

Dharmette: Love (4) Unhurried Love

Gil Fronsdal

January 08, 2026

Keywords: brahmavihāras, The Path of Purification, Brahmavihāras, Buddhaghosa, loving kindness, reactivity, mindfulness, refuge, unhurried mind, spacious awareness

So welcome now to this fourth talk on love. This week kind of laying a foundation for the practices of *brahmavihāras*, of kindness and care that will come over the next weeks. And one of them is that one foundation... is to begin, is to be wise about our reactivity. Reactivity, to become wise about the ways that we don't love. Rather than a rush to love, we want to take time to really know ourselves and the whole approach of mindfulness in the fall last year, the years before, of doing this, all this practice of mindfulness and emphasize is as a preparation for love, foundation for it, by knowing ourselves well, and to be wise about our reactivity, our challenges we have inside, and to be able to meet those with care, to meet those in an unhurried way, and to know them in a way that doesn't add more reactivity, to know ourselves kindly, even the parts that are not kind.

Now, it's kind of pretty instructive or pretty noteworthy that in the long ancient teachings of Buddhism, the biggest, the longest discussions about the *brahmavihāras*, about the practices of love that exists in the surviving commentary literatures of ancient Indian Buddhism, is the longest section of it, is a chapter, chapter nine in the very famous big book called *The Path of Purification*. And he has a very big chapter that's titled *Brahmavihāras*. And he's going to start talking about loving kindness. The teacher is Buddhaghosa. And most of the chapter... is taken up with how to work with anger.

And certainly the first time I came across this chapter, I was expecting to read all about the *brahmavihāras* and was surprised to see page after page after page of all these strategies of how to work with a person's anger, our own anger. And how I took that was it was very realistic that many of us have our reactivity in it. It might not be anger, it might be fear, it might be strong desires, it might be a lot of conceit and self-preoccupation. There are all kinds of ways in which our mind is a little bit wonky. And so this ancient text wants us to really stop

and pay attention to that and find a way to find some freedom without that kind of approach and that kind of mind in preparation. Right. for doing the *brahmavihāra* practice.

And so it's a real acknowledgement of how difficult it is sometimes to be in a human mind, a human heart. And at the same time, it's something that's workable. It's something we can work with. And I've been very inspired by the people who have had a lot of inner challenges, but were dedicated to do the practice. and they were there. It's almost as if they identified more with practice than they identified with their inner challenges. And that's a radical shift.

It's so easy. It's almost automatic that we kind of define ourselves, identify ourselves by our thoughts, by our feelings, our emotions, and get caught and tripped up by that. There's a way in which the love that we're looking for practicing in Buddhism, the *brahmavihāras* and others, it kind of belongs to a whole different way of being in the world than being with feelings. And in fact, many people associate love with being a feeling, and to some degree it is. but to, it's actually the kind of love we're looking for here is deeper than a feeling. It might include feeling, but we don't identify with a feeling. We don't get to prioritize that.

And we want to somehow discover a different way of being in the world that is free of thoughts, free of feelings. And one way I'd like to point to that is to the... The way in which we can be unhurried, the ways that we can be spacious with our awareness, the ways that we can be receptive or non-reactive to what's going on. All these things, those are not feelings. They're not exactly thoughts. And I would like to propose they're not exactly aspects of the mind, but There's something deeper. It's kind of like the deeper, or the deeper mind, not the thinking mind.

And there's some way of being that's inclusive, some way of being that is here for all of it. And to take refuge in these qualities, these ways of being, that can't be identified exactly as a feeling, can't be identified as a thought or an idea, can't really be identified with, this is who I am. It's almost like to be unhurried is to create space, and it's almost like an absence to be spacious. It's almost like we're creating an absence that can hold it all, to be non-reactive. Same way, it's not a thing, it's the absence of reactivity. And it can seem like nothing, isn't it? We want something that we can rely on that's important that we define ourselves by.

But if we define ourselves, if we have to at all, with these things which are kind of more amorphous, more insubstantial, but powerful and full, and that's also the place of a kind of love that's like that. That love is not exactly a feeling. Feelings might come with it, but that's not the source of it. It's more of a kind of a tenderness, a kind of a gentleness, a kind of a spaciousness. that care, which is there in that absence, there in that unhurried way. It's there because

we're not covering it over with being preoccupied. We're not covering it over because we're identified or caught with what our feelings are, what our thoughts are, what our beliefs are, what our conceits are.

And so this being unhurried... And so then the metaphor or the image that I like to use, as I used in the guided meditation just now, is partly an idea I've had before, but it was particularly poignant, maybe because I was giving this teaching this morning, in a dream I had last night. I can't quite, you know, I don't know. My dreams are, you know, what they are. And in this dream, I had gone back to a childhood home that I lived in for some years. And now there were new people living there. And we came, I came with someone else, I don't know, but it was unannounced.

And this other person just walked right into the house that belonged to someone else now, and I was kind of a little bit surprised. And I think I entered the hallway, and it turned out the house had a lot of children. And so I think I just sat in the hallway and it was very still and quiet, and just being there, being attentive and present. And to my surprise in this dream, the children started coming towards me, these little toddlers or little kids who were two or three years old, they came over and they were friendly and they wanted to play with me. But it was clear that the way I had to be with them was just be really still, and just be non-assertive and present, an unknown stranger to them. And it was their home, but it had been my home.

So I don't know what to make of the symbolism of all this, of coming home to a place that's not my home. But what I brought with me was that my new home, my home of being just unhurried, present, be able to be quiet, receptive, open. That's what I identify with now. That's my home. And my old home didn't have to be my home, but all the children who were there in this new way of being, they would come to me. So, this image of, you know, sometimes with people cats, you do the same thing. You just, you try to be very quiet and still you don't approach them, but you're, and then they come to you.

So what is the love? What's the way of being that will come to you if you're quiet and still that way? What is the way of, that being unhurried can be your home, your new home? What is it that being spacious, non-reactive? And how can that give rise to a form of love, which is not exactly a feeling, not exactly a thought, maybe something insubstantial, but because it's that way, it's actually more lasting. It's more unconditioned by the circumstances around us.

So to... Explore, if you will, today what it's like, even if you have to be physically in a hurry, can your mind be unhurried? What is it like to go about the day in an unhurried way? And maybe if you can, readjust your day so that you're not filled your schedule with a lot of things to do, so you have to go from one thing to the next. Maybe you could slow down, create

more space, so that you can explore this very, very important topic of how being unhurried can be a refuge, and how being unhurried and maybe still and receptive can be your home that you take with you everywhere. So thank you very much, and I look forward to our time tomorrow.