

Dharmette: Love (40) Metta Samadhi 15

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Hello and welcome to this continued series on love. And I'm kind of delighted by our human capacity to care for each other, to love each other, to be friends with each other. And of course it has a lot of challenges, and many people have been hurt by this and many people are, seemingly other things are more important. Fear is more important. Our hurts are more important. And our conflicts are more important.

And it's very easy to overlook and maybe even dismiss the value of our human capacity for friendship, for kindness, for goodwill. Other things can seem more important. But I don't think anything is more important than to have kindness, to have love, to have care. For the long-term well-being of ourselves, for our friends, for our world, what really nourishes us and supports us is the field of kindness. Anything short of that may be successful in the short term, maybe it's not successful at all, but it doesn't really conduce to a long-term sense of well-being and goodness and support.

And to specialize in seeing how can friendliness, goodwill, be strong, be courageous, be mature, be wise, be supportive of ourselves and the world? This is one of the great discoveries. This is one of the things to spend time really exploring. To come to a quick conclusion that dismisses the value of kindness is very unfortunate. But to, of course, it's not easy to know when and how to be kind and friendly unless you believe it should be all the time. But how to do it, how to do it wisely, how to do it in a very mature way, how to do it productively so it is the better choice.

That's the homework. That's the work we have to do. And no one can really answer that for you. But it's for each person to spend time really grappling with the value, the priorities that take us away from simple capacity for love, for kindness, and to question them and to see, is there ways you can approach love that gives it a priority in all situations?

And one of the things that supports this, at least for me, is that I have a hard time separating out *mettā*, goodwill, care, *anukampā*, from freedom, from being at ease, from not clinging, not holding on, not resisting, the unpreoccupied mind and heart. The intense mind and heart has love as part of it, has kindness, goodwill, *mettā* as part of it. These two are inseparable. And the more we let go in a healthy way, the more the mind and heart chance to operate in a healthy way. And as they operate in a healthy way, of course, that openness, that presence, that ease is going to give rise to goodwill and friendliness.

And to experience that as a profound form of health, as a profound form of what is most natural for us, what is most when we come to homeostasis, we come to balance, when we come to ease, when we have dropped all the stresses and strains and wounds and injuries that we carry and somehow reinforce and prioritize, that we come to a place of psychological, spiritual, emotional health, and it can rest there and be there. There is love. There is kindness. Of course it's there. And it is not simplistic. It's not pollyannaish.

It doesn't make us weak. It doesn't make us stupid. There can be tremendous wisdom, tremendous balance in that freedom and goodwill together where we can face the world in a realistic way. We can take care of ourselves. We can engage even in conflict, but not with hostility, but with trying to find a way to be a bridge for friendship.

And so this is one of the values of doing loving-kindness practice, doing it as a meditation practice, is to begin having another doorway, another route into the goal of Buddhist practice, which is freedom, liberation, liberation from clinging and craving, liberation from suffering. That some people find it easier to move into that territory of freedom from the avenue of love. Because that also is dissolving, moving, having us work with the places of clinging and resistance. And that's very important to work with. But to work at it from the avenue, from the door of love, has a wonderful opportunity.

And that is the very things that make love difficult, that makes it difficult to really stay in the flow and getting into the *samādhi* of *mettā*. That way it makes it difficult. We can make that the object of love, of kindness, friendliness. We can say, come here, and we meet that. We don't struggle and fight against what makes it difficult. But we invite it into our positive regard, into our way of seeing everything with kindness.

And in some ways we disarm our challenges. Somehow we compost them, we transform them by just saying, you too, here, let me know you, let me hold you with kindness. If it's fear, if it's regrets, if it's whatever it might be, here, you too. I'll hold you with kindness. And sometimes to say, may you be happy is wonderful to do as a way of expressing our kindness. But sometimes that's too much because we're kind of interfering with how things are

in themselves.

Just to hold with kindness. Just hold with love, allowing things, allowing our difficulties to be what they are, but not to buy into them, not to become them, not to give them authority, but give them space, breathing room, to be held in the field of our goodwill, in the field of our kindness, and so they can maybe soften and relax. So that the practice of loving-kindness is a powerful practice for liberation itself. It settles us and brings in this tremendous health of mind and heart. And part of that we discover in meditation through the *samādhi* of *mettā*, to really give ourselves over to this.

Just kind of every breath, love, love. May you be well, may you be happy. And kind of get into the rhythm of it, get kind of into the groove, get into the flow of it, to start feeling the pleasure, the joy that might come from this gathering ourselves, settling ourselves down to this simple thing. So it becomes kind of all of what we're about for the time of the meditation. And when we have this kind of gathering of ourselves fully into the field of love, the attitude of love, the pleasure, the joy of it, the simplicity of it, that's one of those times where the heart and mind come into a kind of balance and homeostasis and kind of wonderful health of not being distracted, not being divided, not being fragmented and scattered.

And we get a taste of a phenomenal, healthy way of being. And then when we return to the world, we have that as a reference point. We can see more clearly when we lose it. We see more clearly how it's healthy to be relaxed and at ease. It's not healthy to be stressed. It's not healthy to be caught in greed, conceit.

Not healthy to get caught and hold on to fear. Of course we have anxiety, but how do we relate to it? Sometimes we're caught by it, then not resisting it, holding it away. There's all these ways in which we kind of fragment ourselves, sometimes dividing parts of ourselves from themselves, so we're kind of divided. And *samādhi* is a way of becoming undivided.

And it's remarkable you can do this with love, with *mettā*, undivided *mettā*. It just makes me just so happy that we have this capacity and how valuable it is, how much we learn from this, and transformative it is. So, we're doing this. So I would encourage you to kind of keep giving yourself over for this period of time. Some of you have been coming along with this 7 a.m. for a number of years, and recently we did a whole series on *ānāpānasati*, on *samādhi*, a lot of emphasis on different types of meditation.

And I'd like to think of this series on love now as being kind of a building on whatever we've done before so that you have a greater capacity to give yourself over to the *samādhi* of just *mettā* and learning how to do it. And so I'd encourage you, as much as you can, to do this

more through the day. In small little, you know, two-minute pieces, sitting together. You know, sitting down for two minutes before the next activity and doing a little bit of *mettā*, meditating at least twice a day. It doesn't have to be that long, 20 minutes, even 10 minutes.

But more with this field of *mettā*. Make it be a current that you stay in touch with and touch into regularly through the day so that it becomes more and more second nature. And then we'll continue one more week on this topic of *mettā* before changing to compassion, another form of love. And next week, Monday, I have to travel, so I won't be here on Monday. And happily, Nikki Murgafore will be here.

And I'm just delighted that she'll come and fill in. And I haven't talked to her directly, but I imagine she'll continue the *mettā* series. That's a practice that she has a tremendous connection to and love for. And I'm very glad that her *mettā* can come and be shared with you for one day, and I'll be back on Tuesday. So may you all be well, may you all benefit from a closer living more closely to your capacity for goodwill and kindness, *mettā*, and may our collective doing of that benefit the world. So thank you very much.