

Dharmette: Sources of Care-Giving (5 of 5) Care

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October 03, 2025

Keywords: anukampā, karuṇā, Buddha, caregiving, non-clinging, respect, Sati Center, Saṅgha, loving-kindness, generosity

So hello and welcome to this fifth and final talk on the sources for caregiving. And today the topic is *anukampā*, the ancient Buddhist word that is much more associated with the Buddha than the word *karuṇā*. *Karuṇā* is usually translated as compassion and it's universally considered that Buddha was a deeply compassionate person and that he was motivated by it to teach. And that could well be, it's a little bit of a semantic issue, but he's seldom associated with *karuṇā* in the way that we would expect, if that's the central word for compassion. Rather, he's associated with *anukampā*, A-N-U-K-A-M-P-A. And the word is often translated into English as compassion.

So therefore, people associate the Buddha with compassion. But I would like to propose that a different translation for *anukampā* that's based on the primary way in which it is described in these ancient teachings of the Buddha. And that is, it's a concern, a dedication maybe, to the welfare and happiness of others. Whereas compassion is usually considered concern about the suffering of others and wanting that suffering to come to an end. And so they're a little different. They don't have to be that different from each other.

Compassion, wanting to end suffering, so people can be happy. Wanting people to be happy by having them end their suffering. But I like to think of this instinct towards being concerned with the welfare and happiness of others as being a really broad category that encompasses caring for people who suffer, caring for people who are happy, caring for people who are neither happy nor suffering, in all kinds of states. And as such, it's kind of a more fundamental ordinary attitude of caregiving. That it's fairly natural for most people to spontaneously be caring for things that are not quite right. And it could be for people who are a little bit in trouble, or it could be that it's someone who maybe has a little bit trouble opening the door, but so we open the door for them so they can come in.

We care for them that way. Is that compassion? Is it kindness? What is it? But sometimes it's so ordinary to open the door. It's done almost without thought. There's not necessarily love or compassion as part of it. It's just kind of a matter of fact, of course. If someone needs help with the door, I'll offer them if I can.

If there's a piece of trash on the ground in a public place, and some people will pick it up and put it in their trash can. Is there compassion there? Is there love there? Maybe not. But is there care? Yeah, we care about the environment. We care about what the environment is like for other people. And we would like to care for the sidewalk so it looks kind of clean. There's a kind of natural kind of caring there. Maybe even kind of generosity involved in picking up the trash.

If we go someplace and there's all kinds of little things that might be amiss, and we kind of just rearrange it, make it nice. If we go into a temple where there's a place building where you take off your shoes, and the shoes are just a little bit in a mess, and you might make a little clearing or put a little bit in order so that the older person who comes who has trouble putting on and off the shoes can have an easier time than having to deal with all that scattered shoes around. And it's a way of caring for someone. I love the word care, because in my mind it's a very ordinary word, and we use it for so many different things. It's a fascinating exercise to just pay attention through the day how often the word care is used, whether it's elder care, child care, intensive care units, spiritual care is sometimes chaplaincy departments and hospitals.

There's car care, pet care. There is all kinds of ways in which we take care of things. We want things to maintain things. We care for things. Okay. One of the reasons I like the word care, it also means, English has a number of meanings, but it could also mean that we value something. We think it's important. And so, you know, to say I care for the environment or I care for people who live in my community, it doesn't necessarily mean we're actively going to care for them, but that it means that we're concerned about their welfare, where we value them.

And then I can also say I care for the environment because I help clean the trash from the local creeks. And that's my contribution. And so this ordinary idea of care that I think is for many people a natural instinct in certain circumstances. And some of the circumstances have to do with how we feel internally. If we're stressed, the opportunity for natural care to operate is less. If we're in a hurry, we don't stop to care for people or offer the simplest forms of care, even open the door for someone.

If we're scared, if we're preoccupied, if we're conflicted within our own hearts, as we settle more and relax more and settle more and live a life that's a little bit calmer and more at ease,

then we find ourselves more kind of naturally wanting to care. Yeah. It doesn't require great compassion, great love. We can care for things that we don't feel friendly towards, or the bar is really low for ordinary, easy-going care. However, the fact that it's ordinary and it doesn't mean that it's inconsequential, it might be the most important. It might be in some ways the source of compassion, the source of generosity, the source of all the other caregiving instincts.

And because it has a lot to do with all of them, with how we are, the internal state of mind and heart that we have, the emphasis in Buddhism is that care, *anukampā*, is associated with two things. It's associated with non-clinging, with non-attachment. And the greater the attachments are, the less there is care. Okay. So especially if we have some kind of hostile attachment against somebody with very little inclination to care for them. So it's associated with non-clinging. And so as people mature in this practice and find themselves clinging less and less, the instinct to care in all its manifestations, including compassion and loving-kindness and goodwill, friendliness, come more to the surface. And it becomes more natural to operate from those. So that's one.

The second that *anukampā* is associated with in the Sutta teachings of the Buddha is having respect for others, that we care for what we respect. So as we begin clearing our eyes and having less bias, less seeing people through the lens of our attachments, our angers, our hatreds, our fears, our greeds and desires, then that gives an opportunity to see people for who they are, to allow them to be themselves in a certain way, and to respect them, respect their humanity, respect their ability to choose. And so that the underlying assumption before there's other evidence is that whoever we meet is someone we care for, meaning someone we value and treat as being worthy. Someone that we respect, and we respect everyone all across the board, breaking down the barriers in our society of how disrespect is used to divide people and separate people and subjugate people even sometimes. And so this profound form of respect. So non-clinging and respect as one of the primary grounds out of which a simple ordinary care can exist.

The other thing that's associated with all these caregiving instincts, but I associate it most with care, is that it feels really good for us to have these instincts, this attitude arise and course through us. And the reason why I like care so much because it's the simplest. It keeps the kind of simplicity of being present and easeably of being as we care. It might not have some of the stronger kind of positive feelings that might be associated with compassion, might be associated with goodwill or loving-kindness. But it has something maybe that it feels more primarily kind of intimate with ourselves or simple because of simplicity and its

peace. So, *anukampā*.

So this week I did five caregiving attitudes, sources for caregiving. And it's nice to have a sense that there's a wide range of different attitudes that can motivate us to care for the world. And different times, different ones come into play the most. It's not all just one way. And some different times, different phases of a person's life, different ones of these might be more important, more kind of what's operating, coursing through us. But they're all five are part of the palette by which we paint our care concerns for the world.

And they can be quite powerful. And I would like to believe that they can become more powerful, more effective than the motivations that come from anger, the hostility. Right. To produce profound change in our society. That's going to be a long-lasting... These five caregiving instincts can guide the way, in a powerful way, in an effective way, in an active way. So I hope that this has been interesting for you to hear about these five forms of sources. And partly I did it because, you know, this fall, in the last few weeks started, the different chaplaincy training programs I'm involved in. And so this caregiving is kind of high on my mind.

And in terms of caring for the world, and a chance to kind of see how these kind of instincts might operate for you and their relevance, the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies that I'm involved in, is going to, I think, have a very significant conversation a week from tomorrow. A conversation I'll be hosting between two Buddhist teachers, and peace activists who live in Israel. One is a Jewish-Israeli, and the other is a Palestinian. And they're friends, long-time friends. And each of them teaches Buddhism for their own communities, in a sense. The Palestinian woman has a Saṅgha of Palestinian mindfulness practitioners she supports. And the Israeli has a group of Israelis, maybe mixed little bit Israeli-Palestinian. And they've been involved with peace activities in Israel and between Palestine and India for a long time. Both of them are contending and trying to manage with the issues of what's happening in Gaza. And they're going to have a conversation that I will kind of mediate a little bit for them.

And mostly they're going to talk about how this is for them personally, how they're supporting their communities at this difficult time. And I think they have much more nuanced view of this than taking one side or the other right and wrong. So I think it's an important conversation. I look forward to hearing them, what they have to say. And you find out information for it on the Sati Center website, sati.org. And the information is right there on the home page, so it should be easy. And you need to register for it. And I think it's at 9 o'clock next Saturday. So thank you all very much. And I look forward to coming back here on Monday.

Yeah, the names. Yeah, thank you. I didn't mention their names. So the Palestinian woman is Muna Shaheen, and the Israeli Dharma teacher is Stephen Fulder, who's written a few books

that one of them having to do with his peace activism work. So please come. Thank you.