

Dhamette: Love (25) Personalizing Love

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February 13, 2026

Keywords: mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā, anukampā, loving-kindness, mindfulness, samādhi, goodwill, equanimity

So, hello and welcome to this series on love, which I'm delighted to share with you. That's a wonderful thing to be able to have this continuous exploration, presentation, contact with this very important topic for human beings. And today I want to emphasize that the practices of love, the living with love, and the Buddhist ideas living with *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā*, kindness, goodwill, compassion, appreciative joy, rejoicing in the goodness of others. And a deep, balanced love, non-reactive love, has the name of *upekkhā*, equanimity. And there's *anukampā*, care.

So what I want to emphasize today is that love needs to be personal. There are many component parts to love. Love is not a single thing. There's many forms of love, and there's many component parts of it. And so if we have some abstract idea of what it is, that abstract idea might be too idealistic for us. It might be something that seems out of reach even because it's so pure or so complete or so all-encompassing or some idea we're supposed to feel this way all the time or we can't do it because we feel angry or we feel annoyed or we have resentments or we're too afraid.

But I think that in all circumstances, the idea is to do the inner work to see what can this love mean today? What do we, and what is it, and some things are not quite what we call love, but are components of it, so close to it, that we might see it as a form of love or take it in as a form of love. If someone, a stranger, maybe someone in a store who's going to help us, they don't know us at all, but they are present for us with kindness, with receptivity, with giving us lots of space to make our choice and not hurrying us, friendly and appreciating, delighted you're there, right? The fact that they give time for you to kind of make your decision of what you're going to buy, and it feels like there's care, feels it's a kind of a delight, a love, that makes you feel safe, makes you feel appreciated, it makes you feel delighted to be valued this way. It touches something in you.

Does a store clerk love you? Maybe you can, maybe in some kind of simple way, you could say it seems that way. Maybe you say they don't, but it's the next best thing. It has some of the pieces and qualities that go into making love, so it feels that way, or has the effect on you as if that's the case. And I've seen people care for objects. I've seen craftspeople doing crafts.

I've seen people cleaning objects. I've seen people tending to making their food or cooking or... And it's just so captivating to watch them. It feels like somehow their care, their presence, they're giving themselves over to this one thing, maybe as a form of love, or it evokes in me a kind of tenderness, a kind of sense of grace, a sense of goodness, a sense of beauty that I'm nourished by, that I benefit from. And they're just taking care of an object, the thing.

So we also can have some kind of attitude approach to all the things we do in our life, whether it's cleaning things, whether it's caring for objects, whether it's people who are strangers. It could also be towards ourselves. And we can offer a kind of attention to ourselves, which maybe is in the family of love, or it's a relative of love, a sibling of love. It's close enough. And so some of the qualities of that is, and we can offer to particular parts of ourselves.

Sometimes it's really fascinating to offer goodwill, kindness, *mettā* to parts of ourselves rather than to all of ourselves. The benefits of it is that the parts are a little bit more specific and tangible. The general sense of self is so big and intangible perhaps that... And maybe we have some kind of judgment or idea about the whole of who we are that we think it's difficult to offer it. But to the things we actually, the details of what we feel with our body, with our emotions in our mind, maybe the particularities that make up who we are. Maybe that can be the kind of care that someone does when they're with a craft that they love or with caring for a, gently, lovingly caring for a, you know, a wounded bird that you hold gently and kindly, lovingly.

So what are the subcomponent parts that makes mindfulness itself? Can be, almost feel like it is love. Mindfulness might be kind of a love. Where does love and attention, mindfulness kind of overlap? And so one of those is we give time to things.

We're not in a hurry. And there's no goodwill, no love, I think, that's really in a hurry. There's time to really let it be there. So time for what it is. So if our body hurts, our body aches, if the body feels happy, if there's emotions that are difficult or emotions that are wonderful, to love them or care for them, be mindful of them.

Give them time. Don't be in a hurry to fix and to change. Part of the overlap between mindfulness and love is whatever we are attending to, we allow it to feel safe. If we're attending

to our fear, we somehow find a way to attend to it, to be present for it, where the fear feels safe from us. We're not trying to fix it.

We're not trying to judge it. We're not trying to make it go away. We have time to let it be there. And that also involves respect. We're offering respect to things.

It's kind of like we offer autonomy, grief, grief. Grief, the heart knows how to grief. And there's something about giving time, giving safety, giving space and autonomy to grief that really does grief a lot of good. If we add second arrows, if we have judgments about it and feel like we should be finished with grieving or it's not okay to grieve, all kinds of things, complications, then it's not so helpful, but it's really good to give autonomy, respect.

Another place where loving-kindness and *mettā* overlap is something more subtle, which is the resonance, the kind of feeling like we're in a field of resonance with it. There is something new that's arising when there's love or when there's mindfulness, and that is the way that we relate to the relationship between the things. So if we're feeling somehow discouraged, and we bring mindfulness to the discouragement. It's not just the discouragement that's the issue. It is not just part me, myself, and mine that's the issue.

But what is that resonance? What's the relationship between the two? And that relationship, can it be generous? Can it be attentive? Can there be something that happens in the magic, the chemistry between the thing that we're concerned with and ourselves that we call the relationship or the attitude?

Right. Where that becomes somehow healthy or nourishing or respectful or kind. So that these qualities we're bringing, we have. And you might not call these things love, you might call them mindfulness. You might not call them mindfulness, you might call them love.

And at different times, different ones of them come into play. Different ones of them are elicited by the situation we're in. And so to be able to love yourself, maybe a way to do it is simply to love all the parts of who you are, whatever arises in the moment, just as you would, maybe if you walk down the street, we have a street where there's a lot of dog walkers. And there's a kind of delight, and I would say love for the dogs. Certainly delight and friendliness that I feel and appreciation and a kind of interest to kind of be open-hearted to most of the dogs.

Why not do that to ourselves, to the particular parts of ourselves, to treat it not as with the judgments, with the heaviness of some of the ways we can be with ourselves. Yes. And so even if there's, we feel regrets or feel remorse for what we've done, or we feel a little bit of maybe, you know, heavy by the things of our life, maybe those things could use love, can use

attention. And so how do you do it? So in the residence of it, there's a pleasure.

Or in the way that we meet it, the way we offer it, we feel like we're better than... person, because we offer this kind of attention, we offer this kind of goodwill to whatever we're experiencing, so that each thing that arises becomes a time for goodwill. Each moment becomes a time for awareness and attention. And maybe, just maybe today... Certain times of the day, maybe you could choose particular segments, five minutes, ten minutes, an hour, here and there, that you're going to operate.

You're going to live at the speed of love, the speed of goodwill, the speed of this kind of place where a careful presence for what we're doing conveys... appreciation, respect, resonance, goodwill, safety, trustworthiness. May it be that you become the ambassador for love to all aspects of your life, all aspects of yourself. It's possible. So, thank you.

And we'll continue this topic of *mettā* next week. Next week, maybe, at least for Monday, maybe that topic will be the *samādhi* of *mettā*, the *samādhi* of goodwill, and how it becomes really a kind of a very significant way of unification and concentration in meditation itself. So, thank you very much.