

# 2002-01-28: Love

Fri, 6/19 10:33AM • 40:53

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

kindness, life, discover, people, buddhism, love, loving kindness, called, ascetic practices, practice, spiritual, heart, liberated, meeting, dalai lama, beckons, sentimental, part, christianity, liberation

## SPEAKERS

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When Buddhism came to China, it had been developing in India for some 600 years. And then it continued to develop in India for another thousand years or more. And then periodically as the Indian developments showed themselves, they'd be transported to China and the Chinese would receive all this different Buddhism in India, because it was being born there. Indians kind of knew all the different schools and how they relate to each other, and which sutras were the good ones, and which ones were the, you know, once you should not pay so much attention to and, and they had all this, you know, understanding of the scene. It's like, you know, if you're here in America, there's Christianity which is all over and we have some sense of the different dominant dominations in schools and traditions of Christianity and we can kind of kind of keep them separately separate somewhat. But imagine that that Some, you know, the Amazon Indians, we've never even heard of Christianity are suddenly importing or we're exporting to them, Christianity. And we're not telling them but all the differences, we're just giving them all the Christian teachings from all the different traditions here in America all at once to you guys sorted out. That's how the Chinese were about receiving Indian Buddhism. And it took about 500 years for the Chinese to kind of sort through all these teachings of Indian Buddhism and try to make some, some sense of them. And they, they're quite quite amazing intellectual feats, that Chinese trying to do and understanding systemising Buddhist tradition, all of it. And around the 06 hundred or 700 or so 800 there was one of the greatest philosophers of Chinese Buddhism, who took all this work as systematizing and trying to understand Buddhism and with the help of all the preceded him in his own study, he reduced all the teachings of Buddhism to one phrase. And that phrase was liberation beckons us, within everything. Each and everything that exists in a core that thing in some way or other. It's calling us Hey, you, come, be liberated. be awake. So that's nice. So what does that mean? So I don't want to talk about exactly the meaning of that phrase, except that I think it's true in our hearts. That in the core of our hearts in our hearts, there is something that beckons us calls us, come, come, come, be liberated. Come discover, come be at home and you On heart, come discover the possibility of love. compassion, liberation, generosity, come discover this tremendous depth and joy and peace, which is that character, the nature of our hearts, and it's calling

us come. And many of us are. find ourselves in a centrifugal force away from our hearts. It's almost as if our hearts is a place where we're not naturally tending to go for many of us, but rather and also society helps us not to go there. And it offers us lots of distractions, lots of goals and ambitions and things to acquire and do and be busy with. And we get involved very much kind of in the surface level of our lives, and it's very easy to lose touch with the internal life, the interior life, the Life of the heart, the life of our gifts, spiritual psyche. And I think, I think, you know, probably most spiritual traditions involve some kind of turning away from constantly being externally focused to discovering our capacity to internal life, the depth and the wealth is available in our hearts, which beckons us to call us come here. Many of us don't listen to that calling, or have never even never stopped to, to hear it. But there's some turning away, and then discovering some internal aspect of our lives. One of the internal aspects of our lives I want to talk about today, I want the important aspects of the inner heart to the spiritual heart is love is loving kindness in the Buddhist tradition. Love is usually divided into four different types in

Greek, Christian Added Christian philosophy, I think or Greek philosophy have, as I know three different types of love. There's eros, I got Bay, and philia. And as far as I know, in English, English is kind of as far as I can tell, maybe you can be corrected. It's kind of vocabulary poor when it comes to love. You know, some cultures have lots of words for love, and we have love, I guess we have friendship and things, different things. But in Buddhism, the four main words for kind of love are loving kindness, or metta, compassion Karuna, sympathetic joy, or mudita and equanimity, Rebecca. And today I want to just kind of bring up the topic of loving kindness or metta, which is kind of the core experience of love that is pointed to in the spiritual life of Buddha Buddhists. I think it's in the nature of our heart, to have to be loving. It's not something we have to kind of create or do or make happen. Those things that can happen sometimes that way, in a sense, but it's kind of the nature of the heart itself in their life that calls us and wants to be expressed and to live through us, has a quality of love as part of it. And the great extended spiritual life involves a shedding of the obstacles to letting that love shine and be part of who we are and be expressed in our lives. There's to shed and let go of those obstacles to see those obstacles, understand and work with and practice with them. So they no longer obstacles. So our capacity for kindness for friendliness, for love, for compassion, has a chance to kind of be an intimate and complete part of our life. Generally, when people are translated metta into English, they've chosen not to translate the chosen translated as loving kindness, kind of a compound word, then they've chosen not to translate it as love. But I saw recently a tick, not Han, preferred the word love. And he said, one of the reasons he said is that some words need to be healed. Some words, you know, are so worn that worn down and broken and overused. And rather than discarding them, we have to kind of reuse them in a way that brings them back to life. So he wanted to translate metta into a simple word, English love. But when we add kindness to his loving kindness, it suggests part of the quality of this method of this Buddhist idea of love, is it it's not passionate love, like eros. It has a it has a kindness to it. It's a kind of softening a gentleness a warm, a caring for ourselves and for people around us. There's a lovely quote By Atlas Oxley he says, of all the Warrens mage dog eared words in our vocabulary. Love is surely the Grubbiness smelliest, slimy just bawled from a million puppets. This lascivious, seriously crooned through hundreds of millions of loudspeakers, it has

become an outrage to good taste and decent feelings and obscenity which one hesitates to pronounce. And yet, it has to be pronounced for after all, love is the last word.

And then there's another thing. This Mullah Nasreddin who's the wise fool of Sufism. Mullah Nasreddin decided to start a flower garden. He prepared the soil and planted the seeds of many beautiful flowers. When they came up, his garden was filled not just with his chosen flowers, but also overrun by dandelions. He sought out advice from gardeners all over and tried every method known to get rid of them, but to no avail. Finally, he walked all the way to the Capitol to speak to the Royal gardener at the sheiks palace. The wise old man had counseled many gardeners before, and suggested a variety of remedies to expel the dandelions. But Mullah had tried them all. They sat together in silence for some time. And finally the gardener looked at Mullah Nasreddin and said, well, then I suggest you learn to love them. How do we love that which is our weeds?

I think it's the nature again of our heart to love all of life. The Chinese quote, awakening beckons us within everything. There's something in everything that partakes in awakening and love and a spiritual connection is that have a sacred kind of life. And part of the practice of mindfulness is to begin appreciating the sacredness of the specialists or the liberated qualities and ennobling quality that's found in everything that we find everything we encounter. In talking about this way, I think it's helpful to think of Buddhist practice is in part involving a shift of perspective, to begin looking at our life, maybe from a new perspective than the usual one that we carry around with us. Because many of the usual perspectives we can carry around with us sometimes add to our suffering and cause problems. And one of the perspective, one of the changes of perspective that Buddhism suggests is the one of loving kindness to go around and see if you can discover how to live in a kind way or to see the world to kind I To see even your enemies to kind eyes just to meet everyone you encounter, what would it mean to be kind to the people you encounter? The famous quote by the Dalai Lama, where he says, my religion is kindness. 25 30 years ago, someone told me that, you know, the core expression of any religion all was kindness, I would have just shrugged my shoulders and said, well, that's nice, but I'm going to go someplace what's more profound, but to be kind, and then some of us had our mothers tell us, please be kind to people. And how many of us had our mothers tell us, you need to be kind to yourself. In the Buddhist tradition, the idea of loving kindness is supposed to be first started with oneself, to discover how to be kind towards oneself, how to express Have some friendliness towards ourselves, friendliness to all our experience. Now you might say, you know, that's kind of sentimental. And that's what I did say when I first encountered this Buddhist teaching of loving kindness. But what I, what I discovered for myself is that it's not a sentimental issue in the sense of something that gets applied on top of our life a kind of a sentimental thinking or sweet saccharin kind of thoughts about things. But it's really in the nature of our hearts itself, liberated when we're settled in our hearts, at home in ourselves, not in conflict with ourselves, not chasing after 10,000 things not ambitious, not filled with resentment and hate and bitterness, that when all those things kind of have a chance to kind of settle away, it's in the nature of the heart itself, to be kind, to be soft, be friendly, to be gentle to whatever arises whenever it goes on.

And I emphasize this because I encounter many people who don't know this, and many people who have the attitude about themselves, that they're not good enough to be at home with themselves not good enough to love themselves or not, they're not good enough. They don't deserve to be in a loving state or to really grasp and relax. They're not good enough as they are. There's always some other thing they have to acquire and do and become and hide from other people in certain ways. They're not good enough as they actually are. And to allow the love the awakening that's beckoning us from within, to allow for that philosophy pulled to it or discover that internal life there we need to begin to get some sense that we are enough that we don't we it's not a matter of doing more and acquiring more and attaining stuff and, and or hiding part of who we are. It just in and of in and of itself as we are. We're enough. We can discover me settle on that Discover this love. When the Chinese said that awakening or liberation beckons beckons us within everything. He also meant that even within our obstacles even within our self hate and feelings of self worth and doubt, or depressions and sadness, even in those things, in the core of them, if we have the eyes to see, we can feel this tenderness of awakening beckoning us Buddhists, and over and over again, focusing on how we can change the perspective on what's happening to us in our lives.

So we don't see ourselves a victim of it, and see ourselves to be burdened by it, but rather see the possibility, the ennobling possibility of liberation within anything. So love loving kindness, the Buddha emphasized loving kindness a lot. And I read recently that in Christianity, certain parts of Christianity was reading a book by a Quaker and he was Using using Latin words so I take maybe the kind of Catholic theology, he talks about two different movements in Christianity. One was called contemptuous Monday, which means something like contempt for the world. And the other movement was a more Monday, love of the world. And he said, both have to happen in the spiritual life. There has to be appreciation of both. And in Buddhism is same thing. There's a, there's an emphasis in Buddhism and the necessity of some kind of turning away. Hopefully not too contempt has quality aversion to it. Some Buddhists maybe only say that, but some kind of turning away from that which always keeps us separate from the internal life and that quiet, peaceful, loving, liberated place we can discover in our own hearts. But the same time there is also be the love of the world, the more of Monday and the experience I've had which was is that as we discover the inner life and give chance for that to live and be part of who we are, give space for that, through meditation through contemplative time, through all kinds of ways in which we allow that to grow and develop within us. That that in that, in the turn, brings us with a greater sense of love, for the world of kindness for the world to so it's kind of like two trains which are passing each other in the night. The, the withdrawal from the world, it's very important to our spiritual life, it's only half of it to the other train is that which is the entry into the world with love and kindness. And both are happening at this it can't happen at the same time. There's some people emphasize one over the other at different times. So the Buddha also emphasized more or less the same thing. And the goal of Buddhist practice can be understood as a kind of turning away complete turning away from any clinging To the world, any clinging to the world at all. But an important part of that path of attaining that and getting there is this quality of love of loving the world loving others. And this is encapsulated, or expressed in one of the beautiful discourses of the Buddha called the Metta Sutta, the discourse on loving kindness. And I spent part of today

translating it. Because I translated I kind of translated before, I didn't really translated before I made my own version before, which is published in various places. And now I'm embarrassed that it's published even in our new book, because we have out there but I really went back and look at the Pāli today the original and redid it. So I'm gonna read it for you.

And this is the basis for the practice of loving kindness. So in Buddhism, we don't just leave it to chance or for loving kindness to bubble up. There's also a practice This, of developing his kindness within us. And that practice is said, his origin in this discourse of the Buddha gave later in Buddhism, when Buddhist theologians kind of looked at this discourse, they divided it up into three sections. And they divided according to the three trainings of sila Samadhi Panyo, a virtue, meditation practice, and wisdom, and so understood to be kind of a progression as you go through the text. So the first section of this part of virtue describes the kind of virtues that kind of qualities that are helpful to be or we need to develop as part of a spiritual life. And spiritual life is not just only a matter of letting go of obstacles and just relaxing and hoping by relaxing enough that we'll live in a glorious spiritual, you know, heaven. But it's also a matter of changing ourselves changing our behavior, attitude, qualities. And it's a very, it's a slow process to develop things like patience and sincerity and different things. But to know that know about these things and slowly, slowly kind of take the steps we need to, to develop ourselves. So the sutta begins with this opening, to reach the state of peace. And that's just another way of stating to reach the ultimate aim of Buddhism of Nirvana of liberation, to reach the state of peace, those skilled in the good, those skilled and the good, what's good are skilled and the ultimate goal. They should be capable and upright, straightforward, easy to speak to. You like that. Gentle and not proud, contented Easily supported with few duties, living lightly with census calmed, wise, not arrogant, without greed for supporters, and they shouldn't do the least thing that the wise would criticize. So if you need to do those things you know you think you have made that's that's enough. And then the next section is has to do with the development of meditation, more or less practice. So these people who want to reach a state of peace, who have these virtues and capacities, they should contemplate or wish in the following way. may all be happy and secure. May all beings be happy at heart, all living beings where they're weak. Strong, tall, large, medium or short, tiny or big, seen or unseen, near or distant, born or to be born, may they all be happy. Let no one deceive another, or despise anyone anywhere. But no one to anger or aversion, wish for others to suffer as a mother would risk her own life, to protect her child, her only child. So toward all beings should want to cultivate a boundless heart, with loving kindness for the whole world should one cultivate a boundless heart, above, below and all around without obstruction, without hate, and without ill will, standing or walking, sitting or lying down, as long as one is alert. May one stay with this recollection. This is called a sublime abiding here. Now, in the last section is the wisdom part or the cultivation of liberation. Whoever is virtuous, endowed with vision, not taken by views and having overcome and read for sensual pleasure will not be born again will not be born again in the cycles of suffering, moment by moment, day by day, lifetime by lifetime. As a mother would risk her own life to protect your child, her only child, so towards all beings should one cultivate a boundless heart with loving kindness for the whole world to one cultivate a boundless heart and one should have the following reflections or thoughts or wishes, wishes. They all be may all be happy and Secure, May all beings be happy at

heart. all living beings, whether weak or strong, tall, large, medium or short, tiny are big seen or unseen, new, near or distant or to be born, may they all be happy. So this is an expression of certainly the Buddha's Love is an emphasis that he put on it. That certainly, I think came out of his own understanding that loving kindness and kindness is an essential part of the spiritual path, at least he was talking about. It's not incidental, it's not a byproduct, you know, it's not just a byproduct, it's not extra credit. It's not, you know, for the sentimental and if you're really, you know, tough and strong and direct and your spiritual life, then, you know, you don't need it. There's a beautiful story. It's kind of a sad story.

Maybe one of the most famous Japanese Zen masters of recent centuries is Zen Master Dogen. And he was known to be a very tough Zen master. And his lineage became most, most, most important lineages eventually of modern Japanese Rinzai Zen. And near the end of his life, we now know why you got to meet old man. He stopped teaching. And he said that he'd become too kind to teach. And, you know, he'd be a good teacher at the really firm and, and, you know, I guess, so I failed. But, so it's a beautiful story, because I think that, you know, in his years of development, his kindness kind of comes with the practice with time. Some of it some of the kindness comes from being humbled enough. And because when you start going into the inner life, it's often quite humbling will be encounter and some of it comes from just the nature of the heart itself that this kindness this love, this gentleness, this warmth just right there. And part of the McQueen story I think is sad because maybe it's you know, maybe he was actually getting more mature to spiritual I had more to teach and offer people as he became Kinder rather than being this fierce, you know, rings I master so love when I was I feel very lucky that's when I was 20 or so I discovered something that since that time has been invaluable for me about love. And that is maybe summer when I was about 20 I fell in love with a couple of people. And my their availability to me was kind of distant. Actually they were across it at some point that he came across an ocean like, so they were far away. So I had the whole summer I think about these two people that had fallen in love with and without them being available. And without any knowledge, whether it was whether it was gonna be reciprocated. And in the course of the summer, I discovered what I call the joy, the joy of unrequited love. And this is one of the great secrets of you know, one of the greatest, you know, keys of happy living, I think. What I discovered was that there was a difference between my desire, my lust and what desires relationship to these people in the sense of delight and warmth and happiness that I came up in me when I thought about them. And until that time, I've kind of maybe entangled those two. I don't know if I love someone that I had to have them in some way or other and I saw that desire and love were actually two different things. And I found that I could rest with the love with a pure love with a simple love where they kind of love which doesn't have that desire as part of it. Love doesn't require desire at all. And that has served me so well as I've gone through my life. Because, you know, there are times when it's, I find it really easy to fall in love. And I just kind of rest in that joy and delight and pleasure of that. And I don't feel any need sometimes to try to act on it or do anything about it or have desires connected to it. Just really, it's really a lovely thing to look at someone and feel just the light and appreciation and warmth and tingling and kind of soft softening and you know about you know, someone else and in fact, there are times and they've grown over the years but it certainly doesn't stay that constant to Congress goes up and down depending how deep



I'm in my practice, and how connected and all that, where I seem to fall in love with everyone. And it just like, Look, you see people, I just feel just the light and happiness and joy. And other times I don't have that then I look at someone's kind of, I hope they don't sit next to me. But I know that when I, when I have that kind of attitude, I'm not really connected to my inner life. I'm not settled on myself, I'm not at home with myself. When I'm really at home or settled or quiet, then I am much more likely to appreciate people that I meet. So to separate out the desire, from love, from what we need to get where you know, are the two holes, the wounds that we have that we often try to fill. to separate out the psychological needs we have the desires we have, from the very simple qualities of love, I think makes life a lot easier.

One of the one of the also great discoveries that I had through my Buddhist practice is that it's possible to have a state of love to be in love in a sense or feel love, feel great love and it doesn't require an object at all. It doesn't require any person even even love for myself or for you know anything. It just seems to be the quality or the nature of a heart which is been opened or liberated or presence is that it just loves it's like a furnace which is someone lit the furnace and it's on blasting out all this heat and you say you know and but no one's in the building. The furnace doesn't care maybe there's not even any building it's just the furnaces on and just blasting out all this heat. It's kind of like the heart just kind of blasts you know, just kind of open there's a sauce softening. Bless you probably not the right word because They usually it's a very peaceful feeling or open, gentle, kind, soft. The word for met does sometimes etymologically connected to the word softening or gentleness. It's connected to the word for friendship, being friendly.

And one of the things that I think we need to learn to love one of the things that's helpful to learn to love is everything that was in us that makes it difficult to love. And for some of us, perhaps at the beginning of practice is learning to have some kindness at least or friendliness. Some it's some kind of acceptance of all the obstacles to it. So rather than setting up love as a goal, as an ideal, we have to measure ourselves by trying to attain Why don't we do is study what gets in the way of it. And that often that itself is one of the purest ways of discovering it. And I have to keep relearning embarrassed to say. So one of the most difficult parts of my practice in the last 15 years is going to meetings. As I had no idea when I started Buddhist practice, that Buddhists are expected to go to a lot of meetings, at least Buddhist teacher types and the Buddha allowed for 13. Mostly Buddhism is the middle way and he rejected asceticism. Back in ancient India, ascetic practices standing on your foot for 32 years on one foot or whatever, all these things they hadn't back in ancient India, but he allowed 13 ascetic practices, and not that dramatic, you know, that that ascetical but your 13th Monk could voluntarily take on in America the 14th ascetic practices meetings and I'm not very good at meetings. And, and it's actually a bit at times quite painful for me the way I participated in My feelings that come up and all this stuff. So I had to go to a meeting yesterday and big meeting. And that's okay. I thought, What am I going to do is, I'm not going to say much. I'm just gonna lay back, sit back and be relaxed. I'm going to do loving kindness. And whoever speaks, I'm just going to do loving kindness towards them. And, you know, I don't have to say anything at all because, you know, I don't have to get my opinion across, you know, I can just, I'll just be detached, you know, at peace, not wanting anything. So embarrassing,

right? I should know better. And what to kinda that was my attitude. So I showed up to the meeting, all kind of geared up. And it was a wonderful facilitator for the meeting very wise man. And we're the first things he said the meeting was, these are the desired outcomes of the meeting. Before we proceed, we want to go through the rule make sure everyone here agrees to those our desired outcomes, if anybody has any objections speak now. So suddenly, you know, I had to either agree with you have to be quiet, right. But if I didn't agree, then I had to say something. And I said, I will not to say anything at all. So right there at the beginning of the meeting, I said, Well, actually, I feel differently. And, and what I found by the end of the meeting was that it wasn't a matter of me, trying to be kind and loving and whatever it had to be was really, as the meeting proceeded. It wasn't so much might be focusing on those people out there trying to be loving towards them. It was really standing with myself and staying with what's going on inside of me being very honest about that over and over and over again, and really seeing what's going on with me and being honest expressing myself as sincerely as I could. apologizing, I need to apologize. And then, by the end of the meeting, I was feeling all this love for everyone. I was feeling all this kindness and warmth. And it was really delightful. And it wasn't just me it was also the facilitator that helped make it happen that way. And so it's not a matter of so much a matter of deciding you're going to be loving. I don't think it's that way, as it is when it's available to you to recognize it, to give ourselves the opportunity to let that inner life come forth. If we never give a chance for the inner life to be there. It's not going to come forth. So give yourself the opportunity to feel it. If it's there. If it is available, then nurture it and develop it. If it's not there and not available, then you like the idea of discovering love and coming from a kind place then it's minutes Matter of studying the obstacles to it, what's really going on for you? And seeing Can you be kind to that? Can you be kind to your anger and your hate and your bitterness? Because without kindness to those also, I think it doesn't really work the whole practice. Can you discover what can you be kind to? What can you be friendly to? What can you bring some kind of softening to a love to within yourself?

What is your relationship to love? What is your thoughts about love? You keep it at arm's distance, so you're afraid of it? You hold on to it, as you know, ideals are kind of a lifesaver. Are you desperate for it? Is it a nice idea for someone else? Whatever you learned about love in your life,

what have you learned that you want to keep? And what would you What have you learned so far? That maybe be good to unlearn About Love. How valuable is it for you? The experience of love? If you've been told that you can love without an object that love is inherent the nature of who you are? is I have any real value for you. Is it important for you? Is that something you'd like to orient your life around a little bit? Or is it more interesting to go to work and make a lot of money and be busy with projects?

Who have you met in your life? That's been loving? Who have you met? That feels sincerely and genuinely kind of kinda kind people kind person. Have you allowed the kindness and love other people to resonate, to register within your own heart to influence who you are



The practice that most compliments compliments love, mindfulness practice, the practice we do here. The insight practice is the practice of loving kindness. The practice of being unkind or wanting to be kind want to practice of wanting happiness for ourselves and happiness for others. And now it's time to end. But I'd encourage all of you to, if you haven't had some contact with a Buddhist practice of loving kindness and metta that you do so to learn more about it. In that book, that is my book that's available. You can have it for free. It's out there in the hallway. There's a couple of chapters on loving kindness. There are other Buddhist books that talked about it quite extensively. Take that on as a whole book now called Love, Sharon Salzberg As a book, and as we go along here in this new center, I hope that loving kindness becomes a very rooted practice for what we do here and at some point we will have classes and retreats here on the practice loving kindness.

So may all of you be happy and safe and healthy.

In today's paper, recorded about myself by myself appreciate the place

Yeah, so the Dalai Lama is sick with some kind of stomach problem. And it's been Yes.

And but the beautiful thing you know, the two people we've evoked this evening, is we invoke the Dalai Lama, which for many of us is kind of where the great examples of love and kindness and liberation really inspires many of us. And the other person we've invoked is the person who's going to be executed tonight. And part of the, the ideal in Buddhism is to have an equal dosage of love and kindness to both both people and not just him. Choose a dial llama and exclude those people who you know we don't like or feel our enemies or whatever. But to actually find the capacity within us to bring kindness and love to the full range of human beings are. We have the capacity I believe within each of us to love everyone, even our enemies and perhaps we learn to love our enemies first by loving our friends. So regardless of how well or poorly the Dalai Lama is doing, I wish him well. Lots of happiness. So thank you very much for this evening and I will see you in a month.