

Samadhi (51) Intro to Third Jhana

Gil Fronsdal

2025-04-14

Keywords: samādhī, Spirit Rock, third jhāna, Suddha, Buddha, happiness, renunciation, equanimity, Sampajañña, IMC

So welcome, everyone, to the next week of our series on *samādhī*. And if you hear in the background all the many birds, I'm... sitting meditating outdoors at the lands of Spirit Rock and accompanied by the birds and occasionally by the animals that are here and it's nice to be meditating outdoors. So this week the topic is the third jhana, the third of the three absorptions that the Buddha emphasized, and with this happiness comes to the foreground. The word is *Suddha*, S-U-K-H-A. And perhaps it's... When we get into this third genre, things get very simple, very ordinary, not ordinary exactly, but very simple.

Nothing really special exactly, except that it feels so good. It feels so nice and so still and so quiet. Okay. There's virtually no thoughts at all. Certainly no discursive thinking, no conversational thinking.

And there's one wonderful descriptions of all the *Jhānas* that maybe is a nice entryway into the third *Jhāna*. Abiding in the *Janus* and any of the *Janus* is called... The happiness of renunciation, the happiness of seclusion, the happiness of peace, the happiness of awakening. I say of this kind of happiness that it should be practiced, cultivated, that it should be frequently done, that it should not be feared. It should not be feared.

So I don't know how many of you fear happiness and joy, but certainly some people fear going into this very deep stillness, where, for temporarily, we're putting aside all the reference points we have for how we live our life, including any reference point of me, myself, and mine. Conceit and self-concerns kind of fall away, which for some people is quite frightening. In a certain kind of way, our connection to other people is no longer salient, no longer operating in the moments of being deeply in meditation. And for some people, that feels like a betrayal or feels not possible. In the time of the Buddha, I think the reason why he said they should not be feared is that the renunciant ascetic traditions of his time didn't fear any kind of happiness because they thought there was a form of attachment.

It was a form of keeping you trapped, caught in attachments. And the Buddha was saying, no, there is a happiness which is not a trap. That does involve attachment, doesn't involve, doesn't keep you in the world of clinging. And this is the happiness that comes from the renunciation, from a certain kind

of seclusion, from peace, certain kind of awakening, awakening from clinging, a clear awareness. So happiness is the primary characteristic of the third jana.

And in the second jana, there's joy and happiness. And joy, as I said last week, is a little bit, the genesis, the source of it is a little bit more kind of a mental excitation. There's a little bit more thrill or big. The mind kind of say, yes, or something. And it manifests often with the strong sensations in the body, energies in the body.

But it has something to do with the excitement or the activation of the mind in a joyful way. And at the same time, in the second *Janna*, there also is the sweetness of this happiness, contentment of this happiness that is deeper, more settled, more restful, more contented. And so the shift from the second *Janna* to the third is a quieting of the joy. The joy fades away, is the classic language. It, and, um, and so sometimes for many people, just the natural unfolding.

Because as we get more and more settled, more present, we're more, you feel safer and more content, not to be thinking a lot, not to be trying a lot, not to be trying to make something happen. It's enough just to be present, just to be here. And there's a movement towards calming that happens. It's just a natural movement. And at some point, there's a calming of this joy.

And what's left is the happiness, this sweet happiness, this deep sense of well-being, that feels very embodied. And some people, the way to shift from the second John to the third is to feel the joy, certainly, but at some point, see if you can distinguish the happiness that's there from the joy that's there. Find the more sweeter, the more contented, the more softer happiness from the more excited kind of joy. Find it in your body and then put your attention there, rest your attention in that sweeter kind of happiness. And maybe even, and the exhale, kind of saddle into it, rest into it more, letting the joy kind of fade away, fall away.

And so some people can kind of, kind of, it's a way of entering into the third jana. And with the mind getting very quiet, so there's no discursive thoughts. There might be knowing, there is knowing, it might be a non-verbal knowing. And the Buddha describes that in this third jana, there is still *Sampajañña*, which is a Pāli word that means clear recognition. So there is a very simple knowing that simply recognizes what's going on and that it's good.

And that doesn't have to involve conscious thoughts, non-verbal thoughts perhaps. But it's really registered. We know that, oh, this is good, this is happy. And because the thinking mind, the reactive mind, the mind has gotten so quiet, there's almost no tendency to be reactive, to be for and against any experience. Different things happen if they do and it doesn't rattle the mind, doesn't stir up the mind so there's a lot of equanimity in this state.

And there's a lot of awareness and it's not the mindfulness that is a doing mindfulness, it's not a mindfulness that involves mental noting or or um it is no longer any need to be focusing on something, the mind is just very present. And in the midst of it, there might be breathing, very, and the breathing

has gotten very, very subtle now, very quiet. And that breathing might be almost continuous with the happiness and with that well-being. And it all happens in a real sense of awareness, a field of awareness, field of openness, clarity. And so the classic description is, with the fading of joy, a practitioner abides, equanimous, aware, with clear recognition and experiencing happiness with the body.

So here now there's four primary factors of the third *Janna* that are here, that are kind of the primary characteristic. And whether these are really distinct states or whether they're somehow all part of the same that can be kind of, you know, like different sides of a diamond, I don't know. So these four are... being a equanimous, aware, clear recognition, and experiencing happiness with the body. So here the emphasis is so much with the body. We're at rest, we're at peace with the body.

And it really feels that for the time we're in the third genre, that we're not anymore in our normal body. We're not experiencing the karmic body. We're not experiencing the physical body so much with the aches and pains and all that. And these all kind of... That body, it's almost like we have different bodies to abide in. And the state of the mind has a tremendous amount to say about how we experience the body.

Not that the state of mind is responsible for the experiences of the body. But the state of mind has a lot to do with how we experience the body. And when thinking becomes very, very, very quiet and still, when the mind is very focused, very still and centered, when there's very little effort needing to be done to just abide, dwell, float in the present moment, when... kind of active, active, energetic joy and energies in the body get really quiet and still. At that point, the body is experienced very different.

The body feels very, very light, almost like it has no weight. The body feels very open or transparent, as if, almost as if it's sometimes beginning to feel like almost like it's completely translucent or something. There's no, it's like very clear. The body can feel just very cozy and sweet. It can feel like it has no boundaries.

Not so much because there's no boundaries because... The mind is not oriented or constructing or tuning into that sense of boundaries to the body. And very, very sweet, very deep, very quiet. So, key factors of the third *Janna* is the fading of joy, equanimity, awareness, clear recognition, and happiness of the body. All of which one abides in, what abides in these experiences, one rests in them.

It's almost as if we become them. We're one with them. We're unified with them. So that's my introduction. That's the introduction to the third *Jana*.

And we'll go spend the week with this. And maybe there won't be too much to say. But to practice with it. And we'll see how this goes. So thank you, and I'll be here at Spirit Rock for two more days, and back at IMC on Thursday.

Thank you very much.