

2009-10-11 What The Buddha Taught On Love

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SPEAKERS

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So for today's talk, I would like to discuss something about the Buddha's teachings on love. And, and how for the Buddha, it seems that love could be a vehicle for liberation. And rather than holding liberation apart from love, sometimes in the Buddhist tradition, it's done. It seems that there were times when the Buddha really kind of have these two big streams of Buddhism. Come together, one supports the other. And as a beginning to this, I'd like to mention that many years ago, I went to this Symphony in San Francisco. And it was kind of unusual for me to be there. So I guess it was a little bit maybe excited or something. And, and the orchestra started playing its music And I was kind of like, the side looking down. So you could see pretty well with what went on in the orchestra. And, and I noticed after I don't know, halfway through the first half, that I wasn't really listening to the music. I was thinking a lot about things. And I was thinking a lot about specially about what's going on in the orchestra. And I was, you know, studying it and looking at this and that and the trombone, this and the drummer that and I wasn't really taking in the music because I was I was involved in all the thoughts I had about what's going on. And I was there to listen to the music I thought. So after a while, in order to, like try to you know, get back to the music, get back to the music, and I kept going back to my thinking. So finally, I closed my eyes And with my eyes closed, then I could get into the music and allow the music to come come through me. And after a while, the music became the predominant occupation of my mind. And by the second half of the concert, I could keep my eyes open just fine. That busy thinking mind had settled down and I could just hear fully. So meditation is many way the same way. That there's a very important shift that needs to happen in meditation, where we're no longer so preoccupied with thinking that it interferes with our ability to to allow something other to happen. There's a lot that can happen in our life. That can't happen very well. If we're preoccupied caught up in our thoughts. We can't listen to the music very well. If we're caught up in our thoughts, we have to let that quiet down enough doesn't mean we stopped thinking entirely or dismiss thinking. Just that we at the concert to do something different than to think. So listening to a friend, you know, if you get caught up in your own thoughts, you can't be listened to your friend. So meditation, if you're caught up in your thoughts, then you can't really avail yourself of the other aspects of our human life that are interfered with or feared with but blocked out if we're always caught up in our thinking. Some people live so much in thoughts, thinking about things, that it's really a foreign idea to them, that there'd be anything else any other way of relating to the world. And so and so, it just seems like it's kind of an illness annihilationism to stop thinking, you know, why would you want to do that it's boring, it's, you become less of something. But in fact, when we can get our thinking to abate enough to quiet down enough, so it's no longer our preoccupation, then our inner eye or, you know, we could see more clearly what's going on here. And we allow for certain kind of inner, beautiful states to arise and bubble up within us some of the most beautiful human states to really feel them Well, you can't be fixating or focusing on your thinking, because then you can't feel them. So love is one of those things. And that in order to experience love in the way that Buddha talked about, and to really use it as a stepping stone for liberation, our preoccupations of the mind, our

thoughts and concerns, have to abate enough so that we're not keep slipping into thinking about them worrying about things and planning about things, judging things and criticizing things, you know, fantasizing about things. And we have to lose interest in the world of thinking enough to focus on this other deeper process, in this case, love. Just like you have to lose. I had to lose interest in my thinking in order to really listen to the symphony. And that's it. You know, that doesn't seem like a bad trade off, right? You know, you pay a lot of money for a ticket.

In my case, it was I was given a ticket, but still you pay a lot of money for the ticket. And, you know, you don't want to miss the concert. By thinking, you know, be so interesting, my thoughts are so interesting, the best if someone said, you know, put those thoughts aside for now, we're not troubled. But sometimes when we say put our thoughts aside during meditation, that can be inner rebellions, you know, this is so important, what are these people telling about them, they'd be less of a human being if I don't, you know, it's not any different than going to the symphony and that sense of, of, of, you know, willingness to focus on something else. So, in this journey, I'm going to take you into what the Buddha talked about love. Thank you back to his time, to a story of two Brahmins who came to see the Buddha. The Brahmins were a kind of priestly caste at the time, who, one of their big concerns, I see me seemingly, especially these two was somehow to be reborn in the presence of Brahma. Brahma being kind of the one of the ultimate gods, the highest gods in the Pantheon. And so they came to the Buddha, because they had a disagreement. They both had different ideas about the path to coming into the presence with this ultimate guy. So this is an ancient world, and how to make it relevant for us, I don't know but one idea came to mind is that there are people here in the West who want to meet God. And different people and kind of theistic traditions have ideas. How do I meet God? How do I come into the presence of God? And, and some people focus on the afterlife. You have to behave a certain way in this lifetime. You have to believe in things in this lifetime. And then you can get reborn in heaven where you could perhaps hang out with God. And then other people who are more mystics will say, Oh, the way you meet God is more mystical is more intuitive, more something in your experience here and now, some change of mind of consciousness here allows for some kind of presence of God that's immediate. So here these, these Brahmins were asking how do we encounter how do we meet Brahma? And, and it seems that what they were thinking about was how to be born in his presence, which was kind of an ultimate thing to do kind of ultimate goal for their religion. They were disagreeing about how to do that. And because they disagreed there, let's go ask the Buddha. So they went to the Buddha and they said, We disagree. Not only do we disagree, but there's a lot of other Brahmins in our community. And they all disagree as well. They all have different paths for how to do that. You know, So you can imagine there's a lot of different paths to God. There's a lot of different theistic traditions who have different teachings. And they say there's different paths to it. So how do you know which ones right? This is the Protestants? Is it the Mormons? Is it the Catholics? Is it the Jews? Is it the Muslims? You know, who has the right way? And do they all lead to the same goal? Was the question was asked the pastor, the Buddha. And there are people who would like all religions to have the same goal all pointing to the same Ultimate Reality ultimate thing. And so it's looking at this question, Do you all lead to the same place? So the Buddha then in, in the beginning, his reply says something, it's gonna be a little bit quite a bit challenging to them. I think they perhaps to kind of pull away their certainty about what they're asking about. Because he says something like, Have any of you ever encountered Brahma? They said, No, we haven't. Have your have your teachers ever encountered Brahma? No more teachers haven't? How about your teachers, teachers? And how about your teachers, teachers teacher? And the Buddha kind of went back through time? And they say, how about those original sages back in the Vedic times? who composed the sacred texts about Brahma? Did they encounter Brahma they actually meet Brahma and they don't know. And then maybe one of the reasons they can be so confidently saying no, is that Rama was met after you die. And since the people who all those people you know, they actually known where they were known before they died. So what happened after died, no one really knew. And the

people who compose the text were still alive. So he's been cast some doubt upon the authority upon which people hold their beliefs.

And that's a very, very powerful thing to do, very significant thing to do is to begin questioning why do we believe what we believe? On what authority, what Scripture and what teachings? And so something like essential as Brahma or God, which people orient their life around? Is it intuitive kind of sense? Oh, yeah, there's such a thing, or is it based on? You know, what's it based on? So here the Buddha is kind of bringing the challenge in a little bit. And so they said they'd met and No, none of those people actually knew directly, what they were talking about. And then the Buddha said, it's kind of like a person who says he's fallen in love with the most beautiful woman in the country. But he doesn't know her name, doesn't know where she lives. Doesn't know You know what she looks like and has never met her, but has completely fallen in love with the most beautiful woman in the countryside. Now is to fall in love with most beautiful woman in the countryside without even having a clue who she is or where she is or what she looks like what she sounds like or anything about her. Is that foolish. And the Brahmins Oh, that's foolish. And so, here I guess the Buddhist kind of like really pulling the rug out from under them. And these Brahmins apparently were game to this kind of way. So could they hung in there. And then he had anybody gave in a few analogies around crossing a river. He said if you stand on one side of a river that's full to the brim, so quite deep river you can't just walk across and you stand on one side of the shore and look at the other side of the shore. Wish the other shore to come to you is that we're going to come to you they had no. So somehow a wishing that something that come to you from outside was somehow not really what the Buddha was, again he who is questioning, you know, and there are people who are waiting for grace, the shore is going to come to you. And then he said, What if a person wants to get to the other shore and lays down on the riverbank on the side of the shore and covers him or herself with a sheet? Is that person to get across? No. Well, in the same way, if a person is covered by what's called Buddhism, the hindrances, the hindrances are they actually a literal word for the hindrances in Pali is the coverings if one is coming hovered over by sensual lust, by ill will, by lethargy and dullness, by over excitement, restlessness. And by doubt, then you're not going to get to the other shore, here the other shore for the Buddha now was liberation. This this shore is sure of where we suffer and to come to the place of liberation is to go to the other shore. And so, our minds can be covered over and as long as are covered over with these kinds of preoccupations, we can't get to the other shore. And so, the Buddha then says, you know, you have to at least kind of reduce these hindrances of the mind these preoccupations of the mind If you can understand what I'm going to talk about, and then they asked him these guys, do you know the path to Brahma? Do you know? You said all the other people don't know for sure. Do you know? And the Buddha says very emphatically and confidently? I do. I know it, as well, as someone who grew up in a village knows all the roads in the village, how to walk around the village. Is that familiar? Yes. Yes, I know. So that's a pretty confident thing to say. So, these Brahmins, I think, imagined that gotten the Buddhist got their attention. Now, these pulled the rug from underneath their authority. He's, you know, said all these variety of things. And so, is there anything he's going to tell them how it's done? So he says, Well, first, you have to set on these preoccupations of the mind enough. So the mind is no longer being pulled into its thoughts, concerns. So it's settled so something different can happen like you listen to the music, something different can happen you can be CBK you can be. And then the Buddha said, once you've done that,

then you begin filling the mind, with love

with his heart filled with loving kindness, one dwell Suffusing one direction and other direction, third direction, the fourth direction, with loving kindness. Thus when dwells if you've seen the whole world upwards, downwards, across everywhere, always with a heart filled with loving kindness, abundant, unbounded without a real will. It's quite a powerful statement about love. Doesn't say exactly How you

cultivate it. The assumption is that you can tap into it from this state of meditation, where the hindrances are settled and quieted down. And I found that one of the remarkable things about meditation for me was the way in which, as I got more settled, it seemed or as a practice deepened for me, it felt as if the crusts of my heart faded away kind of fell away. And meditation, mindfulness is like the great tenderizer. And I was not looking for love in when I was doing my early long retreats, but as I sat there, it just kind of became something that started to radiate and became very important reference point for myself and for how to live this this life that we live here. And so as the mind settles down, sometimes if we can tap into the capacity we have for love It's called loving kindness. And then not only is it possible to feel it mildly, likely, it's possible to strengthen it and develop it. So it becomes a great power. So becomes like, rather than something that just kind of a little shy little flame in our heart, because something that kind of fills all of us here at the description, Suffusing not only oneself, but there's a sense of feeling that one Suffusing the whole world. The idea of Suffusing whole world I don't know if it literally happens, but as we get concentrated in his mind is very focused or filled with this kind of activity of love or focus on love. The sense of personal boundaries falls away. It's hard to kind of sense it on here. And, you know, I stop here and the worlds out there. And the sense of boundaries that we have, which is very important in some settings, is still something that's constructed. And that construction, that activity of making boundaries can fall away. And so there's this sense that this wonderful feeling is so radiant, that it seems to radiate outwards, in all directions everywhere. And to emphasize whatever the emphasizes here in this passage, that it's abundant, unbounded, unlimited, and without any hate, ill will.

And then he says, same to any size, just as if a mighty trumpeter, were with little difficulty to make a proclamation to the four quarters. So by this meditation, by this liberation of the heart, through loving kindness, what leaves nothing untouched, nothing unaffected. This is the way of meeting Brahma. So the Buddha has turned something around here. And this is which is a common technique of the Buddha where He takes the terminology of other people and doesn't criticize it. He does give some critical take care of the authority which they have their belief, but he doesn't say Brahma doesn't exist. He doesn't question Brahma questioning their goal. But he, I think, somewhat cleverly, turns it around on them and redefines it. And rather than Brahma being something you attain, when you die, you go to some heavenly realm, you meet Brahma, in the state of mind, that you have here now, if you have a state of mind, that is like Brahma, then you meet Brahma, so maybe a little more mystical kind of approach to to meeting the God. Earlier in the discourse. The Buddha says to these Brahmins, he says, Does Brahma have any ill will? No. Does he have any data to go through Is he impure or pure? And he's pure? Is he here the translation? Is he encumbered with wives and wealth? I don't know but encumbered but you know, but anyway you could ask that of God right is, is God encumbered with wealth and in why wife spouses is, you know, are the great Gods troubled by their sexual relationships. Zeus was but he wasn't one of the great gods. In the Indian Pantheon, Zeus would be considered lesser God. And so Indian Pantheon there's all these layers of heavenly realms. And as you get higher up in the heavenly realms, the beings become pure impure, but pretty when they're pretty low down and interaction With us mere mortals, some of them you know, they're kind of the trouble summon. So, apologies to Zeus and so, so, in the Buddha asks, these Brahmins are Brahmins encumbered with wives and wealth are unencumbered? And so the answer from the Brahmins, maybe there's there's representing themselves, oh, the Brahmins are encumbered. Are they full of hate or without hate? Oh, they have hate, they replying are they full of ill will or without they will or they had the ill will or they impure a pure, they are impure. So, you know, I don't know about this but but the the, if you don't take it so dramatic the contrast. The question is the issue is Brahma this great God represents a very high degree of inner purity, where there'd be no ill will whatsoever. And there's that level of purity exist in the people in this world, the Brahmins, the priestly people in this world. And these Brahmin say, No, they don't have that, you know, they might be pure to some degree, they might have worked through a lot of ill will out of the

way. But I don't know we don't know any of these Brahman, our colleagues who are really free of hate, and Ill will, who really, you know, and look at them, they're all married and they're all troubled by their spouse, you know, where there's the idea of spouses and this and that. So here the Buddha was pointing to the state of mind, of Brahma, state of his inner state, and the way to be reborn in the presence of Brahma the way to be Meet the Brahma for the Buddha is not to do with literally physically, but to do it by meeting that inner state. So it's the same state of mind stays the same state of heart, as Brahma. That's where the meeting is. So there's a meeting of hearts rather than meeting of physical contact. So the Buddha is taking a turning around

redefining it in his way, because the Buddha's emphasis over and over again, was the inner transformation of the human being. That's what he was really concerned with. And so he said, Great, I'll teach you a way to Brahma. And then he kind of turned it around and said, Oh, this is how you do it, by doing this path of transformation that I teach. And that's why you can see with great say with great confidence, I know the way to Brahma because he'd be defined it. So then and then this I think, is a nice image of this. Mighty trumpeter. So if you blow your trumpet, and then the sound carries in all directions effortlessly, you know far into the distance. Now that my 11 year old son is starting to learn the trumpet. I'm concerned about our neighbors. So mighty trumpeter, with little difficulty, to blow to blow all in all four directions. So by this meditation by this liberation of heart, through loving kindness, he leaves nothing untouched, nothing unaffected. So here the very key word, liberation of mind, the word liberation is being moody. And here the Buddha is saying that it's possible to attain a certain kind of liberation, through love through loving kindness and exactly what kind of liberation he is represented by liberation of mind, through loving kindness is Hello. It's not clear from the text. But it seems that there are plenty of passages in the canon, where the Buddha uses emphasizes using use of loving kindness and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity as vehicles and means to attain liberation. There's a passage in the Dhammapada where the Buddha says, monastic dwelling and loving kindness and please with the Buddhist teachings attains happiness, that calming or the peace, peace, of all formation, the calming of all formations, the state of peace. The state of peace here in many places is referred to as Nibbana, or lip full of liberation. The Metta Sutta, the famous discourse eliminated begins in order to attain that state of peace. And then it goes on and talks about a variety of things that are needed, but the heart of it is a cultivation of loving kindness. I think it's fair to say that for the Buddha loving kindness by itself, love by itself is not enough for liberation. But it's the main it can be it can be the powerful vehicle or the powerful kind of practice. That can be that can bring one to a very profound state of freedom. This is very different from a different path than the path of Vipassana, where we pass in that tends to be the path of not cultivating anything attentional some state some particular state, but rather the path of just seeing very, very clearly what actually is what is actually here in some deep way. The benefit of doing the path through loving kindness is that at some point, maybe not initially. At some point it becomes a very, very pleasant path to follow. And it's also as a sense of love or loving kindness have become stronger. They become too strong a reference point. It seems to me that, that there's a kind of mingling commingling or inseparability between a mind that is free and the mind that loves and so what is it to be in this world? here now what is it to meet Brahma here? Is your is your neighbor Brahma. Can you meet it you know, you're a Brahma and your neighbor, not because your your neighbor is pure and filled with love, but rather because Can we see the other beings through our eyes of love? Does how we see someone depend on who they are? Or does it depend on the eyes of the which we see

probably should depend on both. But, but very significant thing that can happen as we begin learning understanding our mind better. And how it works is we can actually start seeing how the shape that color, the activity of the mind shapes how we interpret the world around us and others. And once we have a strong reference point for freedom, strong reference point for love, it's possible to see the world

through that filter through that reference point. And it becomes a different world. We see people very differently. I think that we become much more accepting of people. Because, you know, people don't need to be so different. If, if we feel so complete, if we feel fall inside on a piece, then it's easier To just allow people to be who they are because they are threatening to us. Part of the beauty of this very strong state of love is that it's a love, this kind of love The Buddha talks about is a love that does not have desire as part of it. You know, it's like sensual desire, sexual desire, it doesn't have you know, you don't, you know, don't think you want somebody, you know, I'm with that person, the most beautiful person in the world in the country, that what that is for mine, there's no desire, that kind of desire doesn't exist in this kind of love. And so it's not a it's not exactly a relational transaction. Which is which often goes into play when people are involved in love popular, at least in the songs we hear. And so you know, I think for some people it's a it's a can be a great surprise, to do love to discover first that there is love that can exist, that doesn't depend on In any kind of transaction, he kind of returned doesn't have any desire as part of it. It's even bigger surprise, I think, to at least was for me to realize that that that can be so strong, that it can be a play to provide a tremendous sense of stability and security as we go through this world.

So, I'll leave then in the end the talk with a question for you. And the question is, if love, kindness, compassion, these things

are

available to us if they are significant vehicles for the path to freedom and liberation. How can you help debate it. How could you develop it? And how could you make it a stronger part of who you are? So that's the question for you. And we have 10 minutes. And I would like to learn from you. Would anybody like to offer some simple, some ideas on how if someone is interested in cultivating this kind of boundless love that doesn't have any desire as part of it? How is it cultivated? Martha. Hi.

I'm Martha. And

I feel that in educational settings, they say, if you want to be a better reader,

then read whatever you can do, you know,

whatever level you're at. If you want to be better at math, do some math and I think maybe if you want to be better at loving, then there are moments when we spontaneously do love without asking something back and for if we can notice those and celebrate those moments in ourselves and maybe get stronger and happen more often.

Okay, thank you.

My idea about this is if we just understand or realize that

if we can feel

compassion, kindness toward other people will simply feel better inside than if we're scared of them, or angry at them or perhaps even in different

Thank you.

loving kindness practice I tend to have a bit of a difficult time with. And I find that for me to approach it, I seem to do better using

goodwill as a gateway

to the larger, more expansive definitions of loving kindness

beautiful Yeah, there's the English word loving kindness is a is one of the possible translations for the word meta. And you're certainly encouraged to find other translations other words that they mean more meaningful for you. Some people limited take out the love and just call it kindness. Some people take out the kindness and call just love. Some people use goodwill. So you know, whatever, whatever kind of word that speaks to your heart is The important thing over here over here in the front here

I used this mental trick where I practice meeting people as he for the first time without you know all the baggage, and I do that my husband but I realized that I was carrying all that, you know those resentments and expectations and then he was really affecting high was meeting him and other people too. So it's looking at the person with a very fresh,

fresh eyes.

Beautiful. Yeah.

This one seems really silly and trivial probably but

I'll be driving down Straight or something, and I'll notice someone will do something that I think is crazy and in driving, or I'll notice someone that I criticize for some reason. And then I can slip into thinking, Okay, I'm in. I'm on a movie set. And everything here is exactly the way the director wanted it to be. And this person who cut in front of me, that's the way it's supposed to be. And this this person who's walking across who isn't dressed, right or whatever, no, that's the way it's supposed to be. And it just completely changes the way that I

Nice. Nice. I mean, there's a similar to that there's a practice of seeing, imagining that everyone you encounter is a Buddha, trying to every everyone, every everybody but one person in the world is a Buddha. And that one person is you. He's not. And they're all doing just the right thing. Right help you become awake. The back there. Maybe if you could move one back there, maybe we move another one, just to right maybe I have it already over there in the corner.

I participate in a 12 step program. And one of the things I always struggle with this as a Buddhist is that you know, they have all this God language, it's, you know, the official stuff, it's all very deistic so I'm always trying to translate and but one of the instructions that they give if you're like, angry at someone, or particularly if you're feeling like you want to control a person, I get that energy going sometimes is just abstain from doing anything and pray for them every day for two weeks. So then there's this question of don't really believe in God in the usual sense, what's prayer, but I've actually found and it was through, you know, like, being in this 12 step program, okay. They tell me to do it, I'll just do it. It doesn't really matter if you believe in God at all. As my Buddhist teacher says to me Yeah, you know, prayers, just an attitude, you know, and I have really found that you know, just praying for the well being I mean, after all, why should I be against the well being for anyone

it does sort of soften me

and, and get me less afflicted with whatever was, you know, bugging me and my relations with this person. So it's actually a very good tool to learn from this program.

So you do so. So if you're really bugged by someone, you know, the last thing you can feel a love for them. Then you you'll start doing anyway the prayer Yeah. And then after after some weeks of doing it regularly, then something shifts

and you know, it is very much like the metta practice. You know, you're supposed to get out to doing metaphor, Friday phrases for the enemy. It's really the same thing. Yeah.

It's, it's, it's great.

I am

for some time. I've been using the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Tomlin, which is similar but it gives you a visualization. And in this, it's best to start with yourself or a friend or family member and you think of one thing to focus on for perhaps a person, you know, a friend their fears of something or another, and you visualize them filled with black smoke. And then with each breath that you take, you pump that smoke out of them until they're crystal clear. And the smoke you pump into a circle or a sphere in front of you. And then when they're clear of that, say their fear black smoke in your mind, you breathe in that black smoke to your heart, and it shatters your heart which gives this golden glow of light, which you imagine enveloping that person. So you start with friends or yourself or your family members, and then as time goes on and you become more adept at this, you can move on to your people who were troublesome to you and then to your enemies. And it's a good visualization technique. And it's kind of like that, that sense of turning the energy around into a positive energy from the negative one that you started out with.

Beautiful, thank you.

Yeah.

Can't let this go without justing to the people on the worldwide web that we all gather at the corner of Haight and Ashbury in wish for the summer of 1969. To come back. It was 68. I think what you said about the hindrances was very important. neighborhood discussion group literature talks about that. So that's an upcoming topic and seems to bear mentioned as it Preparation.

Yes, thank you. So one more.

For me, it's not a theory it's watch what happens. I simply have to observe. If I become angry and filled with ill intent towards someone, if I'm mindful enough, I see where that leads me. It leaves me suffering. And then if I am mindful enough to release that, and let it go, then I see it leads me to no stress.

Beautiful man, if you're mindful enough to notice those times in daily life where goodwill kindness love, even a small degrees bubble up, and really notice it well, and then to validate it or, or support it. So another way, so thank you very much. And there's one more way of cultivating loving kindness or

goodwill or friendliness, whatever, and that is to stay and have tea and you know, me Some of the meet some of the people here if you'd like, and those of you who might be new today, it's a bit daunting to come in here sometimes when especially they come in, and it's all we're all silent and first come in, you know at the beginning and no one's talking and then you have to go in here and sit down what's going on here and no one tells you and so I know I realized that and, but now people will talk. And so introduce yourself to someone and welcome to IMC.