

2015-05-04 Ocean of Love

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SPEAKERS

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I was reminded today that I remembered today that during my long retreats when I was practicing Vipassana and one of the surprises great surprises for me was the arising of love, of loving kindness of goodwill, of a very powerful feeling of appreciation, anything and everything that I could know. And the task of mindfulness practice is to know is to be in the present moment in a clear full way. Not that the mind lost in thought or lost in the future or the past or in desire aversion, but to be really here for the experience as it occurs. And so mindfulness is a chance to really like some people talk about it clears the, the veils from our eyes from the inner eyes so we can really see what's actually here in our experience in undiluted undistracted way. And so in the process of discovering to do that, learning how to do that, you learn to then really see all the different things think arise here. You hear a sound and you are there for the sound, you see a sight and you're really there to see it as sight. A smell arises and you smell or taste or experience the sensations and experience to the body, or a thought arises or an emotion arises. And you're right there and you really see it clearly for what it is and, and with time you'll learn to see the whole range Everything you know of what's gonna happen in the present moment, there's nothing outside. And what are the great joys that I experienced in doing this practice was it kind of came as kind of a ha moment for me is the day that I realized that in theory, I could be mindful of every possible experience I ever had. It was an experience, I could be mindful of it. And why that brought me a lot of joy is that I had discovered by that time that if I could be really mindful, where they present for experience with mindfulness, I could be free in whatever experience was happening. There was something about the clarity of mindfulness of being really knowing and being present, seeing being really being present for something not involved in something not caught in something not being pushed around. Round by it, were kind of like your stand that you're kind of relaxed, stable here. And you're kind of like in a certain kind of way independent from the experience what's going on, you're free of it. That's what mindfulness teaches. And I couldn't do that I couldn't do that yet there wasn't free in all ways. But when I realized that, in theory, I could be mindful of everything. So in theory, I knew I could be free anywhere and everywhere. And I became so happy Wow, I'm so and so lucky. I have this practice it's really inspired me a lot. And then as I continued to practice and my meditation practice got stronger, believe to be in the present got stronger. And what that meant, what that means is that there was less distraction. There was less conceptualization, less abstractions about I wasn't thinking about it or I wasn't thinking What? What good is this for me and we're just taking me and what do I want with this experience and I wasn't going to push things away. So this is I had enough of this, this is too difficult. I don't want this anymore. I was universal, all this extra baggage, start with really falling away. And so I found myself just really present in a very simple, direct way. And it's a beautiful thing, this kind of simplicity of knowing so simplicity of experience that doesn't bring all this extra stuff with it all this extra you know, all this unnecessary memories and plans for the future and whatever. It's just just this kind of the pristine experience of just this, this moment here.

And then it happened, this thing with love. And then I discovered then at some point As a therapist, being aware of whatever is happening, the present moment. I had the feeling the sense that everything that I knew I, I was in love with that there was love there was, there was a certain certain kind of love. The it was in the act of knowing it. There was loving it there was appreciating others valuing it, that there was a kindness to it, the tenderness to it, a gentleness to it or a joy with it or goodwill, loving kindness, generosity. And I don't know what words to describe it. And I think all these words only seem partial part of it. Sometimes I try to call it a radiance, you know much more than just being mindful of a certain kind of radiance of presence and kind of Radiance because it kind of sucks floating out there kind of arise arises from the heart and goes out kind of within and goes out. And it was quite beautiful to feel this kind of unconditional radiance or joy or love for whatever arose and experience. And conventionally what arose might be unpleasant, you know, it's, you know, maybe pain. But, but because the mindfulness was so strong to see that pain, and it's in simultaneous with a pain, there was kind of a love event or kind of love or joy or delight. And just that, just that. So there was a surprise for me, I didn't see it coming. I wasn't doing mindfulness practice to love anything. And there I was, you know, and, and my teacher that I practice with who Pandita he was very strict. And he didn't want anything kind of extra he was like, just really use that to be really diligent to be present for each thing as it arose and there was nothing for no frills. And so every day I would go for an interview with him, but I never told him about the love. Somehow I just didn't think that was going to go over with his sternness. So I just kept that myself. And so, you know, Secret Love My secret love. My secret, my secret love was everything. What do you think of that? And so there I was, you know, and so this capacity so what is this capacity? So, for me, it was a kind of, I use myself I maybe it's kind of a modern term, I think in America in certain circles. Talk about having an open heart. So I've had you know, just that I called telling myself that crusts of the heart fell away and mindfulness This is a tenderizer, right? Like for heart was all old and tough. But that that time and so mindfulness like a tenderizer and softens it. And so in that softening, there's a lot of stuff that falls away and get soft. And there's a reciprocal receptivity to experience, it's very different. It then if you you know, not receptive if you're wanting to this acquisition and inquiring mind like, I want this, I want that I want that I want that. And then there's no openness to receive. Or if you hate, I don't like that I don't like this is a problem with that. And then there's no space to receive the experience. And so part of what happened was I was able to receive in this open space in this open heart to this open, relaxed place. And in that relaxed place, what was received, it was received or experienced, in the hearts capacity for something like empathy. or love or joy or generosity or these things are all kind of. I don't know how we can always tease these apart is generosity as many kinds of love, right, but like the kind of love which is a god Bay or goodwill, loving kindness metta that we talked about so much in our tradition, can you separate it from generosity? Can they be metta without generosity? Can they regenerate real generosity without metta without loving kindness? I think that the two are not so far from each other. And so and then can there be metta? Can they be as kind of love goodwill? Can there be that without some kind of appreciation, some kind of valuing or even some kind of joy in what you're encountering and what you feel and get to there.

And can there be loving kindness goodwill metta, this kind of strong feeling of Love that I was experiencing it, you know, you can't really separate it from ethics either from morality, it's kind of like this is the seed or the source of being ethical because you know, you you love you love it, you love this world and so you don't want to harm you don't want to you harm the world you arm yourself into space.

And so that one of the images I have for this kind of experience that I had that I like is if you get in a rowboat rope out into the ocean, but not that far, just safe distance as far as make safe to go with the robot. So you know, keep doing you don't get scared from the imagery. So you roll that roll out and other people are rolling out their boats. You're all out there paddling away. And it gets very interesting people's relationship to the boat and to the paddling. My boat is bigger than your boat. My boat is faster

than your boat. And I can pedal better than you. I can paddle. I can roll better than you. And I'm going to prove it. Or I can roll it all, I hardly can get anywhere. Those people rose so much better over there. They have nicer boats. Why did I get the bad boats and, and then we you know and sometimes we're really intent on the paddling like the paddling is the most important thing and we're pushing and pushing and doing and you know, it's the boat to the boats and the paddling and the doing and they're not doing well enough and the boats that paddling and doing and we're paddling some more and the boats and maybe we get a different boat some year and we're still paddling and it's and you know You're tired of paddling and tired of me talking about paddling and, and, but you know, you're you know you're up there you paddle right and then the people paddled by you and you've got to keep I gotta keep it up. Or you have a partner in the boat and your boat partner says paddle paddle. We have important places to go and put in place to get things to get done. And you know, we have to prove ourselves to everyone that you know, so paddle paddle. And so it seems like your whole world what's most important is the paddling and the boats or whatever, you know, your whole your whole mind is about that. And you think that's the that you think like so much so you get that's like the only thing going on. That's the important thing going on. That's like your universe right. But you can't paddle your boat unless you float the float has to hold you up and it's a beautiful thing to be able to out there in a nice boat and the ocean is holding you up and you know you take credit for the floating you know i mean never boat look I'm sitting my boat and it's floating I'm a great boat floater. You know, I must better vote for it. When you look at you your vote is you know, you don't take credit for the floating. It's just your float. But the floating has to be there for you to be able to pedal and the fact you don't have to pedal to float. And so, what happens if you relax, stop the pedaling. It can be frightening to forget that forget to stop pedaling because everyone else is pedaling. And they're telling you pedal and they're telling you you're gonna come to nut no good whatsoever. If you don't pedal. pedal. I'm sorry. English is not my set. My English is not my first language. So paddle right pedal. You have pedal boats. Okay, so not that not an either wedding, pedal pedal. So and so it's hard to stop paddling or pedaling, or running, or whatever you're doing swimming. Because your messages are so strong you should. But there's something about if you can really stop, then there's a certain kind of, you know, unless it's storming or something. It's really nice to just be out there to full moons nice weather. Ocean is calm and just can be delightful. Just sit back and feel the floating now nice it is to be held up.

So in this analogy, the mind that we have are thinking and wanting and not wanting that goes on incessantly is something that we do in relationship to other people, we watch what other people do and what they want and what they don't want. We hear their cheerleading of us or their demand of us, our families and society. You have to keep doing you have to keep thinking you have to keep solving, you have to keep fantasizing, you have to keep understanding. And you have to keep, you know, in minds always can be so busy and busy and doing and doing. And one of the things that meditators sometimes discover is the mind starts getting quieter and quieter, is how exhausted. The mind is. The inner life is so weary, it's if we're always thinking a lot and we're thinking about something. Sometimes we're blind to the effect that thinking has on us. But if you get quiet and see the effects and people discover that they are exhausted in their conventionally they had enough sleep for the night. Not tired exactly, but there's a deep weariness from the mind beings busy. Some people discover that there's a quite good quiet and start seeing what's going on. But kind of behind the surface, they find that there's a pervasive anxiety that's pushing their thoughts and what's goes on, everything's anxious and what's going on. And so one of the responses to discomfort of any type is to start pedaling again, less pedal faster, we have to get out of here, we have to do something. And so it takes a lot to trust and to learn to really stop and rest and allow yourself to float and float on the experience of awareness just to let your awareness float with experience here and to float, and as we learn to float, we float and there is love and it can be as the ocean The ocean can be a variety of things. But one of the things the ocean is is love, tremendous boundless love, a tenderness, a gentleness, a generosity, a joy, a valuing appreciation, a caring, what

is love, after all, all these things, you know there, that's kind of this ocean of goodwill of goodness. That is huge as fast. The Buddhist tradition talks about this kind of love, as the capacity of it being boundless without limit. You know, just spreads out that has no boundaries, there is no limit as far as it goes. He just goes encompasses everything huge like the ocean, and to kind of relax and open and relaxing means really relaxing through and past anxiety. Really sentiments, fears, hates, desires ambitions, relax, past, beyond, relax beyond the particular contraction around self self identity, self worth, self representation representations. So, conceit to let all this stuff relax. And what's beautiful about this relaxing process in this mindfulness, mindfulness meditation, meditation is between blacks and let go deeper and deeper is that there's no need to judge anything. Just relax it. Just let it be, you know, let it go. Trust there's a deep trust that goes on. It's like trusting you can just float. You don't have to do all the paddling and everything. Just trust just Just relax. And the ocean is huge. And then and then Then it's kind of because it's so boundless. There's it doesn't belong to you, even though it's your heart, your hearts, the world, then it's there's no doesn't belong to you. And maybe everybody is floating on a notion of love. Maybe it's one of the things we have in common. Maybe we all have different boats. But maybe we're all held up the ocean of love to care.

And certainly you don't have to do a lot of thinking about it, to realize that most people I suspect most of you have been the recipient of lots of care and tenderness in your life. Maybe not recently, maybe not as an adult. But maybe you when you were a baby. It's hard to imagine that does happen sometimes. But, you know, if you were if you were a newbie Baby some time once upon a time, some of you don't remember that there was a lot of tenderness, you wouldn't have ended up where you are today. If there wasn't someone who cared for you in some way, society as a whole wouldn't work unless there's people who care for each other enough. And I think there's a much greater ocean of goodwill in this world than there is an ocean of hate animosity. Though hate none amount of masa gets the, you know, gets, gets the best press and put so much goodwill and generosity and kindness. It's phenomenal. And so to float in that to realize that and to see that commonality and it's kind of where we can as fellow human beings, as brothers and sisters, his fellow family is kind of in the goodwill and their love and all these constellation of, of good qualities of heart that are there. If they are revealed if we allow them to come and we're open this receptive, open, unassertive way that can only be this way. And so to relax and to open, be receptive to trust to let go of all the stuff that gets in the way to trust that don't paddle so much. Annotations places, stop paddling. Don't paddle when you meditate. And what's really nice about this is that in this float, if you realize you're floating in an ocean of awareness, ocean of love, ocean of goodwill, of ocean of generosity, that's you. It's your heart. The world is and you can appreciate the everybody's boats a lot better. And everybody's boats different. It's so great. Everyone's boats are different. Some boats are no orange and some are brown, some are yellow and some are purple. Some are rainbow and some are pink and some are all kinds of things. Some are big, some are small and some have wonderful mast bow heads he's on the put their gods on the front and they've always different gods that are floating on their boats they hold up. All these different religions different boats have different religions. Different boats, people on different boats have different beliefs. People in the boats have different political views. People in the boats have different ideas about what's important. People in the boats have different ideas of how you're supposed to paddle. Some people don't believe in paddling, they believe in pedaling. So it goes but it's then you get great Wow, look at that, and you can appreciate them and value them and you're in charge not to try to make their boat, the your boat, you don't have to change their boat. So you got the wrong boat. Their boat floats too. And so it's a way we can live in the world together. appreciating all the differences. We have all the different ways that we are. And we don't have to even decide who's right and wrong and they're paddling and pedaling and rowing, whatever they're doing, what they're believing even on their boat. But we all share this great big ocean goodwill if you want to ocean of goodwill, you're saying you probably some of you might be saying No way, Gil, this is pretty unrealistic. There's no ocean out there of goodwill. You don't know

what you're talking about. Just today. Let me tell you what happened today to me. People yelled at me and they stole my car. Listen, that there's a lot of terrible things out there. There is a vast ocean of love and goodwill. In this world.

If you allow for it, it only exists if you allow for it. And where it's where it begins is in your own heart. It's how your your heart sees the world. It's how your heart meets the world and is there and you have a great heart. If and if you could let the crust of your heart soften. If you can let the distractions of your mind the busyness of the mind, paddling of your mind, on anxiety and the worries and ambitions, the wants and not once and all these things quiet down and let yourself as part of the value of mindfulness is not so much to know what's here, but to really allow yourself to feel what's here and to feel and open and be present in a beautiful way to so we can value and appreciate this world we live in. So the your ocean, you're floating in an ocean if you allow yourself to float in it. Or you can live in your little boat, and the boundaries of your universe goes only as far as the edges of your boat and your paddle. And everything's about that. Where would you rather live? I've been there. confines of your boat, or the wide expanse of the ocean is your friend. So, this is a little bit my attempt to describe to you what for me was one of the great gifts of this mindfulness practice. The gift of love that I didn't come to Buddhism to discover, but it found me. And then I feel very grateful and appreciative and in all of this sense, the experience of love, compassion, caring, generosity, joy, appreciation. That seems to have welled up. I don't want I can't call it mine. I can call it me doing it. Because it's not me that does it. Me, it's just more paddling. It's nice to start paddling. So those are my thoughts for today. And we have time if you want to ask any questions about any of that or have any protests or bring up anything.

I was struck when you said that your teacher you didn't tell your teacher about the love that you were experiencing and I'm I'm puzzled by That you said he was stern. But I guess my question is, why wouldn't there have been room to describe this experience of love him what he were doing at the time?

You know, I wasn't I don't think I thought about that carefully. And it wasn't like it wasn't a big deal for me. I just, you know, I had I had 15 minutes or so 10 minutes or something to talk to him every day about what my meditation experience was. And so he was very, he was very precise. This particular teacher was very precise about how you're supposed to report your meditation experience. So he had it was a very narrow window, what you could talk about, or how you talk about your experience. So, for example, if you showed up and said, Today was a hard day meditating, boy, I really, you know, I was pretty discouraged and it was hard. He probably just send you away. Now, because you weren't reporting properly If you want to report it properly you said today, discouragement arose. I experienced the discouragement as a lot of heaviness and a lot of thoughts of anxiety and I noticed it as happiness and anxiety. As I did that it seemed like the heaviness got stronger. But I kept I kind of went and felt were that heaviness of this discouragement was felt. And I felt it kind of in my pit of my stomach. And as I felt that there it dissipated. So the idea was because Oh, so hard day, it was hard for me, I felt so discouraged. That's kind of like, being caught up in self and struction and self pity. And it's not the kind of Sword of wisdom, it just sees what's there for what it is, boom, this is what it is. So we so he was training us to, to, in how we report it to him. very precise, no, no sentimentality. No, you know, being caught up in self around it for me or something, just just to the direct experience without the interpretation. So he wanted this very, that's how he wanted it. He was very strict about that. And so there wasn't a lot of room to, you know, to offer. I didn't think there was much room to offer much else. And so I just, there were some things I never told them. So, you know, and he was kind of stern right then. And he was kind of like, he was like that kind of, like, General type, you know, he raised your eyebrow at you, you know, people sometimes would get concerned Oh, but and high praise from him was at the end of the interview, he he would say, carry on. And if he said carry on, he meant he, you

know, he thought you were doing great. You should just keep keep going on the course. And so maybe it was mistake, maybe I could have told them but You know, he didn't want anything sentimental. So

I was just thinking that his loss

there, that maybe he didn't if I understand what you said he wanted you to experience but not to make a story out of

that's for sure. Oh, no stories about it. Yeah. And so anyway, so it was didn't seem like it was that much room for difference, you know, so I just kept it simple. I kept it what I knew he wanted me to report and I was following his practice. I was trying to be, you know, a good student and follow how he wanted us to practice and report reporting was part of the practice. So, you know,

that story stuff is really, really hard to deal with. Not not just simply experience and then not begin to build a story around whatever it is.

And then there was a variation of this experience of loving everything. Was that, you know, so you're kind of mindful of each thing is there as occurs, you know, so hear a sound, notice the sound, in breath, know the breath. So I was knowing and then everything that I knew, I would love, I would love. And as I loved everything, it would disappear. And it felt like I had a racer, and it was going around and erasing everything. Until finally there was nothing. Everything vanished. It was quite exquisite. What I mean, you know, what is it like when everything vanishes? Nobody, you know, no, sounds don't nothing. Great stillness, great space. So that was also I didn't tell him that either. Because, you know, my mindfulness is like an eraser and I'm just loving everything and erasing it away. So, you know, so you don't have to have those. You know, this is maybe idiosyncratic You know, my own you everybody has their own way of doing No things are unfolding so just as my my particular way Yes, here there, Mike, can you go back forward?

So Gil in trying to so while stopping to the paddling I feel like sometimes I slip into more but to pour stage where I feel like I'm floating off into space, makes analogies and I feel so I tried to maintain mindfulness of the body to keep myself here and I wonder if that's the right thing to do. And also the other way is that I get too excited sometimes Oh space and then I pop out of it. What is the correct way of maintaining the right tension or the right amount of floating without too much floating?

stay interested? Okay. That was the answer. Okay. Because, because, you know, if you're sinking into torpor, this way, you've lost your interest. But don't be too interested then you'll get excited. And thinking is like drowning in the ocean. You know, you don't want to drown. Like you you have sprung a leak behind you.

Can you say a little about how that loving ceiling developed and continued in your life? You access that now readily at at will?

Well, that's an easy question for me to answer I think the because partly because you asked the question as a feel as a feeling. I think feelings come and go and the strength of feelings come and go. So there are different times I feel I feel more loving, I feel more open kind of radiant. Other times I don't that comes and goes more. And some of it has to do you know if I allow for it you know that my I have some choices that matter what I do with my my attention and you know if I'm if I go to the supermarket and I'm in a hurry and just want to get shopping done and I'm more focused on finishing and getting everything done and getting in the cart, and you know, and focus on getting get best price and that's all

that's important. You know, there's not much I'm not going to take much time to kind of be have an open heart at that moment. Just be there in a kind of relaxed, open way. It's also possible to go into the supermarket and go down the aisles and just, you know, kind of like you're just there You're not going anywhere, no hurry, nothing to do and nothing to buy. You're there and you're walking down you see Oh yeah, we need that this you get it and so and you see Other shoppers and rather than their their shopping carts are getting in the way of yours, it's like, Oh, look at that it's another person now nice. They're shopping. They're getting a lot of food, they must have a nice family, a big family and appreciate them. And so maybe with a little bit, you know, imaginary, but they did being it's a choice you make. And so if you choose to be busy and harried, there's not that much opportunity for an open hearted approach. And so there's a choice involved in that. So and so sometimes I choose to be, you know, be involved in something and I'm not giving much space to the open heart because I'm choosing something else. So the feeling the sense comes and goes, but I feel I have much more access to it than I had before. It's relatively easy. But it's also something I can't describe very well, which is not it's not a feeling this completely it feels it feels it's formless. It's more like what's with me all the time is there's a space Like Beautiful, beautiful, clear, empty space that's always here, but it's not a thing. It's not a feeling like it's just empty, right? But it's not empty and feel like a dull boring voidness or something or depressing voidness it's actually vibrant and beautiful and, and just, you know, meaningful it's like the meaning of life almost as in that emptiness and, and so that it's not a feeling that doesn't come and go that just is but it's not i'm not always paying attention to that, but that's even easier to access. And that feels like the ocean that supports the ocean I'm talking about today or something that seems to be the background that makes all this possible. I don't know. I don't know that made sense. But so right behind you there someone's asking

I would love to hear your thoughts on interdependence. And those boats who want to pedal very fast and kind of slam slam into your boat aggressively pushing you saying either get out of the way. I don't deal with floaters. What should you do and how you would how you deal with that turbulence. Other boats who are

possibly bigger or a group of boats

I get my group about

I think that generally if you're harmless people leave you alone. Generally. And also if harmless generally, you're harmless generally people will leave you alone. I had a great day. This is a little bit non sequitur, but I had a great experience this morning in Berkeley. I was in Berkeley early this morning, like seven o'clock in the morning and that much was going on in the streets. And I was walking down the sidewalk and an assembly you know, Berkeley, it was just just like right in the corner of Ashby. Ashby is one of the big streets right by just one block away from Ashby in college. And I was walking down the street then and the sidewalk and it's chicken Come out beside me. I have a picture on my phone to show. The chicken came right up to me. And he started cooking. And I said hello and it clicked back and then I started walking down the street have followed me is cooking, cooking, cooking, cooking, walking along, I don't know. And then I walked around the corner down Ashby and it followed me on Ashby and I said where's this gonna stop? What am I gonna do chicken and, and then when it came to the edge of that property of that house, it stopped to do to stop and so I'm not sure how that answers your question. But I think it does.

So your question is a reasonable question and but it's too vague There's so many different scenarios where that something could happen. And each scenario probably requires a different kind of response. But if it but if you all fall you have all you know how to do is paddle, then you'll either paddle away or

paddle towards. But if you know how to float, then you have all kinds of opportunities to look and see more carefully what's needed. In some situations, what's needed maybe is to look the person right in the eye and say, you know, could you take a moment get to know me better? I think if you knew me better, you probably wouldn't be doing this and see what they say. Or say, Oh, this is hard. This is very discouraging. Is this what you're trying to do is to discourage me? Or maybe you know, some people, some people that gets their attention if you engage in that way. And sometimes maybe what you do is you get the floating police to come if it's bad. And they're aggressive enough harming you. We our society has people who can help can take care of these things better than you can. And between those, there's a whole range of things. But my belief is that if you know how to not be caught up in your story caught up in your desires and your fears and aversions caught up in your resentments in your hurts, and you have the ability to stop and pay really careful attention to what's going on, that you have a much you'll discover a much wider range of options about how to respond. And as you discover a wider range of options, you probably have, hopefully, you'll be able to choose the ones that will have the best consequences, results for everyone involved. And if you're if you really understand that we're all floating on the same ocean, and that's where the interdependence is in the ocean that we float on together. Then the task is to try to understand in any given situation, what's the greater good For everyone involved, not what's the greater good for me? What's the greater good for that person? But what's the greater good for all of us? And that's a beautiful evaluation beautiful thing to consider. Not not one, not, not for years now, it's what's best for you when best for someone else. But what's best for everyone involved. And that takes a very different kind of evaluation consideration. to, to think that way, and it's not we're not really trained to think that way, the way much. It's usually people. It's like, you know, it's me or me or them or it's a competition or scarcity of, you know, there's a scarcity of power goods or money or whatever. Luckily, there's no scarcity of love. There's an abundance of that if we know how to touch into it. So I hope that there was Thank you. So thank you all and if it interests you, this kind of pointed is pointing to something that was interesting for you. valuable for you. I leave you with a challenge that for this week and that is that your ability to love to have goodwill to have appreciation to have joy in others, valuing others has a lot to do with the choices you make, whether you want to or not, whether you make the effort to make the time to do that. To allow for that, and see if you can make more time for it. It's a really great thing to do. Thank you