

Dharmette: Doors of Liberation (3 of 5) The Wishless

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So hello and welcome to this third talk on the doors of liberation, the doors of freedom, a kind of deep inner spiritual freedom of the heart, freedom of the mind. That is what Buddhism kind of sees as a phenomenal medicine, phenomenal form of health, a phenomenal, phenomenal benefit for those who can experience this freedom of mind, freedom of heart. And so there's three doors. And the second door, which is a topic for today, is the door of wishlessness. And so to have no desires. First, we have to be clear that the idea is not to now forever have no desires whatsoever.

That's a kind of a sign of being depressed or being kind of dissociated or something. Of course, human beings have desires. The desire to eat, the desire to go for a walk, the desire to say hello to someone. There's all kinds of desires that we have. But it's a game changer to have even temporarily, very temporarily, even momentary, an experience of the profound peace, the profound possibility of having no desires at all. It's kind of like someone, the story I've told is there are people who were species of humans that were born in the ocean, and they were born swimming.

And all they know is to swim. They swim all the time. They don't stop to swim. They are swimming as they sleep, swimming in their wake, all day, all the time. And then one day, one of those swimming humans, this here is that way far to the east, there's a place where you can go and rest. You can somehow lay on your back and just there's a support there for you.

The person thinks, oh, it must be land, it must be a continent. And the person swims for maybe months, years, and never reaches it. And then meets someone who says, no, no, it's to the south. And the person swims for the south, no east, north. And after a phenomenal time, always swimming, searching, searching, searching for the place to rest. The wise old person says, yes, there is such a place. It's right where you are. All you have to do is flip over

on your back and you'll float. Not supposed to float all the time, but probably it's a time to start swimming again for that species of humans. But wow, finally I can rest.

So to have this phenomenally deep rest of putting down all desires is one of the potentials for deep meditation, Buddhist practice. But it's also for some people, the door of liberation opens as we get a sense, as something, as we step forward or fall into, or flip over and back onto, a deep experience, a deep perception or sense or feeling of that which has no desires. So the door of where there is no desires at all, and to trust it, to trust having no desires, is more than anything else, because anything else is to be caught in the world of desires. And desires by themselves always involve some degree of tension, some degree of stress, some degree of work. That we don't see in an ordinary state of mind, where we don't even know how many desires we're having. In ordinary states of mind, there's just a stream of desires.

One thought after another all represents wanting something. The metaphor being that the Buddha gave, or at least in Buddhism, gives that of a monkey swinging, that by the time it's letting go of one branch, it's already reaching forward to grab the next. And so there's no time in which they're not holding on, just switching from one thing to the next. That's how it is for humans often. We just have endless stream and flow of desires. And to begin feeling, not recognizing what we're desiring and questioning it and questioning it, and somehow questioning whether it's worth desiring or worth having or whatever, but to drop down behind it to the force, the momentum, the tension of desiring itself. And desire often camouflages itself or hides itself because it's focused on something at once. It has an object. And the movement of mindfulness is to turn the attention around 180 degrees and feel the desiring, feel what it's like to be involved in desires, independent of what we desire. That's a game changer because often, you know, there's a lot of belief, a lot of value, a lot of investment into the object of desire.

Even if it's something that has to do with the past experience and reviewing it and thinking about it, desire for the future and anticipating something. Even if the desire, there's a kind of a desire, even things that are like if we're afraid and we're focusing on what we're afraid of, there is a kind of momentum of desire behind that. It isn't that desire is wrong. There are appropriate desires to have and appropriate ways to have desires, but to begin discovering how deeply we can let go of desires and be without desires can teach us how to let desires surface without any tension in them. To have desires not cause any stress at all and not be addicted to them, not be caught by them, not be attached to them. This is a wonderful thing.

To be able to hold desires lightly, and to have the ability to choose whether we pick them up or not pick them up, even at the subtle level of picking them up in our thoughts, in our

thoughts, dreams. So when we meditate then, there is a want for some people, they become acutely aware of the tension, this unsatisfactoriness, this stress that's involved in having desires. And not everyone will have this. But sometimes it becomes clear at some very, very deep meditation, quiet, peaceful, calm meditation that in some ways any desire at all is a little bit stressful, a little bit too much, because we know what's better. We know there's a calmer and peaceful place to be. And... I don't know if this is a good example, but if you've had a really fit day, there's been a lot of physical activity for you that now you finally feel so good to rest, just lay down flat and just rest in bed or rest on the grass.

And you feel anything, any movement, even moving your finger up is too much. Even, you know, lifting an arm up. Just someone asks, you know, do you want to go, you know, over there to look at something in the park that's, no, I just want to stay here. Do you want to open your eyes? Not even open your eyes. It's just like everything is too much. So in very, very deep meditation there's a peace where we feel like any desire at all ripples the waters. The water has gotten so quiet that we don't want to ripple the waters. And so it's kind of a remarkable experience. And it's an experience that supports the mind to trust, okay, let go, let go, let go of desires.

And part of this kind of is to begin recognizing that there's a peaceful place, a calm surface of the lake where there is no desires. And to have a kind of real sense of intimacy with that and peace with that and quiet with it and to be in harmony with it, to be in the grain with it, to be in the current of it, to be kind of laying... The cat hair is all laid down in the same direction, to let your hand go in that direction, and maybe then the hand stops and rests. And the cat's quite happy that your hand is resting on top of all the fur that's going in one direction. If you pet the cat in the other direction, get all the fur standing up, and then put your hand down on top of it, pushing it down, that probably doesn't feel good for the cat. So this idea of kind of being in the alignment with the way of being that has no desires, because it feels so sweet, so nice, you want to purr in the goodness of that, to trust it.

And then, for some people, the door of desirelessness opens. So this door of desirelessness might maybe have convinced you that maybe it's okay idea. But for some people, the way they get to it is they have a lot of suffering. And only when they suffer a lot, they reach rock bottom with their suffering are they finally willing to give up and let go of everything? And it's not uncommon for some people, and it certainly happened to me, that my suffering was so strong, so deep, and I kept trying to work against it and fight it and overcome it and fix it and make my way through it. And all my attempts at some point in my practice just made it worse because I was just using more tension, more desire, more clinging to try to let go of clinging.

I didn't see it, I didn't know any other way. My suffering just grew and grew and grew. Until finally I'd kind of reached rock bottom with misery and despair and discouragement. And the only thing left to do was to give up, to let go completely.

I don't know what to do. I can't practice anymore. I just, you know, deeply, deeply let go. And not because I thought I should, but there was just nothing else made sense. Nothing else was possible. I was exhausted from all the effort. And that... There was a particular retreat that happened, and that was the beginning of the retreat for me. I didn't know that that was the case. But then I became in alignment with that. I was kind of supported by that. I understood that. So my system now knew having no desires at all. And that opened a gate, that opened a possibility for me. To let something other than my clinging efforts to support practice. I became in alignment, in harmony with this idea of wishlessness, desirelessness, just as a way of continuing the practice.

So the door of the wishless, maybe it's available more often than you realize. Maybe as you go through this day, you can ask yourself in different circumstances, where is the door of wishlessness at this moment? What is just below my desires, in between the desires, to the side of them? And what would it be like to be aligned, to be in harmony, to be with the grain of that part of life that is certainly alive, present, attentive, but do so without any desires. What arises in that? What's possible in that? The door of the wishless is one of the doors to the heart's release, the heart's freedom. Thank you.