

## Dharmette: Love (54) Compassion Samadhi 5

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So welcome to this last talk on the *compassion samādhi*, partly the continuity of the guided meditation that we just did, and to make a very strong connection between the Buddhist goal of Buddhist practice, liberation, liberation from suffering, and our capacity for compassion.

So there's two really important ways in which liberation gives rise to a very clean compassion that has no suffering in it. One is that our compassion, our experience of suffering, the way we take in suffering in order to have compassion, we do so without any reactivity, that we're free of clinging, we're free of hatred, we're free of distress, we're free of pushing back or closing down or collapsing. There's a way in which even when we feel suffering and it's painful, that pain is in a certain way welcome. We're not against it, we're not struggling with it, we're not troubled by having it. It's almost like we're willing to have this pain, the heartbreak even, that we experience with the suffering of the world, because that is where compassion for the world can arise. It's almost as if we're willing to hold and share the suffering.

But we don't actually suffer by the suffering of others. We're attuned to it, we know it. There's a kind of empathy. But we're not suffering. Even though we might be feeling pain or feeling uncomfortable with what's happening, there's no reactivity, there's no place of contraction or compulsion that's required for there to be a kind of reactive kind of suffering, a kind of suffering that comes from holding on to certain things, including holding on, being clinging to responsibility, to wanting to be liked, to wanting to be seen as a good person, holding on to the idea of what we think we should do in order to be a successful card-carrying human being, that there's a deep, deep sense of ease and a trust that that easeful, liberated way of not suffering because others suffer is actually the best way to respond to sufferings, the best way to be in this world with others in a deep, caring way.

We can't really care for others very well if they suffer and we suffer also. And sometimes I've seen people who suffer more than the people who are suffering. People hear the suffering or see the suffering of others, and they become more distressed, more upset, more anxious than the people who are actually suffering. And that doesn't make any sense. It represents that we haven't really monitored or cared for ourselves in a deep way. To be on this path to liberation is one of the deepest ways of caring for ourselves in a responsible, appropriate way.

And to find ease, to find ease with non-reactivity, to find the ability to be present without closing down, without resisting, without kind of bringing into the picture me, myself, and mine, kind of attachments to self and worried about how people are going to think of us and caught up in all the shoulds that I should be a certain way. It's kind of okay to have a should that, you know, ideally I should be differently. But there's no force behind it. We're at ease with it. Yes, I would like to be a more generous person. Let's work for it. Let's see what I can do.

As opposed to closing down or being distressed in oneself or critical of oneself. That kind of should, that makes us tense. Yes. There's a should that is kind of aspirational and beautiful to have. Yeah, I should be more compassionate. Let's see what I can do about that. And just the feeling is not reactive.

And so one way is that this greater sense of ease that liberation provides provides more space for a clean kind of compassion to come out. The second thing that liberation does is we have a much more clear, fuller idea of how thoroughly it's possible to become free of suffering, that the depths of freedom that are possible from suffering.

And how that comes into play is that if, you know, maybe this is a silly example, but someone has painful knees when they meditate. And so you don't want them to have the painful knees. You care for them. They're suffering. You want them to not have very painful knees. So the best thing you could do is to meditate for them. Sit on their cushion and you do this meditation so that they don't have to feel their pain.

Well, you do address the immediate physical pain and suffering, but that's not what, but you're preventing them maybe, with them doing the deep inner work of finding this deep inner happiness and freedom, that only they can do that work themselves. So the idea is sometimes we interrupt people's capacity to go deep and really kind of find deep freedom.

And this was a decision I made when I was young to take me into Buddhism and want to dedicate my life to Buddhism. The alternative was to go back to graduate school to study

soil science. I was very concerned about the erosion of soils around the world and saw it as one of the really big environmental needs of our times. And it still is, and it would have been a worthwhile life if I had chosen that way.

But I had this deep sense that, yes, I could help people, farmers in poor places, to be more successful and save their soils and promote better agriculture and successful agriculture. And the farmers in poor places might have more money, and they can buy back then televisions and cars, and it'll be much better for them. And I felt, well, yes. But I don't want to simply provide people with, you know, the comforts of life and television and cars or things like that. As important as those are for some people, we're not touching the depth of the suffering in the heart. And they can still suffer quite a bit, even though materially they're doing much better.

And so Buddhism is where that deep inner work goes on. And so, how do we touch, how do we care for people deeply, unless we ourselves know the deepest possibilities of freedom that the heart is capable of? And so liberation provides that reference point that we're so much more capable of helping others people suffer less because we know the full possibility of freedom from suffering. So liberation provides kind of a reference point to understand the depth of human suffering, the subtlety of it that sometimes is invisible to people and to themselves. Maybe only something like meditation allows us to really touch in deep to what's really going on here.

So, there's a long history in Buddhism to associate liberation and compassion, to tie them together, connect them together, that they arise together, their intimate partners together. And so liberation then, because of the compassion that comes along with deep and full liberation, what liberated people tend to do is one way or the other be motivated to live for the benefit of this world. And everyone has a different gift to give. And some people do it through the work they do, through their skills they have, through their gifts that they were born with. Some people care for the suffering of the world explicitly by being a musician or an artist or a craftsperson or a better manager at work or a co-worker. It's possible to do it anywhere.

But the point being that at some point, our Buddhist practice doesn't really make sense if it's only for ourselves. At some point, we practice for the world, for the suffering world, to benefit others as well. And even though that practice might be still very focused inside of ourselves, in ourselves in some deep way, at some point, the motivation to do that becomes wanting to be able to better serve and care for this world of ours. That we can only do if we find the deepest forms of ease from reactivity, the deepest forms of non-reactivity that in Buddhism is celebrated by the word liberation and freedom, release.

So then finally, compassion, practicing *compassion samādhi* is a wonderful thing to do because it's also a vehicle for discovering liberation itself. Liberation brings forth compassion and compassion can bring forth liberation. And so if you're at all inclined to do this compassion meditation, it's a fantastic thing to do. And benefit the world. And if you're inclined to practice more traditionally for the purposes of liberation, you'll become compassionate. That will arise from liberation. Liberation leads to a deep sense of care for this world.

So thank you very much. And so as I said earlier this week, I'm mostly going to be away for the next four weeks. I'll be doing pilgrimages. I'm doing kind of walking here in California for about five days on a Buddhist pilgrimage here. And then I'll be going to Europe with my wife for a vacation, and we'll be hiking there in the mountains and places.

And we have wonderful IMC teachers coming to teach during this month of May. And I'll be back the first week of June. And thank you very, very much. And may you be, may your compassion be a medicine for you and a medicine for others. Thank you.