

Dharmette: Love (35) Metta Samadhi 10

Gil Fronsdal

February 27, 2026

Keywords: mettā-samādhi, mettā, samādhi, Brahmavihāras, goodwill, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, Buddha, ancient India

Hello and welcome. Welcome to the end of this five days on the topic of *mettā-samādhi* and how as a meditation practice, maybe sometimes it's easier to evoke *mettā*—goodwill, or kind of the warm-hearted radiance of the heart, goodness of the heart. Knowing that you're not going to have to do it interpersonally in the world, talking to people, engaging in people, doing it in the privacy of your own kind of meditation. Not to be aloof or not to avoid having goodwill in the world, but as a way of really cultivating and discovering how thoroughly and fully you can center yourself on this attitude of goodwill, of kindness, friendliness. And to learn something about yourself, learn how you can do it, learn where it's hard, kind of be massaging the edges of it, spreading it, growing it. And it's maybe a little bit like going to the gym and building up strength and endurance.

Right? And for its own sake, do it there. Then later you might use that strength in the real world, but first we do it at the gym. So the same with meditation. And so the traditional five categories in which to explore this capacity for goodwill are to the... First it's to oneself, then it's to the benefactor, the person who's really supported and helped us a lot. And then there's a friend, the neutral person, and then the enemy or the difficult person.

And for some people, starting with oneself is not so easy. And for some people, the difficult person is oneself. So it's fine to change the order, because the idea is, the principle is to go from the easiest to the more difficult. So you can choose that whatever order of actual categories that works for you. And the... So, but one way to do this meditation for the difficult person, and also to do the meditation for oneself or to anyone... is to, on the inhale, to think of a person that's easy, the benefactor, the good friend, and breathe into that place inside where something resonates with that person.

Something is touched by that person. Something brings you a smile, or you're just happy to know them. And maybe you can imagine them offering goodwill to you. Maybe they have

done a lot of goodwill and friendliness to you. So imagine being on the receiving end of that, but so that it touches that place that you participate in that because you have something that resonates with that, that meets that, that wakes up with that. They exist there in the relationship between you.

So on the inhale, take in that goodness. And then on the exhale, offer it to the difficult person. And it could be done very silently. It's kind of a sense of receiving and giving. It can be done with just mild, simple words of maybe their names, saying their name at the beginning of the inhale for the easy person, the name of the difficult person, or an image of them. It could be done with words.

And it could be very simple. It could be the word happy as you breathe in, and then offering them happiness. May you be happy. Just say the word happy. And the idea of alternating between the two is that it's not the same as just doing non-stop goodwill for the difficult person. Because that can trigger all kinds of associations, memories, ideas, and it's hard to sustain it.

There might be some of the hurt might be there that comes up then, and it's hard to stay with it. It might be some of the anger, some of the fear, some of the defensiveness. All kinds of things can come up around a difficult person. And it's okay for it to come up because that's what we're working with. We're trying to spread and dissolve that, heal that in a wise and good way in the privacy of meditation. And so... So it's hard to do it non-stop.

And so to do this alternation between the easy person and the difficult person, you kind of recover a little bit with the easy person, get refreshed, and it's easier then to touch in with a difficult person and then let go. And also you don't have to kind of blast the difficult person. It can be just enough for you, just what you can do. And some people find it helpful to imagine that the difficult person is really far away, like across a room, across, you know, on the next hilltop, and just, you know, the size of an ant because it's so far away. And maybe then it's possible to, easier to have it, goodwill, than if they're sitting right in front of you. So whatever it takes, you're allowed to be creative, you're allowed to find a way to do it, and so that you feel comfortable and safe to offer them goodwill, and it seems appropriate.

I have occasionally used the idea of thinking about the difficult person, you know, really sick in the hospital or being injured or in jail or something and hungry and just wanting to give them some food, wanting to kind of bring them some water or care for them in that situation. And that somehow has melted some of the hesitation that I've had around caring for them. So this creativity, what does it take? And because what we're looking for is *samādhī*, the idea is to not make a lot of stories and a lot of reflection, and the idea is to do this practice

so the thinking mind becomes quiet. The discursive mind becomes quiet, because more of the almost like an attitude that gathers together, an intention that's there, a kindness that's there, a glow that's there.

So you can really use the pleasure of goodwill as a gathering point and a quieting point to really immerse yourself in this radiance, this goodness. And so... So it's almost like you're letting the thinking mind become quieter so you can enter into this forest bathing of goodwill. You can enter into this realm of goodwill that becomes not just an idea in your mind, but more like the atmosphere of your whole being, and where you're learning to open your heart, open your heart. And part of the reason to do it is... is to really learn how to dissolve the barriers to your love, to learn what it is about you and what's going on that gets in the way of really unconditioned love for all beings. Because in order to really cultivate the *samādhi* of *mettā*, you really don't want to have any hesitations to it.

You want to have everything dissolved, so just the radiance there. And you don't have to justify doing it necessarily for the difficult person, because you're not going to, in meditation, you're not going to act on it. They're not going to benefit from it, in the sense that you're going to go and, you know, say, tell them what a great person they are or something. Or you're just doing it to really dissolve yourself. And to create the reference point to let you question more deeply why you hold back. What is going on?

And is it necessary? Right. And is there a way to have goodwill together with a confidence that you can take care of yourself, a confidence that you're not going to be taken advantage of or hurt again or something? So it's a wonderful exploration and a wonderful kind of to immerse oneself in this world of goodwill and really feel it, radiance of it, spreading it, extending it throughout the world. And it's remarkable that this is one of the things that the people in ancient India developed and cultivated. The Buddha taught it, the unlimited radiance of goodwill.

So to practice that. So I'd encourage you to spend some time with difficult people. Maybe there are difficult people you act physically in same proximity with, but maybe you don't have to talk to them. And maybe you can just kind of, in your privacy of your own heart, explore what it's like to find some goodwill towards them without any commitment to act on it. Just what it's like, just to explore. What's the edges of it?

How can you have some friendliness, warmth? I like the word goodwill because it's kind of like well-wishing. Some wish, yeah, I'd like you to be happy. I'd like you to be peaceful. And one of the ways to get behind that wish is to realize that if they can be happy and peaceful, they won't be so difficult. It's a way of saying, please change.

And I want that for you. So goodwill. So, if you're interested in this, and I hope you are, that continue. Maybe it can be a regular meditation practice for the next few weeks. This next week, I won't be here. I'm teaching a retreat at IRC.

And Kim Allen will be with you. So many of you know her from before, and she's a wonderful teacher. And then I'll be back the following week. And... probably will continue with this *mettā-samādhi* a little bit longer, partly because it's a foundation for then switching to the other *Brahmavihāras*. At some point we'll switch to compassion, and then sympathetic joy, and then equanimity.

But we might kind of, we might, you know, be doing this for a while. And as we go into the spring, I'm going to be gone quite a bit, so it'll be intermittent. Right. And hopefully that you will keep the momentum going. So thank you all very much, and I look forward to being back a week from Monday.