

Dharmette: Love (28) Metta Samadhi 3

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So hello and welcome back to the series on love. And this week we're pointing to the possibility of a *mettā samādhi*, a deep immersion or a deep or expansive fullness of *mettā* where our whole kind of being sings or radiates or is kind of connected to loving-kindness. And so I'll begin by saying that an interesting question is, when should you have goodwill? And I would suggest whenever the alternative is worse. And if you have something better than *mettā* to do, goodwill, then it's fine to do that. But if the alternative is worse, why not relax, settle back, why not touch into a kind of a general friendliness, kindness that you're capable of?

And this is not kind of some kind of romantic feeling good, kind of Pollyannaish kind of attitude, but rather it is a way of being in the world that comes almost naturally if we're at ease in this world, if we're relaxed, if we take the time to settle. And that is why the *mettā* meditation, *mettā samādhi*, is primarily an activity of meditation, where in meditation we give ourselves the wonderful possibility of putting down our defenses, our battles, our expectations, even many of our needs that don't need to be satisfied in this very moment. Putting down the preoccupations, putting down the work and the struggles of life so that we can connect to or awaken the deeper capacity of relaxed sensitivity, deeper capacity of almost like turning on our ability to be aware, widely, freely, naturally, an awareness that is embodied and that belongs to all of who we are. That isn't something we have to do so much. It isn't a mindfulness that's a work, but rather an awareness that we open to that will be here in some form or other if we don't work, if we allow the thinking mind to quiet enough.

It doesn't have to stop thinking entirely, but quiet enough that we start kind of being attuned, tuned into the natural ways the senses operate that the eyes see. Of course, we can see without knowing it, without really feeling it, but to settle back in the eye sockets and have the eyes look in a relaxed way where we're not being driven by our thoughts to the next thing,

the next thing, trying to search something, get something, protect ourselves. The natural way that we hear, we're not actively listening, but we allow hearing. The ways that the body, the tactile sensations, all the sensations the body feel, if we relax and drop into it to some degree. And this ability to allow the natural senses to begin operating means that we're not preoccupied, meaning we're not caught in the grip of fears and desires and aversions. And that is the place where a deeper sensitivity is possible.

And I do associate this kind of deep, nourishing form of love that we call *mettā* with kind of a healthy feeling of being settled and at peace in our body. And so I associate it with, as a *samādhi*, that the thinking mind gets quiet, discursive mind gets still. And so to begin appreciating, sensing the places within where there is a kind of a silence, a kind of stillness, maybe a kind of spaciousness, that to value that, instead of the mind's natural tendency to value its thoughts, its ideas, its plans, its memories, its fears. We have all those, of course, but we want to be able to hold all of it in a field of goodwill. You know, all of it in a kind regard. And for that, we need to get quiet enough to really tune into this wider sensitivity that can hold things generously.

And to try to do a *mettā*-meditation just as a mental exercise, without being at ease and settled in the body, it probably is not going to be that effective unless the mental effort gets us to relax deeply and settle. So one of the things I'm offering is orientation, as a touchstone for entering into kind of a more immersive experience of *mettā*, the *samādhi* of *mettā*, is to feel this place within, feel this, feel a way in which there's both silence and sensitivity at the same time. Just as when the mind is not preoccupied, if we're not actively looking with our eyes, the eyes can feel at rest and there is seeing. The ears can feel relaxed and there's hearing without straining to listen. So, without a lot of thought, without a lot of feeling this inner silence, stillness, rest, and there's a natural sensitivity that is unburdened by ill will, unburdened by greed, unburdened by fear, and that allows for a more sense of natural goodwill, natural sensitivity, the kind of care, natural care that you would use for maybe holding a crying baby or feeding a hungry baby.

Just you hold it tenderly and lovingly maybe. Or a friend who's sick and maybe your friend needs to be fed, an old, sick relative and like my mother in her last days of her life. There was, I just felt so... I wasn't disturbed or frightened by what was happening to her. But I remember just feeling so much love to take a spoonful of her little pudding, whatever she had, and gently putting it in her mouth. I felt like, wow, she did that for me when I was a baby. And now I just felt so much love and tenderness for her as I did that.

What allows that kind of love, that kind of tenderness, to be a reference point for meditation,

for as we sit? It requires having some silence in the mind, some quiet in the mind. And maybe that's more available to you than you realize. If you feel your way into where that silence might be or that quiet thinking might be, when you put down things and feel this inner comp, the still quiet place within. Of course we are agitated, of course we have concerns, but there's also this other side. And from this other side, then, we can take this goodwill, this kind regard, and hold all that's difficult for us.

And that is kind of the magic of goodwill, is that goodwill that's large enough to meet, strong enough that we can meet whatever is difficult in us with kindness, to hold it kindly. Maybe we don't have to fix things, maybe we don't have to solve things, but we can just hold it, and that makes all the difference to hold it well. And so in meditation, to give yourself over to this silent sensitivity, the sensitivity, the relaxed sensitivity that carries within it a tenderness, a gentleness, a sweetness, a sometimes even a strength of goodwill, of kindness, of love. And so the *mettā samādhī* is to really give ourselves over to these things, to this inner landscape, inner territory, terrain that belongs to loving-kindness. So yesterday I talked about being centered and feeling the pleasure of it all. That centeredness is a place where there's more sense of stillness and quiet.

And the pleasure of it all is part of that sensitivity that's there. You don't feel pleasure without sensitivity. And now I'm saying that sensitivity in that kind of quiet, still place, non-reactive place, that is an ingredient for love, for kindness, and goodwill. And stay close to that. Breathe with it, breathe out of it, breathe through it. And if you use the phrases, may you be happy, or may I be happy, to somehow have those, almost like they emerge out of that deep sensitivity and pleasure of goodwill, of love.

So if you want to, I'd recommend that maybe, at least once today, meditate again and meditate with these instructions. See if you can do this *mettā*-meditation and see how in a gentle, unforceful way, you can kind of dip your... dip into it or begin feeling it and sensing it, kind of grow and expand through your body. And maybe we sat for half an hour, this last meditation, and, you know, there's a lot of me talking as we go through it. And maybe you can now do it on your own and see what that's like. See what it's like to tap in, touch into it. And if it's difficult, if there's all kinds of concerns, think of that as the ideal recipient of your kindness, of your care, that you hold it kindly without trying to make it go away.

And then we'll continue tomorrow with this. Thank you for being here, and thank you for giving greater consideration to your capacity for kindness. The world needs more kindness. Thank you.