

## Dharmette: Doors of Liberation (1 of 5) In Harmony

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So, hello and welcome to the beginning of this week's series. And in a sense, it continues from last week's theme of emptiness, because emptiness is part of this current theme. And the topic for this week is something called the Three Doors of Liberation. That also follows what much of this year, what I've been doing here for these YouTube presentations. First, there were many, many months on *samādhi*. And with *samādhi* as a foundation, we transitioned to insight, insight practice.

As insight practice develops and grows, at some point it brings us to the gates of liberation. And there are three gates of liberation. They are kind of a little bit funny language in English. They are the signless, the wishless, and emptiness. So, signless is that which has no signs. Wishless is a state free of all wishes, desires. And emptiness is this glorious absence that we talked about last week.

They're called doors, but perhaps that's a bit prosaic. In the guided meditation we just did, I was using the word gate. I was thinking about these marvelously large, inviting, stately gates in front of monasteries and temples in Japan where I practiced. The gate marks the location of here and now in a majestic, sometimes strong way. You kind of show up. You're kind of like, whoa, stepping through this means something.

If there was no gate there, it would be fine and open and relaxed, but probably I'd just keep talking with my friends, absorbed in a conversation. But the gates command attention. And there we are, here. You're stepping into a new zone, a new atmosphere, a new place that has significance and value. Perhaps the word door is prosaic, and maybe in modern English, the better reference point is portals. A portal is not just a door from one room to the next, but a portal nowadays is almost like a Star Trek term.

A portal is something that carries you into a whole different dimension, a whole different world, a whole different, so radically different way of being. And so these three portals, and how they work is that as mindfulness becomes stronger, and what that means, as we've become more and more at home, stable, comfortable, settled here and now, with the distracting mind being quieted for a while, put to rest for a while. So there's no pull out of the present moment. We've arrived here and now. And then starts the work, starts the momentum of *vipassanā*, of insight, where we start because we're so present, now we can start being attuned or pay attention to the deeper ways in which we, how we experience and perceive at the present moment. And that has a whole pattern that goes on.

Often what's emphasized a lot is that over time, the practitioner has a very deep experiential insight, experiential participation with inconstancy, change, impermanence, the first of the three characteristics. A deep participation, insight with suffering, with unsatisfactoriness, with a certain kind of stress. That we really deeply see something going on here, the under-foundations of experience, and the deep insight and participation in the experience of not-self. So these three, and these are considered to be intimately aspects of our experience, of how we perceive the world and live in the world. The idea is to become aligned with those, to be in harmony with those, to be attuned to them in a deep way. The language of the, you know, as practice deepens, the ancient language of Pāli, they use their equivalent of our English word with the grain.

To be with the grain of these things, not resisting them, not debating them, not trying to make it different, trying to hold on to something as permanent, trying to deny that the suffering is here, where there's some unsatisfactoriness in clinging, the suffering of clinging, and to be aligned or in harmony with that way in which it's really deep, kind of freedom that comes when we no longer attach to or oriented around concepts of self, me, myself, and mine. In English, we say with the grain, I like the Pāli word quite a bit more. It's with the hair. You pet a cat in the direction that the hair lays down. It would be completely out of harmony with a cat if you pet the cat against how the hairs lay down. The cat would probably get up and leave.

But if you do it with the hair, then the cat begins to purr. At some point as a practice deepens, we become, we go with the hair. We're in harmony, we're aligned, we're kind of, kind of a feeling of intimacy and kind of like purring with the flow of experience, with the truth, with the experience of here and now. Rather than having impermanence, suffering, and not-self be distressing or be debatable or questionable or resisting it, and rather than believing it as a philosophy, we begin to see that there's something to be in harmony with that, to be

attuned, aligned, is so satisfying that it creates a kind of equanimity, a kind of peace of all the hair lying down, all in the same way, kind of participating in the way that maybe the hand of time is stroking us, is petting us. So the idea is that as practice deepens, the mind gets quieter and calmer and more settled. We're not resisting anything.

We're not asserting anything. We're not pulling away from anything. We're not collapsed. We're not caught up in me, myself, and mine, what's in it for me and I want. We're not ahead of ourselves into the future. We're not behind ourselves in stories and memories of the past. We're right here.

This is, I liken this to the experience that I had in the Zen monastery in Japan, where a new monk, which I was at one point, in order to be able to enter the monastery, you have to stand at the gate. The gate is open, wide, large, expansive. A gate that marks nothing. Doesn't need to be there in a sense. But it's that the gate-less gate, we stand right here, right now. So in the Zen, you have to stand there, and you had to be there in harmony with the purpose that you're there.

You have to be fully in that gate, standing there in the monastery, maybe sometimes for a long time. It's showing that you're capable and interested in to enter the monastery to live with everyone else. So you can't collapse, you can't be assertive, you can't pull back, you can't be distracted. You have to be there in a relaxed way, you can't be tense, you have to be there as if it's forever. You have to be in alignment and in harmony with what it means to be there waiting peacefully. For someone to come out and maybe check you out and see if they would like to invite you into the monastery.

In that way, we sit, we become attuned, we become in harmony with what's here and now. We stand in the awareness, the presence of the present moment, here at the gate, at this gate-less gate, at this place that doesn't have to have a door or portal, but is always here for us, but we are different. Because now, after deep practice, we've come into harmony, we come into alignment, into attunement, in a deep, deep way with how things are unfolding here in the present moment. So any clinging, grasping, pushing has been settled with deep, deep equanimity. And then, and the way I was taught this in Asia, practicing, is that depending on one's personality or personal dispositions or something about unique for each person, one of these three portals or gates or doors will open up, or will invite us through, or will somehow, you know, pull us in to this new dimension of life that is called liberation and freedom. So some people will go through the door of the signless, some people go through the door of the wishless, and some people go through the door of emptiness.

On the other side, they come through that door, they all end up in the same place, freedom.

So in the next three days, I'll go through each of those three doors and talk about what they might mean and how to be aligned in harmony, to be with the grain of reality rather than against it. So thank you very much and continue this tomorrow.