

Dharmette: Love (41) Metta with Spatial Awareness

Gil Fronsdal

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So I'm happy to be here with you all. Happy to be sitting here. The opportunity to reflect on and touch into goodwill, into kindness and love is one of the phenomenal opportunities of any lifetime, and one of the things that has grown over the years with my connection to Buddhist practice. And it's a form of strength and a form of inner health that I delight in. And I don't think, when I was younger, I mistrusted this idea of *mettā*. I thought it was artificial.

And now I see it as the natural byproduct of not being attached, not being caught, not being preoccupied. We have all these ways, defenses, we have all these ways of protecting ourselves or pushing away the world, or being caught in desires and ill will and grievances that limit our capacity for the soft, gentle heart to shine. And we shortchange ourselves when we don't touch into this deep form of health. Being, living in grievances, living in cravings, living in desires, is not really healthy for us. It's not really an expression of inner health. But to have deep sense of peace and satisfaction and purpose and subtleness almost allows our goodness, allows us to have the time and the willingness, the interest in connecting with people kindly, in being with people in a nice way, to be available to be a friend, and to be available not to be if there's no people around or if there's not really their call.

But we have this natural capacity that we can make more room for. We can give more possibility to allow it to grow, to allow it to spread, to allow it to become strong. Right? And one of the forms of *mettā* meditation, *mettā samādhi*, does not involve using phrases, does not involve using categories of people like self, benefactor, friend, neutral person, or enemy, difficult people. It just doesn't need to have an object. And this is one of the miracles, I think, of love.

Love that has no object, needs no object. If an object becomes within their, in, within its scope, then the love goes to it. It's kind of a light that's like turned on in a room, but no one's

there. But if someone comes in, they receive the light. Excuse me for a moment, I might need to sneeze again, maybe not.

And so, so the idea that, um, the heart's radiance, the heart's light, is maybe always on, always available, except we don't turn it on or we don't go to its room. We are searching elsewhere. We're searching in the dark for our happiness. But if we go where the light is, go where the warmth is, then we find it. It's there. And it can seem impossible at times because the power, the strength of our preoccupations are so strong.

The strength of our fears, the strength of our resentments, ill will, strength of our hurts that seem so important. And we get preoccupied. We get so focused on things that we don't have room in the mind to stay attentive to the heart center, to the chest, to the deep inner sensitivity where the goodness is, where the warmth is. And this ability to sense and feel profoundly within us is one of the consequences of mindfulness practice. This, to be mindful not just of the surface, what's going on, the surface, surface thoughts, surface feelings, but to be quiet enough to sense and feel what's going on under the surface, what's going on more deeply in the deeper quality of our being that... doesn't, you know, it's not dependent on what's going on in the world around us.

To learn to live independent of what's going on in the world around us. Not disconnected, but to live knowing and feeling that which inside of us, which is not dependent on what's going on in the world. And with that, to go into the world. And when that, that is not dependent on what goes on in the world, is love. Wow, then it's fantastic to be able to love, to be able to have goodwill, to have compassion, to have care.

That is not dependent on others, but it is dependent on how open we are to ourselves, how settled and satisfied we feel in and of ourselves, how we feel content in a deep way to just be alive and allow this deeper wellspring of goodness to flow outward. This is phenomenal. And so one of the meditation practices that is associated with the earliest teachings of the Buddha, he did not teach how to have categories of people. He seemingly didn't teach even how to use words, but rather he just understood that when we're deeply settled, deeply at ease, when we have some degree of freedom from greed, hate, and delusion, that right there, goodwill is available. Right there, goodwill is possible.

And then to allow it to radiate, to sit quietly, close the eyes, and to really enter into this world of goodwill. Trust it. Just become it. Let go of anything that takes you away from it. Feel it. Know it.

Enter it. Settle into it. Abide in it. Let it kind of fill you. And let it radiate. Let it flow.

Let it move outwards. Right? And some people will imagine it's a light, maybe a light, a colored light, white light, or some color that seems to irradiate from us out into space all around. Some people, it's a kind of a feeling of warmth, a glow, subtle vibration. And what we're using here is our capacity for spatial awareness. We can know where we are in space.

We have a sense, we construct or we sense or feel that when there's a lot of space around us, when there's very little space around us, our spatial awareness takes into place where other people are in space. We can close our eyes and still have some general imagination or sense of how large a room is or where we are in space in the room. So this ability to have spatial awareness is one of the forms of awareness we're using for *mettā*. And we're imagining, allowing that ability to be receptive to, or open to, goodwill, to flow out into that space all around us. And so one of the ways that we bring in here, is the ingredient of it, to make it kind of *samādhi*, all-encompassing, is now engaging our spatial awareness as part of the field of what we do.

So in order to make it *samādhi*, we're slowly beginning to harmonize together all the different ways that, all the different faculties of who we are, our sensations of our body, the knowing, what we can know. We can know that there's goodwill. We could know there's warmth. We can connect to it. Our attitudinal, we can have this attitude of goodwill.

We can have wishes. We can have various, almost like words or non-verbal, kind of a wish, a heartfelt wish for the well-being of others, the kindness, wanting them to be happy. We can... Our thinking, if we're thinking, is not about distracting things, but we're gently, quietly, very deeply, part of a deep form of thinking, profound thinking, thinking about *mettā*, thinking about how to stay connected to it, and how wonderful it is, and let it flow. Not as the primary thing we do, but as, you know, small things, just in a, like, a gentle little breeze of thoughts that... kind of in the background almost, it keeps us present, keeps us engaged, about the *mettā* itself.

And then there's the spatial awareness that we can also now include as part of it. And so we're bringing together all kinds of ways in which the mind body is operating, and it's all now concerned with goodwill, with *mettā*. And sometimes you can even try to just intentionally go around and gather all the parts of yourself. So everything is flowing with *mettā*. And then the radiance of it, the flow of it, can feel like we almost become that radiance.

We almost become that wider space. We almost like we become love. What else would we be? So the radiance of *mettā*. And for the rest of this week, that's what we'll practice. And maybe this will be a form of *mettā* that is most closely related to freedom, the liberation that Buddhism focuses on.

In fact, sometimes there's an idea that there's a liberation of mind based on goodwill. It's phenomenal. Liberation. So thank you all very much, and I look forward to being here tomorrow.