful and white and clear in a very nice way. very still. Some people have said that this image of the white cloth is little or a is kind of the contentment you feel after being completely satisfied. And this way, if you're in the desert, thirsty and you finally see the water the lake up ahead, then you get really excited. Lots of joy and rapture. That's the rapture part of the service. And then you finally get to the water and start drinking and you take some big You're still thirsty, but now you drink in a happy way You're so happy. You're no longer excited and running to the water because you're so thirsty now you're content you know you're at the water. And so now you just it's very satisfying just drink the water. And then once you've satiated yourself had enough to drink. Then you sit in the shade and the tree in this little oasis and cover yourself with your nice towel. Maybe you've taken a bath to come clean. And then you sit there very contented, happy, you've had enough and you're safe and had enough and, and so this they have sitting there with a

blanket sitting there with a towel or the sheet over you is this idea. So there's a lot of variations of how these particular states are experienced. So the you know, the way I described it is kind of just very approximate. I wasn't trying to be very technical, because it's, it's better not to be too technical or exactly of the great variations in which people experience them. Some people will experience each of these states with great intensity, a lot of concentration intensity goes into it. And some people have experienced them with just very little intensity. And so they're much milder the states and closer to ordinary states of consciousness, intense ones are further away from ordinary states of consciousness. And exactly how some of these things are experienced the happiness or the joy or the peace is sometimes idiosyncratic, different people experience in different ways for who knows what reason. But that's why sometimes the images, those similes of the lake and sometimes speak to a wider range of people because sometimes similarly, it's easier to find yourself than if you give a technical description of exactly what's going on. The people who have these kinds of states and can experience them find that they're extremely satisfying, and very, sometimes very meaningful to have them. Because there's a sense of safety sense of well being sense of joy, a sense of that, you know, that feels complete or feels very good, then it's hard to have that kind of feeling and daily life not impossible, but it's hard to have it there. It's very satisfying, very meaningful. It's very people who are like sensual desire are really happy in these states, because there's a lot of sensuality.

And these states are very people who have lived with a lot of conflict in their lives, find it very meaningful, because there's no conflicts like almost like conflict has been healed in the states and just states of conflict free peace, safety, confidence, that's there. People who experience a lot of anger and hostility can feel almost as if there's a lot of love coming out of these states. It's very Closely Akin, in fact, not a few times in the Buddhist teachings, he describes coming into the states with loving kindness as the primary kind of focus of attention for the state. So, the loving kindness, experience of love or compassion becomes quite intense and beautifully intense in these kinds of way. You know, Ordinary Love You know, is a little bit you know, you can sometimes you can feel love for someone or feel love and it kind of state that lingers for some while, but it's easily lost touch with because so easily we start thinking about something else, you know, and then oh, yeah, you know, with my lover, you know, we come back and you know, maybe think about something else. You know, it kind of comes and goes or something. But with the strong states of concentration, the states of love you It's like you're not going anywhere. That's the idea. You're, that's the focus and you're there with it. And as this experience of loving kindness Just there, and then you go through these four different stages. By time you get to the fourth one, it's really, you know, just that's basically all there is you're abiding in a beautiful state of love or compassion. And sometimes these will arise naturally by themselves for people as they doing this practice. The, in Buddhism, the point of these states are not the states themselves. And sometimes Buddhist teachers will warn students to avoid them or not get too caught up in them. Because they can be a form of attachment. And because there can be dead ends because they don't really open up. They're not what liberation is. If you go to a good Zen master, to a great meditation Master, perhaps, but and tell them you're having some of these states. If they're polite, they'll just yawn and if and if they're, you know, if they're, you know, more strict or Something they might kick you out of the monastery or you know the you know nothing in or you know or say some murderbot say look at you and say, you know, come in you say hi these states are great, you know, what do you think of these? And they say, oh, now are you going to suffer a lot? The hell help you not to get so caught up in them, but they are useful states and I think they should be respected and honored and when they happen I think can be supported. And we don't be so afraid of them because as long as we have mindfulness going, they're self correcting. You don't you don't have to worry about getting caught in them. You might be there people get stuck in them for a little while. But it's not as terrible thing. I mean, do suck enjoy, you know what I mean? What's wrong with that? And it isn't even though it's like pretty good job. It's like you it's not like you have You know, you got drunk or like cocaine or all these other things, you know, not like you went out and, you know, did all kinds of kind of sensual things that people do that they

wake up back to where they were doing. You know, it's clean, good fun. And it's self correcting over time. Over time, it's a shift, so not to worry about it. And the, but they're the function of this, that I've talked about already in this series, but one of the functions is to really one of the primary functions to really help us to loosen up the grip of our attachments and loosen up the grip of our fear, loosen up the grip of our hate.

This is kind of a very deep tenderizer like a meat tenderizer a tenderizer of the heart tenderizer of the mind. And it's you know, when we're really stuck Hard to narrow attachments or fears or desires or angers and all that. And so it's a great help to soften, soften and soften the mind soften the heart. And because of that, just that is good. And because of that, it helps soften the mind, relax the mind enough that it become it's, it's more possible for the mind to have deeper insights and to have experiences of liberation or radical experiences of letting go a mind which is kind of frozen mine which is hard. Mine which is you know, kind of you know, it's like, you know, if you if your hand gets cold in the in the wintertime in this in the icy weather, and it gets all numb, and it might be you can't uncurl it. He says no, you can't use your hand until it thaws. But once it does, and you can open your hand. It's kind of like that sometimes the mind or the heart It gets so hard so frozen, that we can't, you know, can't open it can free it. So it has to thaw. And so these concentration states is one way in which the, the mind thaws and, and so once it's thawed and soft, then it's easier to let the deepest forms of liberation or freedom letting go to happen. So next week I'll talk the last series I'll talk more about how this concentration stuff works together with insight practice, mindfulness practice, and how the other kind of insights they're used as with the concentration as a basis can, can lead to liberation and freedom. So sit, meditate, relax, shift from thinking to sensing relax into what you're Focusing on and enjoy yourself but not the kind of joy that's thinking about it. Just enjoy Thank you