

Dharmette: Love (33) Metta Samadhi 8

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And hello and welcome to this series now on *meta-samādhī*, where *samādhī* is kind of giving oneself over completely to something, immersing ourselves with an absorption, a real depth of fullness of attention and participation, full participation in the meditation that we're doing. And it's a marvelous thing. We have this capacity. We have this capacity for full participation, absorption of what we're doing in things which are really interesting, like playing a sport perhaps or instrument or reading a great book. And maybe if we really enjoy cooking, really giving yourself over to that. And so we have the ability when it's really interesting.

It's a whole different thing to do it in meditation, which can be very interesting, but where there isn't a lot of input from the outside, just with yourself. And it can be more challenging here, but because of that it's more rewarding. And it's more rewarding in some ways, to do it where it's a full participation of here with this deeply connected, deeply aware of yourself, as opposed to losing yourself in the activity, because that's so interesting. We're not exactly losing ourselves in meditation, but we are filling ourselves, participating fully with all of who we are, and what we lose is our self-consciousness and self-preoccupation. But we don't exactly lose ourselves.

So to do that with love, with kindness, and some people can give themselves over fully to love when it's a romantic love and sexual love and just really give themselves over to it. But to do that with a non-romantic kind of love, a deep feeling of friendship, a deep feeling of warmth, of care, of compassion, or love, or kindness... it has a very different effect because there's no desires involved. There's no reaching out, going beyond oneself. It's a deep subtleness here in ourselves where it's not a... Even though it wants others to be happy, there's no need for it. There's no clinging to it. It's just kind of a gentle kind of full participation radiance or flow or care.

And so, as I've said, the classic instructions of this is to begin where it's easiest and most inspiring, kind of where it's kind of, of course, I feel kindness and love. And then to spread it from there and learn how to have that same unhesitating love, non-resistant to this real give

ourselves over to goodwill, to... to work the edges of it to where it's a little bit more difficult and more difficult and more difficult. And sometimes spending a long time on that edge, just kind of riding the edge, not trying to go too fast, but just saying, okay, I can have 75% goodwill for this person, but there's this one thing about this person. I'm afraid or hesitant or I'm annoyed or angry, troubled by them somehow. And so I can't really go further. And so why not? What happens if I touch that edge and come up against it?

And what happens if I open up a little bit more? What do I have to let go of? What wisdom do I need to understand this in a wiser way so that how I can be safe or appropriate in expanding out to have no resistance? And part of that wisdom is to appreciate you're doing this in meditation, to really understand that this is a separate domain where you don't have to do the same when you're actually with them. You can, they don't have to know you're doing it. And so this is a place where you're learning to expand your capacity. And in a sense, you're doing it for yourself. So maybe it's just okay to do it this way.

In a sense, you're doing it to learn something very profound about the capacity for a universal love. And capacity for not just a universal love, but becoming love, just being love in a full, complete, wholehearted way. And so to be love. And then with your wisdom with you, then when you're in the world and with people, then you can navigate that. And you navigate it differently with them, choices you make, what you say. When you know you have this capacity, you know you can relax, you know you're safe, having within you kind of this universal goodwill, and you start learning how to care for yourself, how to be in those relationships wisely, how not to give yourself away, how not to compromise yourself in ways that they're not appropriate. And so you learn to have this universal love while, you know, being in a healthy relationship with people. And that is a great thing.

So we start where it's easiest. And the classic Buddhist instructions is to do it for oneself with the assumption it's easiest to do it for yourself. Many people in the modern world don't find it that way. There's something about how modern cultures have developed that people have very difficult relationships to themselves. And probably in some ways may be more difficult than people have had in history. And maybe because of this very strong relationship psychological culture now, that kind of post-Freud, that it's complicated to so much inner information about ourselves and expectations and judgments and how things should be.

Some of it has to do with the nature of modern society and all the complexity of it and insecurity of it. And so it's more difficult here. So if one's not so easy to do it for oneself, if the easy person is some other person that you know. And I know some people who choose animals as their easy person, easy object for the love. Some really cute, cuddly, loving animal. And

that's where they do it. Some people use some kind of public figure that they don't actually know personally. I think a fair number of people I know have chosen the Dalai Lama as their easy person.

And so the idea is to find a person who can be easy person and really discover that uncompromised or unconditional goodwill to that person. And to really get into an absorption, to really give yourself over to the *samādhi* of that. Don't be in a hurry to go beyond that. Some people spend weeks, long time with their easy person, to develop concentration, to develop kind of a steadiness, undistractedness, to be fully participating in this. And so it's kind of feeling of fullness, like this is what's happening and the mind is not distracted from it. And then to begin exploring how to do it with people who are not so easy and doing it with a friend.

And we have maybe a circle of friends, some that we're very close to, maybe they're the easy person and some that it's a little more complicated. And so go with a little more complicated and see why it's complicated. Find the edges of it. See where you hold back. And what is it like to go further? Can you trust it? Can you go further for a while then and pull back? Kind of massage that edge of it.

And because you develop some meditative concentration on this, absorption or undistractedness with the easy person, that is kind of the tool or the medium through which we're now exploring it with the not-so-easy person, that person who's still a friend, is so we really have this reference point, not the ordinary state of mind with all its doubts and concerns and everything, but the reference point is this *samādhi*, this goodness, this radiance, this warmth that we're capable of. We know we're capable of it, and now we're beginning to see, can we now open up unconditionally positive regard to this person who's our friend? Right. And do it there. And so we're kind of learning to expand so that we can keep doing this slowly, slowly, slowly, only when you're ready, only when you want to, only to agree that you want to.

You don't have to be pushed against an edge, pushed against a situation that is more than you care for to do or is more than it's good for you. And it's really doing it kind of for your own sake, to explore what it's like for you to expand in a healthy way, appropriate way, the fullness, the edges, the circle of goodwill that you can hold. And you don't have to go to your enemy or most difficult person for a long time. And if you have more than one difficult person... You know, maybe you never do some of them. You don't want to make this whole practice of goodwill a reason to harm yourself or challenge yourself unduly or to do it in a way that you're not ready for to do it or don't want to do it.

The idea with this kind of goodwill, because we have goodwill and respect and care for ourselves, is to do it as we're ready and as it feels good. And maybe you stay with the easy person

and friend for a long time. So today I was introducing the friend. And maybe that's the one that is most kind of represents *mettā* practice, because *mettā* is cognate to the word *mitta*, which means friend. And so *mettā* is a form of friendliness. And for some people that's kind of *mettā*, one of the primary characteristics of *mettā* that helps us understand what it is and how it's different than other forms of love, is that it's really a form of friendship, maybe *agápē* in Greek, a form of friendship, a form of deep respect and care for others.

And so today, an interesting practice to do, a *mettā* practice, is to... is to just kind of track your thinking. And when you think about some friend that you have or some person that you know, kind of not a difficult person necessarily, don't just let your train of thoughts just continue as they are. Take a moment to wish them well. Maybe say the phrase, may you be happy. And to... and just kind of sprinkle in, salt in a little bit of heartfelt goodwill, friendliness. Remind yourself of friendliness as you're thinking about them.

So whoever you're thinking about, oh, may you be happy. And then you can continue your thoughts as you wish. And it could be through words like may you be happy. It could just simply be settling back in your heart and just opening, ah. It's more like, ah. And for half a moment. And to sprinkle that through the day, and if you want to do this practice, maybe there's a few strategic places you can put a little note that reminds you, *mettā*, so that you don't get too distracted with the fullness of life.

So, thank you. And then also, I would encourage any of you who have the time and the interest to do a second sitting meditation today, where you do this on your own, to really kind of settle in to this meditation on *mettā*, or if it's meaningful for you to listen to this guided meditation again, maybe do it again, just so you're staying close and not getting some momentum, because momentum and *samādhi* kind of go together. Thank you.

---KEYWORDS--- samādhi, meta-samādhi, mettā, mitta, Dalai Lama, goodwill, universal love, friendship, agápē, meditation