

Dharmette: Love (26) Metta Samadhi.

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So welcome to this continued series of talks on love. And for this week, the particular focus will be the *samādhi* of *mettā*. *Mettā samādhi*. This is this amazing capacity we have to become unified and fully present for our goodwill, for love, for the heart's ability, for kindness and care. And I use these different words because different people have different things that kind of land in their heart or kind of awaken some sentiment of well-wishing for others, well-wishing for oneself. Some people, the word love works. Some people, goodwill. Loving-kindness, kindness, care.

Some people, like we've used the Pāli word, the ancient Buddhist word, *mettā*. And the amazing thing is that we could really get ourselves centered or really filled with this experience, this feeling. It's kind of like maybe after some difficult task that's accomplished. Maybe we feel a deep sense of contentment and peace and ease that just fills us. This is good. Or maybe we feel somehow at ease, at peace, and we just feel because we're not distracted and everything is good and well, it's easy to have a feeling of love for the world, for ourselves, just love for others, that kind of fills us with kind of a wonderful feeling of pleasure, of delight, of joy, of appreciation, of kind of a feeling of resonance or feeling of mutuality.

And it's possible to have goodwill in an undistracted way, where the mind is not jumping around all kinds of different thoughts, not getting distracted from it, undistracted, being undistractedly absorbed, connected to our inner feeling or sentiment or intention or attitude of goodwill. And so learning how not to be distracted, how to be really present, to learn how to be present with all of who we are. There's a gathering, a unification of all of who we are when we enter into *samādhi*. And most classically it has to do with breathing in Buddhism, getting really absorbed in breathing, so really centered on it. And something begins happening in the resonance between our capacity for attention and what we're attending to. What we're attending to is one thing. What our ability to attend is something else.

But in between those, it starts becoming an influence, a resonance, a kind of a wonderful feeling of being restful, at ease, cruising along, surfing along, kind of being caressed along, or a kind of wonderful feeling of dipping in. And sometimes with *samādhi*, there's a feeling like we're dipping into a wonderful, refreshing, warm, comfortable pool of water. Because it's so immersive in this wider state that the *samādhi* becomes. It becomes a state and not just a singular focus. It's an overall mood, an overall attitude, an overall presence that of focus, of presence, of pleasure, of really being involved with just one thing in a wonderful, resonant kind of way.

So it's possible to do that with *mettā*, with goodwill. And in our *Vipassanā* tradition, one of the ways that sometimes deep concentration, deep *samādhi* is taught is actually through doing loving-kindness practice. And some people will spend whole retreats. I've known people who have spent a month-long retreat, three-month retreats, where their sole practice was the practice of goodwill, of *mettā*. And it's phenomenal that someone would give themselves over for that long to love. Other people give themselves over to breath meditation for that time, really getting absorbed in that. So other people give themselves over to doing mindfulness more broadly, more receptively in a wide kind of present moment way.

But the benefit of doing this, giving ourselves over fully to these simple practice of meditation, is the growth of a feeling of deep peace, deep unification, deep being not fragmented and scattered, being real settled in ourselves in a wonderful way. And there's not a few people that will feel that that way of being feels very healthy. Some people will sense that this way of being, this is what a healthy mind-heart is like. And anything else that is scattered, full of tension, desires, fears, anxieties, jumping around, being busy, being not so connected to ourself, that that is an altered state, that is kind of an unfortunate way of living. But to learn to be really unified in love, for example, with *mettā*, the focus of this week, provides a very different orientation for how to live our life. It becomes an antidote to our protection against living with anger, resentment, with negativity towards others.

Those might still arise, but we don't get ourselves unified, gathered around anger, gathered and unified and consumed with resentment. Human beings often can get extremely, this whole idea of *samādhi*, sometimes all the capacities that involve with *samādhi*, those capacities sometimes get hijacked by states that are not so useful for us, focuses and concerns not so useful. And sometimes we have an easier time getting concentrated when there's strong greed, lust, desires, when there's strong aversions, hostility, resentment, and when there's strong anxiety. We do have a capacity for becoming kind of consumed by certain things. But the consumption is with tension, with attachment.

When we're doing the *samādhi* of *mettā*, we're using the same abilities we have to be caught up in some unfortunate mood, some unfortunate attitude. But now we're beginning to apply, to do so with something that's healthy for us and healthy for the world. Not to override the others, not to push it away. We want to be able to include all of who we are in this unified experience of *mettā*, of kindness. So it isn't that matter of denying that we're resentful, but rather hold it within this field. And this is a remarkable thing.

To be able to really cultivate and develop this mood, this attitude, this state of goodwill, this warmth, this white, broad, warm light, the sun of *mettā*, and be able to have it land on all the parts of ourselves which are difficult, kindly, with care, with peace, with safety for everything, all of who we are. So that even what's difficult within us, we meet it with kindness, we meet it with goodwill. Unchecked kindness, unreserved kindness towards everything, including what is much difficult in us and in the world. This is the wonderful possibility of this kind of *samādhi* of *mettā*, *mettā-samādhi*, to really be present.

So to do so is a practice. And it's a wonderful practice to do. And what a practice means is that we're not so good at it at first. It's a little haltingly, or we get distracted, or it goes kind of, other things challenge us. But it's like riding a bicycle for the first time. It's hard at first, and then it gets better and better, and pretty soon it's very smooth and absorbing to engage in it.

And so to kind of develop that capacity, to understand it, to be intimate with it, to understand our resistance to it, to understand what other values we have, they get in the way of it, and to question whether there are other things which are more important than having a basic sense of goodwill for this world. To wonder how can we take care of ourselves and take care of the world with goodwill? Can we do it as effectively or more effectively than do we do it with anger or greed or attachments or with, you know, anxiety? Right. And we can find that out perhaps by meeting all of those with kindness. What happens then? What goes on?

So, as we do this practice of *samādhi*, of *mettā*, it's one of the principles is to take all of our conscious capacities that we have some ability to marshal together, to marshal all together for the purposes of kindness. So, our ability for attention goes towards *mettā*, to kindness. That might be a feeling in our body, it might be feeling in our heart, it might be a generalized kind of mood that seems to be spread everywhere. It might be something very particular, spot. It might be a particular thought. It might be the intention itself, the wish may others be happy.

People who really find it through this intention find it really useful to use their thoughts to remind them, to stay connected to that intention, to repeat, may I be happy, may you be

happy, to use these simple phrases. And so the body, the heart, the mind, the thoughts, everything begins to kind of be gathered like a magnet, gathers all kinds of things around it. Here, come here, settle here, settle around and unified around the idea of kindness. It's a remarkable thing that we have this ability. It's really remarkable. It's almost like one of the natural wonders of this world that it is possible to become unified and whole with goodwill, with kindness, with love, that brings with it a deep sense of peace, a deep sense of being at ease, a deep sense of friendliness and warmth to those we meet.

So that's a topic for this week, the *Mettā Samādhī*, the *Samādhī* of *Mettā*. So, thank you very much, and I very much look forward to continuing this tomorrow morning.