

## Samadhi (52) Immersed in Silence of Third Jhana

**Gil Fronsdal**

**2025-04-15**

**Keywords:**

Samadhi, third jhāna, noble silence, discursive thinking, happiness, Bodh Gaya, Buddha, lotuses, meditation, non-verbal knowing

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So, good morning and welcome to this next talk on *Samadhi*. And this week we're exploring the third *jhāna*. That is, basically the second and third are recognized as a form of noble silence. And silence, of course, in our society, there could be a dictionary of silence. All the different meanings of what's conveyed in silence, many of it which is not kind, and sometimes is off-putting.

But this is called a particular kind of silence called knowable silence. A silent treasure, treasure silence. Where it feels cozy, it feels wonderful, it feels like nothing's needed. And there's a remarkable thing that happens when discursive thinking stops, conversational thinking stops, rumination stops. Not just a few times, often for many people, rumination, obsessing about things with the mind, storytelling, telling yourself stories, repeating the same idea over and over again, commenting, judging, having thoughts which are mean, thoughts which are scary, thoughts which are filled with desires.

All these limit us. All these narrow the window, narrow the wholeness, they divide us. They keep us not really deeply in touch in a holistic way with ourselves from the inside out. There's, in fact, even though thinking can be quite pleasant at times or quite compelling, seemingly very important, it involves a tremendous sacrifice and tremendous loss. And oddly enough, sometimes the people who are most worried about the Buddhist teachings of renunciation, letting go, which these *jhānas* have a lot to do with letting go in the meditation, the people who are most worried about it, most troubled by it, are the ones who are most involved in their thinking mind, discursive mind.

And there's good reason for that, because that's the mind that tells us. Stories about all the things we need and should have or don't have, and all the ways that, you know, we've been offended or hurt. And of course, thinking is valuable. Of course, some of the things we think about are true enough. But it's unfortunate if it disconnects us, from the wholeness of who we are, and some of the deeper capacities of knowing and intelligence that we have, that are waiting for us, are there, kind of below the level of discursive thinking, below the level of conversational thinking.

And so, going into this third *jhāna*, it can feel very silent in there, but it's not a silence that is being silenced, being ignored. It's not a silence of being disconnected. There's a feeling of, like, almost a

feeling of, to be alive is enough. Someone on this retreat that I'm teaching asked me very sincerely a question of, what's the meaning of life? And sometimes if someone asks that question, it's not really asking for an answer or maybe too philosophical or something.

But there was such a sincerity that this was really important for the person. So I was careful about how I responded. So there was an example. I was using a kind of discursive thinking to think about that. But it arose from that silent place inside.

It wasn't arising from fear or ambition. It was more kind of the place where creativity or intuition arises, maybe. So I thought about it for a while. I lived with it for a while. And the answer I came back with is that the meaning of life is to discover the expression of life.

What is it that wants to be expressed? What is this flowing and growing and knowing from deep inside that you can never know? If you answer the question, what is the meaning of life, with a philosophical answer, with an answer that even is logical or somehow rational or somehow conceptual, it's like asking someone if they're involved in some wonderful playing of music or doing a dance or maybe just going for a walk with a friend in a delightful walk. What's the meaning of friendship? What's the meaning of playing music?

What's the meaning of dance? While you're doing it. It's not needed. In fact, to assign meaning to it during the activity takes you out of the activity. And so to drop in and let the expression of the music, the music making, of the dance, of the friendship, that the expression of it, that is the meaning of life.

So in these deeper *jhānas*, it can feel that way. There's no need for meaning. We're so fully alive, so fully here, so fully quieted, the discursive, ruminating mind that tells us otherwise. It's part of the delight for it. So, and it's also very satisfying to go through this process of feeling a lot of joy and happiness in the first and second *jhāna*, and then having the joy quiet, and then inviting this very deeper happiness where this deeper embodied happiness, again, is not a verbal, it doesn't have a verbal source.

It doesn't have a source from ideas. Many people's emotions and sense of happiness and sadness is so dependent on the thinking mind and whatever direction thoughts go, that's the way we feel. And here there's a whole different source for happiness, for joy, that wells up from deep inside and that exists deep inside that just feels satisfying, feels like this is being alive. And so I want to read the metaphor or the simile for the third *jhāna*. And it uses in this metaphor a pool of water that's cool, cool water.

And you have to appreciate that, maybe imagine that it's one of the warmest days you've ever been in, hottest days you've ever been in. Because these metaphors were created in India, in the hot climate of India. I was in the Buddha's place of enlightenment, *Bodhi Gaya*. I think I was there in June. It was the hot season.

It was the hottest season. Boy, there was no one else there. It was so hot. And the Buddha didn't get enlightened in the peak of the hot season, but he was getting close to it when he was sitting under the Bodhi tree there. And in the context of a very hot day it's just a delight to go into it's soothing and

satisfying to go into a cool pool of water.

And so it's in that context you'll see that coolness is used as part of the metaphor and lotus flowers are used and lotus flowers can be quite beautiful and so it's a metaphor for something that's quite beautiful in ourselves, in our experience. So the third *jhāna* is like a pool filled with blue lotuses or red lotuses or white lotuses, where some of the blue, red, and white lotuses would be born in the water, would grow in the water, would be nourished by the water without ever rising up above the water of the surface. The cool water would fill, pervade, saturate, and permeate those lotuses from their tips to their roots, so no part of the blue, red, or white lotuses would not be touched with cool water. So the practitioner pervades and saturates and permeates this body with happiness, freed of joy, so that no part of the body is not touched. So a couple of things about this simile.

I just find it delightful, this expression. This body is permeated with happiness freed of joy. Have you ever heard of such a thing? Why would you want to free yourself from joy? Because there's a happiness which is better.

Sick, pure happiness in a very deep, embodied, satisfying way lacks the excitement, the thrill of joy. And of course that thrill and excitement is quite wonderful at first, but if it goes on and on and on and on, it's exhausting, it's tiring. And then to be able to drop into this deeper state of happiness. And the metaphor is one of being immersed in the water, cool, refreshing water. When I was young, we lived by the seashore.

Excuse me. We lived by the seashore, and I spent a lot of time in the summer, not only in the water, but under the water. I had snorkels and masks. And I would dive under the water, maybe to about six feet or so, five, six feet, and flip myself over on my back and try to stay down there as long as I could. There were gentle waves coming in in the sea that I was at.

And I'd be underneath looking up at the waves coming into the shore. And it was so delightful to be down there. There was this wonderful silence. There was this wonderful being kind of enveloped, hugged. It was kind of like being all cozy in a nest, perhaps.

Or cozy in a nice comforter-filled bed or something. And the world had disappeared down there. The world of expectations, the world of needs, the world of comparing myself to others and wanting things to be different. The world was so still and quiet down there, so satisfying. And I felt more alive on my back under the water looking up than I did almost any other time.

No part of my body was not touched by this wonderful environment of the water. So as we go into these deep absorptive states, many people will actually use the simile of dipping under water briefly or for a while. When they're in these deep absorption, and then if they come out, it feels like they're surfacing out of it. And there was a time in my practice where I would go into these deep states, and I needed to, felt like I needed to, just kind of make sure everything was okay, that I wasn't straining, or things were, I knew the time, I knew my environment, and I would surface out of the water and check out what was going on, make sure everything was good, and then I would dip down back in.

And then in this state, everything we experience, all the sensations, whatever goes on, feelings, any feeling goes on, is seen as beautiful, is seen as kind of wonderful, like lotuses. Each thing is distinct. Each thing is its own thing floating in this water. So you might feel sensations of breathing, and it's just delightful, like its own lotus floating in the water. You might even feel some happiness, sensations of happiness, different parts of the body, anything.

And there's a silent knowing, a silent awareness, nonverbal knowing of all this tremendous clarity. And you're not thinking about it, but you know it. You come out of it, you might think about it some, but not in this state. So I hope that this metaphor and these words give you a feel, a sense, maybe through your imagination of what it's like. And if the idea of being in a pool of water is not welcoming for you, maybe there's some other way, another metaphor that you have that can be comfortable.

One of the first times I experienced this kind of thing was going into a thousand-year-old chapel in France. And it was on top of a little hill. And being in that chapel, I was enveloped by a kind of goodness, a kind of peace that was new to me. So, the second *jhāna*. Thank you.

I hope that you somehow go through the day exploring, considering, feeling into ways in which you can have non-verbal knowing. The ways that awareness, mindfulness, can be silent and that you find that very satisfying. So, thank you very much. Thank you.