

Dharmette: Love (10) Love Without a Reason

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So, welcome to this tenth talk on love in this ongoing series and what love has to do with our Buddhist practice.

And not a few people who practice discover that as mindfulness becomes... as mindfulness becomes well developed, that it becomes almost synonymous with love, for love is carried on it, partly because mature mindfulness is not resisting, is not limiting ourselves, our experience, our attention. And so whatever capacity we have for love can flow easily. Love is a natural capacity, or the family of emotions. There is a natural kind of love, of goodwill, of kindness, of well-wishing, of compassion, of profound sense of caring, that... is quite natural. And so when the resistances and the contractions and the attachments dissolve, that replaces it. That has a chance to surface and flow.

Strong mindfulness comes with it, with a experience of being feeling quite safe, content at home here, with oneself, with this world in a certain way, even if the world around us is chaotic, even if it's dangerous. We're not caught in that. We're not being defined by that. We're not identifying with anything. This non-identifying awareness is not losing ourselves, but is gaining ourselves. It's almost letting go of the limiting ideas of self, and there's more of an unlimited quality that nothing is held in check.

And one of the really beautiful aspects of this practice, when we stop... overlaying our constructs, our stories, our beliefs, our interpretations, our desires, our aversions on top of the experience. At some point, we begin understanding that everything is nature, and everything is kind of natural in a certain way, but in a way that it can be inspiring, in a way that we can have a deep sense of gratitude, maybe even reverence, or a deep sense of joy and appreciation, that we can sit and see everything as nature. And so sitting down to meditate becomes equivalent to sitting down, you know, going out for a walk in a park, going out to a

walk in a delightful natural setting and appreciating the natural world and how it takes us out of ourselves. Oddly enough, taking a walk inside of ourselves, all the sensations and feelings and thoughts we have. There's a way of doing that, that that takes us out of ourselves in a refreshing and nice way.

But what it takes is what I've been teaching this week is an awareness that doesn't identify with anything. Awareness that doesn't make itself out of anything. Awareness that just is available and open and present for what is there. But to do that wisely, we have to know how to practice with our anger and our aversion, our fears, our griefs and sorrows, and our conceits and our attachments. We have to not be at war with them. We have to not get glued to them.

We don't necessarily believe them, we don't disbelieve them, we don't accept them, we don't reject them. There's a whole other way of practicing which is to just see clearly without needing to fix, without needing to have it be different, because we discover the gift, the richness, the freedom even, of this awareness that can hold it all, but doesn't do anything with it, doesn't identify with it, doesn't make a self out of it, doesn't take it as being right or wrong. Of course there's right and wrong in this world, but the awareness doesn't have to be caught in that kind of grip. We don't have to be identified and locked onto how the mind and heart does have instincts to what is right and wrong. That's nature as well. But that doesn't require us to be it, to identify with it, to hold onto it, to grip it.

We can just see it clearly. Oh, there's this feeling of right. There's a feeling of wrong. This is... and just hold that very generously and openly in this wonderful awareness. And what that allows is for intelligence to operate, wisdom to operate. If we're locked on and identified, we're not going to be as wise. We're not going to be as intelligent even. And so, and we're not going to be as loving.

So if this broad, magnanimous, open awareness, this ability to not identify or hold on to or be defined by anything, it's going to have some real value. It's important to understand how to practice with and how to include within it things that are often considered quite difficult. And one of those is, in Buddhism we call a suffering. And even our suffering is, we don't have to make a self, define ourselves by it. We don't have to assume we are the suffering. There is suffering.

But that too is nature. And that might seem as a kind of betrayal. It might seem like it just means I have to just suffer better or more. No, it's a path to becoming free of suffering, to see it and hold it in an awareness which is not suffering, to recognize there's a way of being, of knowing, of feeling, sensing, being aware that in and of itself is not suffering, even if there is

suffering in this system. So to be able to discover this and know all this, the whole show of what we are, to include it all, that helps us to discover a form of love, which is not romantic, it's not preferential, it's not dependent on anything in the world, it's not because we're going to get something in return, it's not because people love us, it's not because we're going to get pleasure from the experience.

There's a love that is just what radiates. It's love that has no object. Love that in a way has no reason. It's like feeling a tender, warm, the gentleness, the sweetness within. That maybe is because we're settled and relaxed and at ease. And it just feels tingling and nice and warm for no reason, in a sense. No external reason.

It is possible to rest in an awareness... a love, a loving awareness, and that doesn't have to have a reason for its existence. It just is. It just is our natural capacity. It is something that wants to surface and arise and be there if we get out of the way, if we don't cling, if we don't get attached, if we don't identify with experience. And this is one of the great gifts of this practice, the ability to, the emergence of love that has no reason.

There are kinds of love that do have reasons, that do have objects, and that's fine. But there's a whole other capacity that is at the heart of this Buddhist practice that we're doing, that's intimately connected to our ability to have this awareness that's there for no reason, that the awareness is not there, for a purpose. Awareness is not doing it to get something. We're not doing it because of the object that we're trying to attain. Of course we can do that too. It's not wrong to do that. But as the practice matures, that becomes less and less the purpose.

The purpose of mindfulness has no purpose. It's just the nature of being alive. It's the nature of being at ease and peaceful and free. A free heart is an aware heart. A free heart is a loving heart. Each person in their own way, there's no universal love. There's only that love that is unique to the heart that you have.

Appreciate yourself, appreciate your capacity for love, appreciate that it's okay to be at ease in this world, because then the best of who you are has a chance to surface. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to be straining. It's okay to be at ease. And maybe you'll discover a natural capacity for love.

So I'll be continuing this series. Now, for the next weeks, and so this first two weeks was laying kind of a foundation, so that with this foundation, maybe the practices we'll be doing, the *Brahmavihāras* will be more understandable, more accessible. And I look very much forward to continuing. Thank you.