

Dharmette: Love (31) Metta Samadhi 6

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So now continuing with this series on love and in particular on *mettā*, goodwill, kindness, loving kindness, and learning the *samādhi* of goodwill, learning how to be immersed in goodwill. So it isn't just a random attitude that comes up, a wish that comes up accidentally here and there, but it becomes something that we live with, almost like we carry it with us, or it's continuous in some way that flows and is here. And in particular, in meditation, being able to dip down deeply and feel like we're forest bathing in or being nurtured, nourished by the goodwill that we feel. And so that the goodwill is kind of reciprocated or reciprocal, just within ourselves, that we have goodwill and it feels so good to have it. And so part of the biofeedback system for developing and growing goodwill is feeling the goodness of it and saying, yes, let's stay with this. And beginning appreciating that we have a capacity for goodwill.

And each person is going to have to find their own. There's no, you know, not everyone's going to do it the same way. Different people from different cultures, different backgrounds, different families, different personalities, different neurology will have different ways of connecting to this goodwill that's a piece of a larger puzzle that is connected to body sensations, connected to heart sensations, connected to intentions and mind and images and this... and all kinds of things that begin kind of gathering together so that it becomes the central kind of orientation of the mind. The mind is absorbed, immersed in the world of goodwill, your own way, your own making, your own gathering together. And so what *mettā samādhi* has in common with everyone is that it's the gathering together so that we're fully immersed, engaged with whatever our way, our connection, our bridge to goodwill, kindness, loving kindness might be.

And so inevitably I have to use language and ideas and point to aspects of me and others that maybe doesn't quite work for you, and so you have to find what does work for you, so you

then can dip into it. But one of the things that it means is to recognize that you do have a way to be friendly, to be generous, to be kind, of being gentle, of being tender, of being caring. And finding how it works for you, and then beginning to stay with it, stay with it, stay with it. And just like in breath meditation, we stay with breathing, stay with breathing, come back to it, letting go of thoughts, settling down into it, relaxing the distracted mind, the scattered mind, stay here with this. And one of the ways to do it is to have some kind of thought, mental words, that just keep you going. If the mind is idle, it might wander off into thoughts and you get distracted.

And here there's a decision, a loving decision: let me just stay here. And to the degree to which you can say these phrases or words in a gentle, meditative, contemplative way that supports settling in, supports gentling, opening. So, and the classic way is to start with oneself. May I be happy. May I be safe. Safe from hostility, safe from danger, safe from hatred.

May I be peaceful. May I be unagitated, may I have no conflicts, may my heart not be in conflict, may I be settled, may I be at peace, and may I be free, free of suffering. And so to gently, over and over again, keep coming back to that. Some people like to do four phrases, that's the classic way, and just rotate through them. But to be careful it doesn't become mechanical words, but words that arise out of goodwill or remind you or point you back to it, where in the body it is, where the pleasure is, where the warmth is, the glow is, where somehow where it kind of flows from. And some people will just use one over and over again, one phrase, may you be happy, may I be happy.

Some people will just use the single word, happy, happy, happy, where the word itself carries the rest of it. May I be happy. May this happen. I wish this for myself. May I be happy. And I've known people who have liked using the word just "may."

There's something about the opening of the word "may." Might I, might there be? May there be, maybe the opening, may there be room for this, may this grow. That somehow just that word carries a kind of goodwill, a well-wishing, and that kind of makes room for this feeling of goodwill to kind of be there. But one just keeps, in a gentle, meditative way, a way that the mental voice that says these words, or maybe the non-verbal way that we kind of evoke these kinds of concepts, ideas, these feelings. Let it kind of have a continuity to it.

Like you're holding onto a kite that's flying, and you have to keep the string of the kite taut, but not pull it too tight. It can't be too tight, it'll break, and if it gets away and gets strong, you have to let loose the string. But if there's no wind at all, you have to maybe pull it in a little bit. And you always want to keep it somehow a little bit taut, a little bit, not tense, but a little bit kind of like, yes, stay here, stay here, stay here. Kind of like you're kneading bread

and dough and you have to stay there. Just keep doing it or massaging a friend.

Or like you're driving a car, and you have to keep your hand on the steering wheel, please. And you have to keep your attention on the road, on what's happening for the most part, 99% or something. You have to stay there. And so the same thing with driving the *mettā* car is that you're just staying there, staying there, stay in your lane, stay present. Don't go into another lane, into other thoughts. Stay with it, stay with it.

Settle down into it. Do it in a way that you feel settling and opening and gentling. And because what we're looking for in the *mettā samādhi* is continuity. The kind of continuity of staying in touch with it. And I love the expression "in touch," staying in physical contact with it almost, and with the words pointing you to that way of being kind of heart-good. The heart is in touch with it.

The heart keeps being opening. Some people find it helpful to add to this *mettā*-meditation this idea: with every word, the heart's opening, the heart's sensitizing itself to feel more, to be more broad, to be more inclusive. And when we're doing it to self, may I be happy, that we're just opening beyond, we're opening wider. And of course, there might be parts of ourselves which are difficult. And the wonderful thing about *mettā* meditation is you don't have to fix it. You don't have to engage in it and judge it or try to analyze it or make a story about it, of what it means about you.

Just maybe just recognize as personal difficult. This is difficult. This is unfortunate. This is not pleasant. And just keep opening that *mettā* to be wider and more inclusive. It includes that too.

Learn how you can have goodwill that includes what is difficult, even what is difficult in you. You don't have to approve of it. You don't have to feed it. But just keep opening this field of goodwill. Maybe you melt it that way. Maybe you convert it that way.

Maybe you show the difficult parts of yourself that there's safety here, that you're safe for it, and then something different can happen. But don't make that the purpose. Just keep opening. May I be happy. And finally, in terms of doing this practice of *mettā*, meditation, *samādhi* of *mettā*, I also find it helpful to emphasize the last word.

Sometimes I imagine that the last word I'm dropping a pebble in a pond and I let the ripples open up, spread out. And the Buddha talked about *mettā*, that we're doing *mettā* is like the sound of a trumpet going out. I don't know if that's the best instrument, that instrument as an image for some of you, but the idea that the sound of the trumpet just goes out into the world. It says openings, opening, spreading. You can't see it, but you know it's there. So

mettā...

And so start with yourself as a classic way. The principle is to start where it's easiest, which might be with a good friend or someone else. And the third option, which I offered in the meditation just now, is to rotate through self, an easy person, and the we. And maybe something about the we that can grow this *mettā* in a more and more full way. So thank you very much. And if it feels like a wonderful gift to me, maybe to you, to all of us, to this world, that we're spending so much time on love, imagine that. Thank you.