

## Dharmette: Love (39) Metta Samadhi 14

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So, my friends, we continue with this series on love, and right now with the title \*mettā-samādhi\*, the immersion, the absorption, the full engagement in goodwill.

And I hope all of you have had some experience of being fully engaged with some activity that you kind of lost sense of time, lost sense of, in a wonderful way, the world around you, maybe absorbed into reading a book when people read books. And, you know, you weren't disconnected from the world, but, you know, you didn't really notice what was going on around you and people talking or maybe even someone in your house calling your name. And you're so involved, and whatever you were doing, it felt good. It felt more peaceful. The mind was not in conflict with anything. The mind, the thoughts were not struggling with anything. The mind was absorbed, centered, engaged in some activity.

And it could be exercising. It could be walking in nature. But something that really gave you over, sometimes there's a real kind of primary focus on doing your craft, meditation itself. And so it's possible, it's an amazing thing, that it's possible for the primary activity of the moment to be completely involved in wishing goodwill, not just simply as a wishful thinking, but as a whole embodied sense of being, a being of love, a beingness of goodwill, of kindness, a gentle warmth, the joy, a radiance of it, where that is what the mind is most interested in. There might be distracting thoughts, thinking about other things, but the mind, you're not really interested in those. The mind is interested in everything having to do with goodwill.

And it's a kind of a surrender to goodwill, to \*mettā\*, surrender to doing this one thing. And it's possible to get phenomenally concentrated so that it, kind of, goodwill, love, kindness, \*samādhi\* becomes kind of fully what we're immersed in completely. And rather than being immersed fully in hatred or immersed fully in sorrow or depression or preoccupation or greed or fantasies, which it's all too easy to be kind of absorbed in. But there are activities where it

doesn't necessarily do us much good. It doesn't bring the unification, the gathering together of all this healthy emotional, social capacities that we have.

So, if you were interested in the \*samādhi\* of \*mettā\*, then we have to know, recognize the different major elements of our being that we're gathering together to really be immersed in it, to surrender to it. And as I said in beginning the meditation, there's four or five different elements. One is to have a posture that somehow or other supports the practice of goodwill, that evokes it. Some people really like to have their chest kind of open. That kind of makes it more sensitive there, more tender there, more sense of openness, vulnerability even, that allows for the flowing of some kind of goodwill.

Some people like an upright posture where there's a confidence. And so the confidence in our ability to offer goodwill, maybe we need a posture that we feel confident and safe. It can feel frightening sometimes to live with goodwill. We don't know if people are going to take advantage of us or we feel too exposed. So to have a posture and a situation where we're really here to feel safe, we feel confident and present.

And then there is who we're directing the goodwill to. It's possible to practice universal goodwill without specifically towards someone. But most people find that it's easier to evoke it if we find someone who it's easy to do it to. And some people find it easiest to themselves because there's kind of an intimacy from the inside out with oneself, and it's easier to kind of gather all the forces in ourselves in the goodwill when we know it's all centered right here. It's like that's distracting.

Some people prefer to do it to some benefactor, good friend, someone who really inspires them with love. They have a lot of love for that person or a lot of goodwill. And it's easy to want them to be well. Easy to imagine them happy, smiling, twinkle in their eyes. So we choose a person that it's going to be directed to, so that in thinking, we bring that person to mind.

If we visualize easily, we can have a picture of their face or some activity, picturing them in some way that inspires us in our love. Maybe they have a smile. Or maybe they have helped us in some way, done something good towards us. So we remember that occasion. And then, so there's the posture, there's the person that we're going to direct it towards. And then there's the, with that, hopefully some tenderness, some warmth, something that, some quality of goodwill.

And different people will feel it at different places. For some people it's mostly mental. Somehow the quality of thinking, the quality of the imaging, there's a gentleness, there's an open-

ness, there's a sparkle in the mind. For some people it's more in the heart or in the body, that there is a glow, a joy, a pleasure, a gentleness that just feels like that's where the love is. So we're bringing together the body as a posture, we're bringing together some person we're directing to, maybe some feelings that we have about it, the feelings of goodwill.

And then those feelings in the mind or the body can come with pleasure. And so pleasure sometimes can be a kind of joy. And to appreciate the value of pleasure as a kind of glue, as a kind of gathering force that keeps everything here. Leah, stay with us. Stay with us. This is good.

And then there's our motivation, our interest to stay here. This is important. This is valuable. Okay. And, um... And then choose one of those, choose something that's going to be the focal point, the gathering point for all these things, so that everything else is gathered as a supporting cast to really be absorbed in one thing.

So some people are saying the phrases, that's the object of focus. The phrases are like, you know, the closest thing like to a mantra or singing a song or the words of the song, you gather yourself around and there's a whole body is involved with the singing. And as I said, I've known people who have actually either in walking and meditation sung the phrases of loving-kindness out loud, and I've known people who have kind of made them a little simple song, the words, in their own mind as they're sitting there. And having it more as a song is more engaging, it's more involved. It's really being engaged, and to really be able to stay with the object of the primary center of what we're doing here.

For some people, it's the feeling, the emotion, or the feelings in the body or mind that are associated with goodwill. You're staying close to that. The pleasure, perhaps. For some people, it's the image that they're really staying with and staying with. And I find it useful, very useful, to support this, then to include the breathing, the rhythm of breathing in and out as kind of a massage or a cycle or a kind of engagement of it.

In the teachings of the Buddha, there are the word \*vicāra\*, which is sometimes translated as sustained attention, sustaining, maintaining attention there. Also has the meaning of exploring. So exploring, and sometimes it's used like moving around a little bit, like if you have a cloth to polish a brass bowl, you're moving it around the bowl. So there's a kind of sense of, with the breathing perhaps, a kind of moving that kind of, the attention is kind of gently kind of flowing and moving and dipping in and touching, kind of like petting the cat there and there, as opposed to holding it fixed, unmoving. And so the breathing can kind of help with that kind of fluidity and exploring sometimes.

And then they're surrendering to all that, not giving in to the distractive thoughts, to understand that discursive thought, conversational thinking, is not really that useful here and let that just kind of recede to the background. And so with the central focus that we give ourselves over to, some people like the idea of surrendering to it or dropping into it or immersing in it, gliding with it, surfing on it. So there's a variety of different, all these different ways, different people will take these different elements. And with \*samādhi\*, well, the different elements, people combine in different ways.

What it all has in common is dedication to just make this, to the best of our ability, to make that the subject, that the object, that the be-all and end-all of what we're about in that moment. Not with strain, not with stress, but with love. To love how we're doing loving-kindness, that the very way that we're engaged in the practice of \*mettā\* is an expression of love, of care, of goodwill for ourselves. We're not straining and pushing and trying to and being ambitious. And so how we do it is part of the totality of just getting absorbed in this thing, like just this is the good book we're reading, this is the song we're singing, this is the, the sport that we're fully engaged in.

This is the purpose of our life in these moments that we give ourselves over fully. And we know we're doing it well, that it's happening when the discursive mind, the thinking mind, becomes quieter and calmer. And if it doesn't, that means that we're still prioritizing our discursive thoughts. We're somehow engaged in them. And so to learn, to relax that engagement with discursive thought, to come back and just be in the flow of this goodwill.

And occasionally the opposite happens. Sometimes the goodwill, the practicing goodwill, makes us more distracted. Distracted mind gets stronger. Sometimes the opposite emotions than goodwill arises. It could be anger. Yeah. And ideally, just see that all with goodwill. See everything with goodwill, kindness and love.

And realizing that sometimes we want to stop the practice of goodwill and practice mindfulness with what is making it difficult. And assuming that it's gotten difficult, it's expression of love to stop and really attend to that and care for that and then come back to the loving-kindness another time. So, to be immersed, to give ourselves over. And I would encourage you, in this period of time that we're doing this, that you would spend an extra time meditating on this way, maybe a second time today, maybe later in the day, in the afternoon, or the evening before going to sleep. But just keep giving yourself over to this.

It's a skill that builds over time, becomes second nature. And that second nature aspect of it supports the immersion in it. So thank you. And then for some of you, it might be interesting that on Saturday I'm teaching a day-long retreat online through the Insight Retreat Center.

And I think it's from 9 to 4:30. And so you sign up for it and get the Zoom information at the Insight Retreat Center.

And probably in the menu, it's under online offerings or online retreats or something. So thank you, and look forward to coming back tomorrow.