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SPEAKERS

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We those of you who were here last week, I talked a little bit about loving kindness. And I thought that today I would talk about compassion and loving kindness as the first of the what's called in Buddhism the Brahma viharas. In compassion is loving kindness is the first and compassion is a second. And is a very interesting word, this word brahma vihara. It's sometimes translated in English into English as meaning the divine abode. Brahman, Rama is the supreme god or a certain kind of heavenly realm in Buddhist cosmology and vihara means abode or a dwelling place or a monastery. So the Abode or the monastery or the dwelling place, of Brahma, Brahma, Brahma, Brahma Brahma romantic place and heavenly realms is considered to be one filled with delight, certain kind of joy or some kind of pleasure. So, one way to experience the abode of Brahma, this divine abode before you get to heaven, here on the earth is to cultivate these four qualities that make up the Brahma vihara. So to cultivate loving kindness, to cultivate compassion, to cultivate sympathetic joy, and to cultivate equanimity. And these are the four, what I call the four kinds of love that the Buddha taught. And what makes this love different from the kind of love that we often see in popular songs and places is that it's a kind of love that has no attachment as part of it. There's no clinging as part of it. There's no wanting something in return to be loved in return. It's a kind of expression that comes out of us. Sometimes I feel, I imagine it's like a furnace. The furnace just produces all this heat and doesn't ask for anything in return, I guess. It just kind of radiates. So, these brahma vihara are things that radiates from us, and, and are considered quite beautiful, the abode of the Divine abodes in our particular Buddhist tradition, there's a lot of emphasis placed on cultivating the first one, metta or loving kindness, and the second one gets some emphasis, the third gets the least. And equanimity gets a fair amount of equity of emphasis also. It's hard for me to imagine Buddhist practice without the Brahma vihara is without this warmth, or this radiance or this love affair that comes with these qualities. And in particular, it's hard for me to imagine Buddhism without compassion, the quality of compassion. And as I was coming down here today, I was thinking to ask you a question. I don't know if it's a good question to ask, but what would you rather? Would you rather have someone tell you that they love you? Or to have someone tell you that they care for you? So, probably depending on how you define those terms, you have

different answers, and they don't all share the same definition. But at least the question points to the possibility that caring for someone can be quite a beautiful way of relating to someone and or to be related. to relate to from someone someone relates to us to care for us and love without care without the caring in Buddhist understanding is not love at all. So there has to be some caring, the other person's and caring and concern. One of my one of the words that I like as a synonym for mindfulness is the term attending. So we don't just watch your breath, or follow our breath, we attend to the breath in mindfulness practice, the attending has much more of a caring quality with something we tend to, we bring more of ourselves kind of the listening, caring, presence to tend to the experience of breathing, so it's not an act of watching and kind of a neutral way. So this is the attending when I was living in the monastery Tassajara. I was there for about six months, and I was assigned to the garden And to be the gardener. And before work started every day, there was this kind of break time in the morning for 20 minutes or so. And I would go into my garden and I would just go around and look at all the plants. And I just loved it. It was like tending to all these little creatures, all these little beings piece of life and I just look at them and how you doing today and when I say it this way, it sounds kind of silly. But it was just a love affair, just really kind of caring is tending. And it wasn't it wasn't self conscious in the sense that I was planning to do this or it just I would find myself wandering into the garden just wandering around the beds, looking at the plants, tending to them with this kind of feeling of caring attending or I would maybe stretch to say Kachin kind of compassion that I think back at that time. This is a time in my life where I was doing a lot of meditation practices in a monastery, spend a lot of time meditating. And one of the things that happens when you meditate a lot, is that the kind of barriers or the defenses we might have for caring for or for the heart to care for some quality of resonance and feeling of sympathy or empathy, the barriers that empathy, kind of fade away dissolve away. And since my job was to be in the garden, that empathy translated to these plants a little little embarrassed to tell you that because plants seem it's kind of silly. But this feeling of tending. So in Buddhism, these brahma vihara are considered very important and compassion for some Buddhists is considered to be the most important because Compassion is what motivates us what motivates some people to engage in the spiritual life, some people motivated or motivated for other reasons besides compassion, but it's sometimes said only by compassion. And can one follow the path all the way to the end only with having some motivation of compassion. So in other words, somehow you understand that your spiritual life, your Buddhist practice, is somehow related to the practice for the well being of others. Without that sense of empathy, that sense of connectedness, then it's very hard to take the path all the way to the end. And the argument is that it's you're not going to have the sufficient motivation on your own to take it all the way. One of the ways you see this is that after people practice for some time, and different peoples different lengths of time, the basic personal motivation that brought them to practice meditation or do Buddhist practice has been satisfied. Somehow some people come with great distress or great suffering of great loneliness or great something. And so they're motivated to practice to deal with their suffering. And then, after a while that's suffering a base, and it's no longer strong enough so that it's motivated. And so then people sometimes will get on with their life, you know, whatever their life is about, you know, something, something else that motivate them. However, if that if in the course of that practice, that person feels that their practice is supportive and helpful is connected to the welfare of others, then that becomes a

motivation to continue the practice. It isn't just for me anymore, but it's also for others. So how is it in my practice is supporting for others, I was quick to make that connection. So because of because of that, it's said that compassion will take you all the way in some schools of Buddhism, tremendous emphasis, put on cultivating and developing compassion. So with all these forms of love these four kinds, what we say in Buddhism is that you don't have to leave them to chance. It doesn't have to be a matter of chemistry that somehow happens. You put in a want that and someone's called right that personal ad in the paper, and you know, somehow the right person answers the ad, or I don't know how the hell happened. No one really knows how it happens, right? But it's chemistry we say, because that's makes it mysterious, doesn't explain anything. And, but in Buddhism, what we say is you don't have to leave love to chance. But it's something you can cultivate and develop. And what that implies is that love is not contingent upon the other person. So in other words, not contingent on the chemistry between people, but it's contingent upon the chemistry inside of yourself, and that you could somehow change yourself, you can change the chemistry and you could change the camera. To inside of you, then one of the products of that change is love. So we don't leave love to chance, but rather it can be cultivated and developed. It can be developed and cultivated unintentionally. By doing practice, at least for some people, it's a it's a common for as people develop more and more mindfulness, more and more concentration or more stability of mind that their capacity for empathy grows and grows. And that empathy translates I think directly to being able to love more. Do you feel kindness or friendliness or to feel compassion when someone suffers? But also it's possible to do practices that cultivate these four brahma viharas. It's possible to do a meditation practice writing meditation practices that cultivate and strengthen compassion within us. I've heard I've read it. That an ancient Buddhist teacher said compassion is a seed. Compassion is the water and compassion is the fruit. So in other words, the beginning of practice compassion can be the little seed, that's there is a seed that has potential that can grow. But compassion is also the water that nourishes or the seed that makes it grow. And compassion is also the fruit when the plant is grown is borne fruit. Compassion is all those things, passions, always they're always present, and it can bloom and blossom within us. So how did how is compassion developed? One of the ways, there's many ways, but the most, for some people, the most direct way is by doing a meditation practice on compassion. And this is, in our tradition, the way it's usually done. Is you first think of someone for whom it's relatively or very, very easy for you to have compassion. Easy to have uncomplicated compassion. What that means is that you have empathy for their suffering. And you wish for that suffering to be alleviated, to come to an end. That's the definition of the Buddha's definition of suffering of compassion is the quivering of the heart, in the presence of suffering, and then the desire to somehow alleviate that suffering or desire that suffering be alleviated. So, in meditation, when we first calm oneself down, settle the mind a bit from the normal way it is running around. And once the mind is somewhat settled, to bring to mind, some person for whom it is relatively easy for you to have empathetic concern compared to someone who's suffering You don't want to have someone who suffering is too great, we might feel anxiety or distress. But for someone where it's relatively clean, straightforward, so you might consider someone who's Well, you know, maybe there is a suffering very much, or different people needs a different kind of person. But you think of someone, it could be a friend, it could be a stranger, it could be someone you read about in the news. It could be all kinds of different situations, we think of someone where somehow your heart

vibrates or resonates with our suffering, you feel it in some way. And it's relatively easy for you to have that feeling of attending or caring for that person suffering. So that the words the sentence, may you be free of your suffering. give his voice to a feeling in your heart, a feeling inside of you. And that's very important for me when I do this, that somehow because when I when I tried to do this practice by saying the words May you be free of suffering, I get bored really quickly, and it feels really flat. I have to find someplace in me, where there's a word world word list, caring for the other person or sometimes a wordless caring that's even before even think of the person. And then once that wordless caring is there, to give his voice and the voice that is usually a classic phrase to say is May you be free of your suffering. And you say that and you can set up a nice rhythm. It's very nice. So I find it's very nice setup a rhythm, where to bring the person to mind. Feel the person suffering. And then give voice to the caring may be free of your suffering. You'd be free of your pain and then pause to take in the person again, And then say the phrases. So it's a kind of a pause, and then a giving a pause, taking it in feeling it, and then giving it getting into a rhythm like that. And when it's done to a dare say, right, when it's done right. When it's done well or as it's meant to be, then oddly enough, a feeling of well being arises in the person who's doing the meditation practice. And why I say, oddly, is that some people think when we feel compassion for others, we're supposed to feel distressed. We're supposed to feel, you know, somehow we're worried for the person or be angry about the situation or distressed or something. But the expectation here is that when the when the when the compassion is clean, that actually produces a sense of well being That's actually very pleasant. So it's very strange. That's the case it doesn't sound strange to you. It said that if the loving kindness gives or if a compassion practice gives rise to grief, or distress, then stop doing it. And maybe go back to doing loving kindness practice or doing mindfulness practice to you're settled again and you can try again. It's also said that anxiety, or grief, or distress, is the near or the near enemies of compassion. And the near enemy are those qualities that look like compassion and are mistaken for compassion, but are not compassion. So sometimes, anxiety or distress or worry is taken as a form of compassion. There's not really compassion because compassion when it's clean, has no anxiety, no grief, no distress, no sadness as part of it. So it's a whole practice in itself, then to begin sorting out the difference between distress or grief and compassion in this kind of pure sense. And it's a really, really a worthwhile exploration and teasing apart that can happen. I've known people who have had felt tremendous amount of what they call compassion. That was came together with a tremendous experience of distress at certain kinds of suffering. So, one person member who felt it and felt felt tremendous, overwhelming distress in the suffering of stray cats. Somehow, the cats was something really got this person. And, and or sometimes other categories of certain kinds of suffering that really kind of seemed almost too much. And they thought they were very compassionate, maybe they were a certain to be a compassion, but we're seeing over and over again is the people who are overwhelmed by the suffering of others tend to have unresolved pain in themselves and resolve suffering of their own. And what's happening is the suffering of the world. suffering of others, is somehow like salt on the wound of our own suffering. And so it's very important then, to be able to go in and bring a self or bring a healing to our own wounds, so that our compassion for others can be clean, or beautiful or healthy or healed or whatever. And this brings The very important point of being able to do compassion practice for oneself and other or to attend to oneself to care for oneself. It's hard for me to imagine that any meditation practice would go

very far. Unless the person who's doing it has some caring for one's themselves. So they're willing to tend to themselves with care, whether it's to their breath, or to their, whatever their meditation experience might be. But self compassion is sometimes in in short supply. Some people, it's a completely foreign concept that they would have compassion for themselves. It's okay to have compassion for others because you're required to do that, right? There's a duty that you're supposed to be compassionate for others, but it's considered selfish to be compassionate for yourself. It's kind of self indulging or something and the best thing you can do is just suffer a lot so that you show your care or atone for your past deeds or, I don't know. I really know I don't understand what the good arguments why you should suffer. But people have them because I know some people are attached to their suffering. They cling to it very tightly sometimes. But to somehow attempt to turn our suffering, turn ourselves around, so that we can be caring for ourselves, may I be free of suffering? Yeah, I'd be free of pain. And to do with not as a mantra words, just empty words, but do it because there's some place of stillness perhaps inside of ourselves, where we feel for ourselves, we care for ourselves for this empathy for ourselves when there's warmth for ourselves or openness to ourselves. argument and Are there is that everyone is equally deserving of our suffering, or suffering or our love. Everyone's equally deserving of our care just as much and everyone means we're one of those people. So how to do that for ourselves as much as we would do it for anybody else? And how to do it for other people just as much as we do it for ourselves in all directions. So you find in classic Buddhism, various reflections that people are encouraged to do to cultivate compassion and develop this quality. And one of them is to do the exercise of imagining yourself as others or others as yourself, can you put yourself in other people's shoes Imagine you submerge yourself in their shoes would be like for you to be in that kind of situation, to kind of change places with people. And in that exercise, begin feeling their situation almost firsthand. And doing that not not holding yourself a distance or judging or aloof from the person, but actually feeling what that person is like. So that's said, to cultivate more sense of compassion. That sense of seeing others as oneself oneself as others, is supposed to heal the particular kind of suffering that takes the form of pity. Where we kind of are considered to be kind of better than others or higher than others or they were looking down a poor person down there. And that's not considered healthy. What's healthy is to see others as equals in the suffering and not to be kind of above percipient someone. The other reflection has to do with the kind of Buddhist Classic mythology or cosmology, is the idea that everyone in the distant past have all these different lifetimes we've lived. Everyone at one point or other has been our mother, or father, or sister or brother or lover or our children something. You see a little snail walking on the ground, you know? Yes, once upon a time, I bet. You know, you're my mother. And because the time goes back an infinite amount of time, you know, you had you had a chance to be every possible life form. So that possible relationship. So to me that little teaching reminds me of the I think the Native Americans, Sue Dakota, Sue's Sue Dakota, so I have this expression, all my relations. Anybody know how to say things. They may know how to say it. I forgotten. Yes. That sounds familiar. So they say all my relations. And so I like this kind of mythology that we're all been related in the past. I don't know if it's true, but I kind of like it as a symbol or to represent the fact that we are very, very connected to each other. The sense of interconnectedness and interdependence that we have with each other. And then the third form of reflection that's supposed to give birth to compassion. is is that reflection of how interdependent we

are. And I've noticed that when I've gone to some countries in the world where you don't expect the train to come on time Are the buses to work? That I feel pretty grateful when things work, things work out. And then when I've been in countries like here, where the telephone, telephone repair person doesn't come, you know, within 24 hours, that's irritating. And you know, compared to other countries, we have to wait a month before they come, you know, and that's they come as a three weeks you say, Wow, that's great. We have, you know, in this culture here, things are so amazingly, work so well for us. And I think many times for myself, I take it for granted. And that's taking it for granted. I've come to expect it sometimes I considered irritation when things don't work. But when I but the fact that so much it works so well. It's an immense number of human beings that are responsible For the fact that I could drive down the road by gas cooker, you know, buy food, you know, all the different things that we do by telephones work, you know, hold things. It just immense what what goes on today I was up in this in Carlos canyons going to hiking a gold trail up there for a little bit. I had a reason to talk to someone on the phone. And strange place without I guess, but no, this isn't never a strange place for a phone call anymore. And I was amazed at the phone worked back the cell phone, you know, work way back there in the canyon. Well, what's he doing back here? And so how often do we feel grateful that for all and innumerable laborers that are responsible for how we get by and get through our day here so I don't know if it does it for you. But one of the classic reflections to cultivate or waken compassion is reflection on our interdependence. Now, so much of our life is dependent on the efforts of others. So the near enemy of compassion is anxiety or grief or sadness. The far enemy of compassion is cruelty. The near enemy looks like compassion is confused for it. The foreign to me, is that which is obviously different, and so different that destroys compassion. So cruelty, hostility to the Greek, but however, compassion is considered to be the antidote for cruelty. And I've seen some times that I've gotten angry with people. How could I personally That happened just as last week someone did something which he shouldn't have done. And it was actually kind of disrespectful. And I went through in my mind how I'm going to give this person a piece of my mind. I had a kind of plan in my mind. And then I thought, you know, this is silly. What a waste of my neurons and I thought I thought about for a while and so I started thinking about this person. And kind of taking the person in kind of imagine the person kind of had a sense of the person remembering the person or the person looks like it kind of taking the person in. And so the person wasn't the person out there. Somehow, a distance kind of walled off from my heart, but I took the person they interviewed like, We're familiar like we're friends are closer and And it was kind of hard then to be angry at this person. And that's I felt like an improvement. But we still had this problem, we still had this issue, I didn't want to just forgive the issue. And so now I have a new plan. And that is, I thought, you know, it's actually I think, will work a lot better to tell the person that I was hurt. And by saying on hurt, my my defenses could still stay down, my closed off, this can still not be present, I can still be open and relaxed and kind of be present for the person, take the person in. And then we'll see how the person responds when I say that. Maybe that person will put up his armor, bring out the weapons, because sometimes people do that. But But, you know, I thought it's a better way. Let's see what happens in the conversation if I say that I was hurt. Maybe that's kind of good. Maybe that maybe actually sometimes I've done that with people. It actually helps people don't to me because it helps because they don't lift up their defenses. And you can meet more like human beings. So in doing the meditation practice on compassion, these classic

instructions to start with whoever it's easiest to do it for. For some people, it's for themselves. For some people, it's definitely not themselves. And it might be a friend, it might be some distant person, but Dude, what's easiest. And then, in a progressive way, begin doing it for people where it's harder and harder to feel compassion for. So first you do it somewhere is easy. And then you might do it for someone who's almost as easy as the first person but not quite. And then you can stretch yourself see where it takes? See what needs to be clarified inside of yourself? What would you have to work out so that your feeling of care can become equal as you had for the first person. And then you go to the next more difficult or you begin moving out a little bit moving out. And then eventually you do it for people for whom you have no obvious and easy, caring feelings for, but you have no hostility, either. They're just neutral. So how what is it to have that compassion or care for people who you feel neutral for? It takes some stretching, working, working things out to find out can I do for a person to? And then the final instruction is to the next instruction is to do it for people who have difficulty with including people who might actually want you to do your harm. So what is it to do for people who actually want to do harm to you? Your enemies and why would you so then there's a whole thing that happens then. And this is not supposed to be kind of a light thing. We just kind of say, Oh, yes, I'll do it. But it's, it's, it's a really good time for really careful reflection, and thought and consideration and feeling, what's going on there with people who are my enemies, who I have hostility towards, or have hostility towards me. What would it take to open my hearts for that person where we take to have a caring feeling for that person also. And it might take months or years to kind of explore that and to work it out. Maybe it takes a lot of talking with friends or exploring different issues that we have, but find what does it take? And I think what's really beautiful is when someone wants to do the work to discover how that's possible. It's nice if they can do it, but simply the want to do it. Even though it might take a year or 10 years. Want explore what does it take to really want to take have compassion for my enemies? May you be happy? May you be free of your suffering. For some people, it can be easier to do compassion practice for difficult people for enemies. If there's an understanding that the what their behavior, their difficult behavior is arising out of their own suffering came to mind just now but this evening before coming down here, I was playing with my three year old I wasn't playing with him, but I was in the bedroom with him. And he was playing with his train set. He was really happy. And I was just I was the purpose because I just sat there and watched and he was singing he was so happy. And I had to stop, maybe especially maybe I can go do something else. And I said, no, maybe not. Because maybe he's happy because I'm there with him. And then the telephone rang. And the telephone rang and I talked on the phone. And as soon as I answered the phone, he became impossible. impossibly unhappy, nothing work, the train is knocking it over, he was unhappy with that hell train and you know, nothing. And I realized how much you know, he was valuing my company, even though I was just sitting there watching and that then when that was taken away from him, there was certain kind of pain there. So, because in that situation, it's easy to identify his pain. I could feel I could understand Oh, you know, his mean spirited way of being right now. This is not to be disciplined. Send him to his room, you know, how could you treat me that way? I'll give you a way I'm talking on the phone, be respectful. But rather, you know, I could have some care concern or there's Oh, there's something more going on more deeply going on here. a three year old who needs the presence of his father for a while? I didn't spend much time with him today. And, you know, he had it that he was taking it in, even though there was no,

you know, I'm just watching. So difficult people to have some sense of the suffering that's prompting their difficult behavior can sometimes help open up the heart and have some sense of compassion. Now, the beautiful thing about doing Compassion meditation is that the person you having compassion for? Like, if you do it for an enemy doesn't have to know. You're not really doing it for their sake. You're doing it for your own sake. So you're not. So sometimes people say, I can't do it for that terrible person because then I'll be defenseless, then the person will take advantage of me or that person, you know, will feel like it was okay to do what she did or something. But the person doesn't have to know you're doing it. It could be something very private, it might not be safe to show someone else. How open hearted you are, how you feel how you feel for them, but you can keep it private. cultivate an open heart, a warm heart that's private, for however long it needs to be private as opposed to a guarded heart. And so the final thing to say is that all these brahma vihara us but including compassion here is meant to occur together with an ability to see clearly. So what that means is that it's not meant to be sentimental or sugary or it's not meant to kind of avoid or ignore or have blinders on in regards to people's faults or the difficult things, difficult things, they're they're also there. You know, it said that the particular kind of love that you have songs about sometimes you say puts on, people put on rose colored glasses as a result and they just See everything is wonderful, but the person wow, you know, that's best versus the best. Wow. And then you wake up the next morning with the person there next to you and what was I thinking and some other rose colored glasses have taken off. Sometimes it happens overnight and sometimes it takes 20 to 30 years. But there can be this rose rose colored glasses kind of syndrome. And the idea with compassion practices that we're not supposed to have any kind of rose colored glasses on at all. We're supposed to be clear, seeing clear, clear thinking about what's actually there, not denying anything. And then because of that clarity with with that clarity, then to find out what it's like to have caring concern for the other. So I don't know how this talks been taken by you today. But For me, this idea of this the quality of compassion is completely central to my own practice of my own Buddhist practice. I think it's, it's inseparable. It's very, very hard to be at the core of it. And I would say that pretty much all my motivation in practice is somehow or other feeds back to or is related to the compassion that I have slowly developed and cultivated over these years.