

Dharmette: Love (31) Metta Samadhi 7

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Hello and welcome to this continued series on love.

Right now we're in the middle of a section on *mettā*, loving kindness, kindness, goodwill, and the possibility of being completely given over to goodwill, absorbed, immersed in it for a short time. And short is important so that it's realistic, so that it doesn't become sentimental, or become kind of ignoring of the difficulties of life. But to really spend time, quality time with oneself, cultivating, developing our capacity for goodwill is a wonderful gift to ourselves and a gift to others. It helps us be more realistic, actually, more balanced, more able to see the world without the filters of fear or hostility or greed. It's a phenomenal thing.

And one of the great kind of amazing gifts of meditation practice to me, and I think for many people, is not to attain anything, not to get anything in a sense, but to shed a lot, to settle away, to quiet down the agitations, quiet down the fears, quiet down the desires that are always operating with every thought we have, and to begin relaxing the body and letting go of the tensions, the holding in the heart, the body, and discovering not an attainment, like something special that we... but rather natural capacities, wonderful natural capacities, a natural capacity to resonate with other people, to feel like we... So the mirror neurons we have operate cleanly and fully. They're not distracted or all dirtied over. So that our capacity to be touched by others, the capacity to care about others, the capacity to be inspired by others becomes more available because there's less in the way of it.

And also what becomes less available is our capacity to care. And human beings have a tremendous mammalian capacity for care, for nurturing, protecting. And it's kind of represented for me of new parent or new mother and all the hormones and all the different physiology that sometimes come into play that we want to take care of this child, without kind of a tremendous capacity, mammalian capacity, to focus and wish to and delight in and feel the

warmth of caring for a helpless baby. Maybe little babies wouldn't survive. It's kind of built into our genes to do this in some degree.

And so to have some practice that kind of relaxes and settles us to feel and sense a natural capacity. And maybe the example I gave is not the best one for everyone. But still, a natural capacity to not override, not be caught in thoughts, not be caught in desires or fears so much that we can't really take in the other person, become attuned to the other person. We can't see all the messages from the other person.

And what I'm emphasizing today is this, that has a two-way street, two-way kind of cycle. Our natural deep receptivity of sensitivity to the goodness of others, to people who we naturally feel like, oh, this is inspiring. Their integrity is inspiring. I'm just so delighted they're in the world, that we feel their friendship, we feel their friendliness, even for a stranger. Maybe something's even more inspiring with a stranger who offers to do a kind thing.

You ask for directions and they say, here, let me walk you to the end of the block and I can better point to you where you have to go, and I hope you're having a nice day. And they're just not imposing. They're just, they're friendly, they're warm. They seem delighted that they get to know you. And as soon as you get to the corner, they point, and there's nothing sticky. It's like, bye, I wish you well.

It can be someplace where we say, wow, I just feel lighter. I feel like I was distracted from all my troubles by this person who just met me with such warmth. And so we can be changed, we can be shift, something that can change for us. And so we have this ability to take in cues from other people and to somehow shift the inner landscape in a positive way by people who are friendly, by people who have goodwill or care or love.

And so we're using that capacity because that very receptivity is that very sensitivity is the source from which we can then can offer that back to the world. There's a, and it becomes a cycle, receiving and giving. Receiving, somehow the inspiration from this person we know. Not that they're loving us directly, but we're so inspired that for someone who's so loving, caring, that we receive, we're touched, we're inspired.

And to do that on the inhale, in meditation. Because in inhale we're taking in the oxygen, so it's kind of nice, and we're filling ourselves with something. So to fill ourselves with this sensitivity to someone else, and then to offer it back. Don't keep it there. Don't keep it for yourself.

Because if you keep it, hold it onto it, at some point it gets in the way of actually feeling more of it. If we give it away, if we offer it, there's a kind of freedom there. There's a kind of a giving,

opening almost. And in that giving and opening, then we're ready to be more sensitive to receive again on the next inhale. So the inhale with the air we receive. On the exhale, we offer it out.

And to do it where it's easy, so we get a sense of what it's like to start getting immersed in it. And to have it be a cycle, because sometimes when things are kind of in a cycle, breathing in and breathing out, receiving and giving, it's a little bit easier maybe to get into the rhythm of it and to settle in and just give yourself over to this cycle.

And in meditation, this is one of the ways then to develop a *samādhi* of *mettā*, where this is the primary thing that's going on for us. We give ourselves permission to let our normal concerns drop away. We give ourselves permission not to continue the normal trains of thought that have so much authority. We kind of offer ourselves, this is interesting, this is important, so that... Our whole kind of physiology, mentality, emotionality, starts becoming shifting and participates in this.

And I mean, it'd be just like if someone, something happened. You know, there was a, you were walking down the street, and there was, you know, you were kind of a little bit grumpy maybe. And then there's a street performer, entertainer, on a little plaza, and doing the most amazingly funny comedy act that you've ever had in your life. And you're suddenly stunned, and you stop, and you're immediately pulled into the humor of it all. And all of you gets absorbed in the humor.

You forget the time, you forget what else you're doing. It's just, you're absorbed in it. We have that capacity to give ourselves over to something. And to allow ourselves to be so interested, so captivated in a sense by something. And here with *mettā*, *mettā-samādhi*, it's a little bit like that. We're giving ourselves over to this cycle, and to begin doing it with this cycle of receiving and giving.

Because sometimes it's easier to feel our own goodwill if we kind of let ourselves recognize where we're touched and inspired by others, and delighted by others who have something that's good, and then to offer goodwill to them, and to keep it that simple. And sometimes the emphasis is a little bit more our offering, sometimes the emphasis is more our receiving, sometimes the two are unbalanced. Right? But to give ourselves over to this wonderful cycle as a way of really getting centered and really understanding how this feels like, what it's like, to have it uninterrupted, not without any hesitation, without any caveats, and just give ourselves over to it.

This sets the stage for begin learning how to do it to others who are not so easy. And not that

we have to, but like required to do so. But if we want to begin softening the edges of where we limit our love, limit our care because we're afraid, because we're a little bit hesitant, it's complicated with that person, or that person doesn't really deserve it. That's a good friend of mine, but I felt hurt last day when they didn't invite me to dinner. And, you know, so we have all kinds of reasons to hesitate.

And the idea is to learn how to not let that stand in the way and to be able to learn to expand outwards. And so we start where it's easy. And I think it's really to do with the person who's easiest. So for this day, until we meet tomorrow, that I would encourage you to spend time reflecting, thinking, maybe being with people who inspire you. Let yourself be touched by the goodness of other people.

And see where inside of you there's a delight, a joy, an inspiration, a resonance with the goodness of others. You don't have to tell them you're doing this. It might actually be better to do it kind of privately so that it doesn't get complicated with how you actually live with people and talk to them. But spend time really getting to know your own capacity to resonate with the goodness of others.

And if you have some time, maybe just take two or three minutes through the day and do the cycle of receiving and giving goodwill. Again, no one needs to know you're doing it, but to kind of get into the rhythm and begin having a little bit of ease or fluidity in this cycle. So the *mettā-samādhi* is the topic we're exploring. And so we'll continue tomorrow. And I thank you very much.