

Dharmette: Love (543) Compassion Samadhi 4

Gil Fronsdal

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So hello everyone, and welcome back to these talks on the *Samādhi of Compassion*, the meditation with compassion. And one of the values, as I said earlier, of compassion meditation is in fact to benefit from the wonderful absorption in compassion, the feelings, the intention, the whole experience of how we have and experience compassion. And it can be very healing, it can be very opening, heartwarming, and it can be very settling. It's possible to go into a deep *samādhi* where the whole field of awareness is saturated with a feeling of compassion. Sometimes in breath meditation, the whole field of experience is saturated with peace or with joy. And with compassion, it can be saturated with compassion and joy, with compassion and peace.

But compassion is the main characteristic of it. And when we practice compassion meditation, there are two ways that it can succeed. One is by actually getting absorbed or unified around this experience of compassion. The other is we learn what gets in the way of us doing that, what makes it difficult, and how we can't do it. So the very thing of not succeeding makes part of the success of the meditation, because we learn about ourselves more. We want to learn about ourselves. We want to learn about what gets in the way, the hindrances we have.

And then to hold those in compassion, to hold ourselves in compassion for the kind of challenges we have, the resistance we have, the resentments, the attachments we have, the strong sense of obligation that keeps us kind of tied to the suffering of the world or suffering of others, where we almost lose ourselves in concern, preoccupation, concern for them, and what can we do. Lose ourselves in anxiety. Lose ourselves in a sense of victimhood. When we open to suffering in the world, we more feel our own suffering in some deep way. And if we understand what gets in the way of our compassion meditation, it's successful, as I said, and we can learn how then to better care for ourselves.

We know what needs attention, what needs to be resolved or worked with or seen. And then eventually those things that get in the way will fall aside. And eventually those things that get in the way fall aside, and we can get absorbed in this wonderful experience of compassion better. And compassion is this wonderful place where Buddhist meditation meets, has at the interface of our own personal experience in meditation and the world around us. And so there is an interface, there is a connection there where the meditation is now concerned for the welfare of others. But because others are, we're thinking about others, we're concerned with others, to some degree, it's easy to get pulled into our thoughts, our stories, our reactions, and pulled into the deep-seated beliefs that actually interfere with compassion, that make it more complicated.

Feelings of responsibility, obligation, taking suffering too personally, a kind of empathy that's not quite compassion because it's kind of like we're taking on people's suffering. And now we have two people suffering, the other person and us, because we're somehow suffering with them in a way that we hurt. Compassion is not a suffering with; it's a being with deeply. It's a caring for deeply. Yes, there's a kind of empathy where we sense and know and understand in some deep way the suffering of others, but we're not taking it on. We're not experiencing exactly the same suffering ourselves. That would not be so helpful.

And so to begin seeing what gets in the way is an extremely important part of this practice. It's not a mistake. It's not a failure in compassion meditation. It's actually part of its purpose to kind of reveal this part of ourselves. And it helps us understand what is not the meditation. And what is not the meditation is a lot of thinking about the suffering of the world, or reaching out, or being assertive.

But what is the meditation is this being a receptacle for suffering, being a receptacle for compassion, and to feel this compassion we have in the body. To enter into *samādhi* is to allow us to really get centered on the sensations of compassion in the body, where that's the primary home for awareness. That's where the attention rests. That's where the default is. That's what is being massaged by breathing. And everything else, like I said yesterday, comes and joins there and gathers there and is there in the periphery, but the central focus of attention is the compassion.

But to feel it in the body, to feel it physically, and it might take a while maybe to really get a strong sense of the physical manifestation of compassion. It might be a warmth in the body. It might be a tingling or radiance in the heart. It might feel joyful, or there might be a pleasure. I often talk about it here as a sweetness. It might be a feeling of openness somewhere in the body.

It might feel somewhere like a softness. So whatever the sensations might be, find where that's centered in you. Find the center of those sensations. And let that be what we focus on, where the breathing unifies the breath with it by breathing through it, breathing with it. The breathing accompanies these sensations. And then all these other things begin to relax, where we soften.

The less energy we give to the strong sense of I have to do something, the strong sense of the story around it and how this is going to turn out terrible for everyone involved, or I better get activated and clear my calendar so that I can do something about the suffering of the world, all those can quiet. And something deep within the mind, the heart, the body can begin relaxing so that this warmth of compassion can begin spreading through the body. Some people feel it like a light that spreads, warm golden light. Some people feel it's like there's a gentle heater inside, this warmth that's spreading. Sometimes it's a softness. Sometimes it's something a little more indistinct, like a sense of beauty, really a sense of pleasure that's spreading.

And the more we relax, allow this compassion to relax something in our body, the bigger becomes the receptacle that can just let everything come in and just settle and relax there. Including, in a sense, the way we experience the suffering of others is welcomed in to come and relax here with us. For now, we don't have to respond. We don't have to figure out what to do. The radical and very powerful thing to do is to simply be with it and allow it to rest in us. It's almost like we save the suffering of the world by letting all the suffering come and rest within us. We receive it. We be with it.

And this simplicity of compassion in the compassion *samādhi* is a treasure. And it's a capacity we have, an amazing capacity in meditation, to really simplify our life around one beautiful, wonderful thing. And in this case, it's compassion. Other times it's just the breathing and the goodness that comes from that. And as with breathing, so with compassion. It prepares us to be in the world in a better way.

So it's a kind of delayed gratification, or delayed, maybe we call it delayed compassionate action. Of course, it would be nice to actually respond to this suffering of the world in an active way and make a difference for our friends, our family, the world around us, our neighbors. Of course, it's good. I hope that's kind of one of the reasons I'm a Buddhist teacher, to be able to spread more compassionate action in the world. But to know first the simplicity of it here, and to ferret out, is that the right word, all the complications and hindrances to compassion, so that when we go to the world, our actions in the world, our care for the world, we don't carry those complications with us.

It doesn't interfere and make our care for the world more complicated than it needs to be. So that compassion can be an expression of generosity, not obligation. An expression of deep goodwill and respect and kind of attunement to the world. Not, you know, responsibility, not resentment, not a big should, not tension. Compassionate action without tension is more effective than compassion with tension. So those are the thoughts today about compassion *samādhi*.

And I would encourage you during this day to continue looking for little opportunities to feel compassion for others. Maybe strangers you see; no one has to know you have it. Maybe private acts, feelings of taking time to feel the simplicity of a care, a warmth, that concern for people suffering. And see if you can find, in the simplicity of it, where there's a pleasure, where there's a positive feeling that comes with that compassion, however small it be. Let yourself check in and touch into that pleasure a few times in the course of the day, and let that be a reference point to also understand how you make it more complicated than it needs to be.

So thank you for today, and we'll have one more day on this topic tomorrow. And that'll also be the last day before I go on about a one-month vacation that I'll do in about four weeks, I think. And so I look forward to being here tomorrow.