

On four Buddhist jhanas

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KVĚTOSLAV
MINAŘÍK

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Yoga is a system of mystical efforts. This is not commonly known, because, in the western world there are a lot of practical yogis whose understanding of the idea of yoga is that it is the exercising of positions, or mental effort concretely expressed as concentration of mind on one entirely exclusive object out of the commonly known objects. From this, indeed, an opinion stems, that the yogic development is fully in the hands of people and that the only important thing is whether they will or will not fulfil instructions, concerned mainly with either physical, mental, or both types of, exercises.

This is, however, not in question in yoga. Someone said that yoga is a struggle for quality. This can be understood by it been a struggle for the best inner state, for the clearest state of consciousness, for the highest vigilance, for a state of mind without ill will, hatred and for development of its clarity, for the best emotional states, etc. – for states of a purely positive character. As a rule, it is not possible to achieve such success only by mental effort. This is mainly because those who believe only in this effort are obviously not interested in the religious ethics of yoga, but only devote their effort to achieve that, which they desire emotionally. When striving spiritually, this moral flaw has to be removed by adhering to moral commandments of yoga.

“Struggle for quality” thus means to exclude vices and replace them by virtues, which are reflected in thinking. In another sense, it means to constantly exclude from inner states negative manifestations like, precisely, ill will, hatred, prejudice of mind against someone and something, or its darkening; further then to constantly exclude negative inner states, sleepy torpor and bad emotional states. If a person does not strive precisely in this direction, then no – however strong – desire and concentration of mind, will solve either their problem of a happy emotional and mental state, or even the question of a good health. For, the “struggle for

quality”, especially if accompanied by a correct yogic morality, constitutes the right way of living – a way of living, which, by itself, causes that the being of a person will be gradually led to inner tranquillity and will be producing happy states, even enlightenment, and everything that accompanies the development of a superworldly mind.

The right way of living is thus an action, by which the restlessness resulting from a desirous mind will be subdued and, by that, also its introvert tendency will be brought about. This tendency is then a self-acting concentration of mind, it is the mind’s concentration on one’s own being or on the existence of a yogi. By this, his or her disturbance by irritative sensory perceptions and reminders which so powerfully ignite the taste for trying something, for tasting something, for some experience, will be excluded.

To once and for all interrupt this complex of psychological interrelations and processes causing inner restlessness and ending, as a rule, in some orgasm of varied kinds and natures, is indeed already a great success on the mystical path. It is a great action of renunciation of the world and the beginning of a deep moral discipline, leading to mystical growth, to mystical development. The pounding of waves of cravings and sensory impulses thus ceases and the person devoted to yoga then must get used to, to a great extent, new inner and emotional conditions and conditions related to awareness.

Correctly evaluated, the new inner orientation which came into existence in this way, can be considered an arena where a person struggles in a difficult fight with himself or herself for increase and improvement of the inner tranquillity. The momentum of the previous orientation, actually constantly and immensely aggressively, forces them to again return to the previous way of life and – by this, that “struggle for quality” is characterised. For, if a person does not resist the evil, selfish urges, they are seriously damaged on the mystical path of yogic nature.

This very fact indicates that the mystical development induced by yoga is, in the first place, a matter of a right way of living. Only in the second place it is a matter of mental practices of the type of simple concentration of mind, or of the hathayoga exercises which are popular nowadays. Inversion of the mental vibrations or discharges, which is brought about by withdrawing the mind from the world, its focusing inwards, is continuously disturbed by a desire to repeat earlier feeling sensations – experiences. This fact makes practising concentration or positions, in the first case, devising plans how to get to emotional or sensory

experiences, in the latter case restless sitting, from both of which nothing good will result.

To keep setting the inner being robbed of the, until now unlimited, emotional experience into tranquillity, requires a great deal of inner strength. Generally, it takes years until a person arrives at a complete tranquillity of their “psyche”. Only this tranquillity becomes the true mystical concentration, it becomes those Buddhist jhanas, which are so closely connected with the degree of inner peace arisen from the absence of wanting. Only the degree of tranquillity arisen from the absence of craving brings the mind from the first to the fourth Buddhist jhana; other goals that a person on the path of yoga sets for himself or herself serve nothing good. This is because these goals do not exclude continuation of the inner restlessness, that eternal ‘cycling’ through existences, through reincarnations of the life process, and now – in this life – they, as a rule, claim their price in form of inner decadence, disorders or loss of health. Thus, something totally different than that which a person expected from yoga or hoped for.

Let us, however, return to the development which leads to those four Buddhist jhanas. I would say this about it: when a person, by means of a massive struggle for quality against strongly developed sensory cravings, finally withdraws their mind from the world, they will be overcome by rejoicing, similarly to that of a slave freed from chains. This is the first jhana, which can be disturbed by cravings which surge again and again.

The struggle for the overcoming of these, again surging, cravings, deepens the rejoicing which comes about as a result of the first Buddhist jhana. The struggle disrupts the shallowness of the first Buddhist jhana and, at the same time, it also deepens the mental tranquillity, which can be characterised as a tranquillity arisen from joyfulness. This is the beginning of an emerging impartial view of the world, which can be characterised, due to its accompanying joyfulness, as the second jhana.

When a person, from the second Buddhist jhana, no longer obtains joyfulness as something opposite to the ceasing feverish state of a harsh and uncompromising desires, but being aware of the fact that this joyfulness is easily disturbed, they begin to fight for undisturbable tranquillity, slightly tinted by this, it can be said, causeless joyfulness, they are entering the path of realisation of the third Buddhist jhana. When they succeed in developing this undisturbable inner tranquillity, they will finally achieve equanimity, accompanied by bliss of joyfulness, which is at first developing, and then slowly fading away. This is the third jhana, not achieved,

evidently, by the concentration of mind, but by the right way of living. It is the first state to lead to “opening of the eyes”.

This has to be understood as the beginning of a correct comprehension of the whole question of spiritual development, as it is regarded by yoga; comprehension of a fact that the life process can only be stopped by a way of life, i.e. by a systematic, life-practice based, an extinguishing of the not only thirst for life, but – and mainly – the life drive itself. A person will thus understand that only, and repeatedly only, the right way of living leads to the extinguishing of the life drive, working in life as a consuming, burning, bad fire. The technical yoga, understood as practices independent of the modification of the external life, never leads to this. Not even knowledge, no matter how developed, and even though a superworldly one, leads to this. A person starts to understand, that knowledge is only a product of the correct mystical effort. Thus, it is a factor, which makes the extinguishment of the life drive understandable and by that also realisable, but altogether unrealisable by the technical yoga.

However, the third Buddhist jhana is a process, similarly to both of the previous ones as well as the following fourth one; it is even an inner life process and not an inner state. Therefore, if a person pays attention to fulfilling the conditions of the development of states of the third Buddhist jhana, they are maturing towards the realisation of the fourth jhana. Even the slightest traces of a tinge of emotions disappear from the state of enlightenment. Even the slightest traces of a tinge of emotions, which is inherent in the third Buddhist jhana, disappear from the state of enlightenment. The state of enlightenment gradually develops and an indifference of the enlightened one to the sensory life in the broadest sense of this word begins to emerge. The ignoring of suffering of the samsaric existence and living, as well as ignoring of the celestial states, comes about. An increasing introspection, and leaving everything around oneself behind, is accompanied, solely by an utter absence of craving. Therefore the lust for life ceases to exist, as does the life drive, and a person becomes ready to entirely pass beyond without a single impulse of the desire “to live” or “to be”.

The force that keeps the incarnation process running thus ceases to work, and a person is ready to extinguish themselves like someone, who has lived their life out until the ultimate trace of a touch of desires. The terrible “then” with a horrible conglomerate of sufferings, interwoven with only exceptional moments of pleasures, stops for them. A landless clear emptiness, welcomes the realiser of the fourth jhana. The others, who haven’t eradicated the life drive down to its root,

are only welcomed by dazzling hopes for future pleasures; but instead of these, only sufferings occur.

Therefore, yoga doesn't mean concentrations without a right way of living going hand in hand, contrary to what uninformed people believe – those people, who are picking from the yogic teaching, only the promises of power and victory over their life difficulties. Yoga is, in the first place, a right way of living, which can, indeed, be properly expressed only by that “struggle for quality”, as it was said above. Those who are able to struggle for quality without the modification of the moral orientation which is prescribed by yoga, will fulfil the conditions of the right way of living without modifying their living according to the moral commandments of yoga. However, is not easy. Those who are full of cravings, as a rule do not struggle for quality, they only struggle for emotional experiences. Therefore they miss the target. The right way of living accompanied by yogic effort does not miss the target.



KVĚTOSLAV MINAŘÍK (1908 – 1974)

Czech mystic who, in his youth, learned in the deepest detail and in himself realised, the highest spiritual and mystical ideals of the East, without losing contact with the social and the working life. Later, he has formulated his experience into an original, authentic experience-based spiritual teaching, founded on the ways of thinking and psychology of a contemporary European. The teaching leads a person through life, and perfects their

being as a whole; it does not only deal with the physical, moral or mental component, but develops all three in harmony. Out of the great spiritual teachings of the world, Květoslav Minařík's teaching is closest to the Mahayana Buddhism.