

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

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So hello, and today I'll give the fifth and last talk on this topic of the three doors of liberation. The first talk was the introduction. The next three were on each of the doors, the signless, the wishless, and emptiness. And today is kind of concluding. It's considered these topics to be part of the depths of, or the deepest places of practice. I've tried during the course of the week to offer you guided meditations that prepared you to understand these teachings.

In some way I talked a lot more than usual in the guidance this week, but I hope that served the purpose of somehow conveying something of these three potentials we have that represent the three doors of liberation. The word that's related to this Vipassanā practice and coming up to the doors of liberation is the word, the Pāli word is *anuloma*, A-N-U-L-O-M-A. *Loma* means hair, and *anu* means with. So with the hair, and it's kind of like the English word "with the grain." I talked about this earlier in the week. I wanted to emphasize again today that what we're looking for here is not some kind of believing in the wishless, the signless, the emptiness; it's not a belief system.

You don't have to twist your mind philosophically or try to understand how these things work. Rather, it's something to come into harmony with, to come into alignment with, to go with the hair, with the grain. What is that? At some point in things like meditation practice and other places in life, there arises, there occurs some kind of experience of well-being that feels right, that feels good. Now, you know, this is how I want to be aligned with this. I want to live in this. I want to live this way. This is good.

Generally, for that to happen, especially in meditation, it requires a deep relaxing, a deep quieting of the incessant chatter, the incessant wanting, the incessant signifying, judging, evaluating everything that comes. So this is good, this is bad. That's a signification, that's signifying. There's assigning value, and then there's what is assigned. That's not exactly in

the objects of the world, but is what we project onto them. So we're allowing, as part of the reason to quiet and relax in meditation, not to have a nice, calm feeling of stress reduction. The point is not to be calm. The point is to quiet the incessant activity of the mind enough that we start entering into a wholeness, a fullness, a calm, a peace, that we start getting a glimmer of something that seems really invaluable.

We start getting a glimmer of a kind of peace, a kind of deep peace, well-being, a kind of freedom that comes when we're not caught in the chatter, not caught in the signifying, not caught in the selfing and identification with everything. You know, what's in it for me that can go on incessantly non-stop sometimes. So in a deep kind of way, begin appreciating what our society often doesn't point to. Because our society in some way or other points to wanting, having, getting, protecting, judging, being angry, being afraid. All of those are activities of the mind where the mind is caught and tense and busy. It's kind of like there's no monetary value in a mind that gets really peaceful, calm, that's not about something and not preoccupied by something.

So we're learning to recognize that there's a phenomenal inner wealth, phenomenal inner benefit to a deep state of peace where a whole different orientation in how to live our life can happen. To start recognizing what is signless, that which doesn't make signs, doesn't do the assigning, doesn't make the signifying of everything. To recognize that way of being that is not always about what we want and don't want, incessantly, but a way of just resting, being on vacation with desires, and just being able to rest and be content, profound deep contentment. To put to rest... For some of us, the incessant preoccupation with self, so much high percentage of depression, of anger, of fear, has its roots in a certain kind of self-preoccupation, self-identification, self-survival, which of course we have to do to some degree. But to be caught in that and spinning in it and living in the small world of self is painful, right?

To start getting a sense of how it's possible to be alive and present and calm without all that selfing going on, to experience the emptiness, the freedom from all that selfing. So in this Vipassanā insight tradition, the pathway to these doors starts with, most classically in insight, the Upassanā, starts with having a deep insight into inconstancy, impermanence, *anicca*, in Pāli, the way things come and go, and the changing nature of things. As the mind quiets and gets stiller, we learn that some of the ways in which we don't see in things that shifting, changing nature is because of the activity of the mind that projects or assumes constancy, assumes permanence in a world that's actually always changing. As we let go of that and quiet that activity and start floating, swimming in this world of change, we start seeing that nothing

that we signify can stick. Any assigning or projecting of permanent especially... doesn't stick. If we assign or signify that this thing that's happening right now, this is where happiness is. But if it's inconstant, then, you know, we'll be disappointed when that goes away.

Assigning something out there which is going to make us happy, or if we are trying to think that the solution to everything is to have a really strong self, hold on to it and assert oneself and be oneself and prove oneself, and all this self is game. That's no end to it. If we see deeply the impermanent, changing nature, we see how a good part of this preoccupation with self is attempt to ratify, to fixate, to hold on to something that can't be held on because everything is changing. So change begins to show us not only that, and we kind of do relax the signifying, the assigning of meaning, the assigning of value, the assigning of purpose, relaxing into what does not do that. That's called the signless.

As with impermanence and change shows us that the clinging to things for happiness is misplaced to find happiness. Clinging, anything, is suffering, is unsatisfactory. There's a way of settling back, relaxing deeply. There's becoming whole, undivided in ourselves, confident in that, that brings a sense of, that we like, that... of wishlessness. We don't need to have desires. We don't have to want and not want things in the world and get caught in that. We can just settle back and trust this deep place of well-being.

Then as we start seeing the impermanence of things and the unsatisfactoriness of them to cling to things, we see that also in relationship to all the ways in which we play the self-game caught up in self-preoccupation. We begin feeling that we see that so much of what we think is self is not really a permanent, abiding, reliable self to hold on to. To let go of holding on to any kind of self, maybe surf with the selves that arise and pass in different settings, but that we don't hold to anything and begin appreciating that nothing is really the self. Nothing's really the permanent self or who I really am. It's just a constantly shifting and changing kaleidoscope of different kind of selves in a certain kind of way over time. Then to be able to let go of all this selfing and appreciate that in the essence, in some very deep way, that nothing qualifies as the self. We have a sense that everything then is absence of this self that's attributed to things, assigned to things, clung to in things. We relax that and we see the emptiness.

It isn't just a matter of seeing all these things, the signless, the wishless, the emptiness, or experiencing them. As we keep practicing, the idea is to be in harmony with it, to be aligned with it. There's some kind of sweetness, some kind of wonderful feeling of delight and joy to be in a river, a nice, peaceful river, and swim out into the middle of the river where there's a current and feel like the current picks you up and carries you gently along. So it's that

entering into the current of this effortless place of the signless, the wishless, and emptiness. When we allow, when we trust this current, when we trust this harmony, when we trust this way of being, then we create the conditions for, we kind of support the possibility that the last remnants of mistrust, the last remnants of ways in which we hold on, the last remnants of conceit, have a chance to relax, let go, release, so that there's a release of all clinging, all attachment. That is what the doors of liberation are, that final release into that world that the wishless, the signless, the wishless and emptiness lead to.

So I hope this has been meaningful for you. You can follow along and don't make a lot of significations around this. Don't make a lot of desires around this and don't make a lot of self around doing and understanding or not understanding this. Just trust that you can start doing less and less, less and less of this ongoing signification, ongoing attachment to searching for happiness outside of oneself, and ongoing conceit and self-building that is so common for many people.

So I am going to be on retreat again next week. You're very fortunate to have Shelly Galt coming to teach for you. She's taught here before. She's a teacher in Santa Barbara and just recently graduated from our teacher training at IMC. She's a really wise woman, been practicing meditation for decades. I'm just really, really delighted that you'll have a chance to be with her on Monday next week. So thank you very much, and I'll be back the week after.