Dharmette: Love (59) Generative Appreciative Joy

Gil Fronsdal

June 19, 2026

Keywords: *muditā*, *samādhi*, appreciative joy, love, goodwill, compassion, freedom, Juneteenth, generosity, well-being

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So hello everyone, and welcome back to this long series on love. And today, this week, the end of the week, we are on appreciative joy as a form of love. And one of the definitions of love is to appreciate and support the best qualities in a person's heart, to appreciate the depths of goodness and capacity for well-being in others, and to want to see it flourish, to want to see it go well, and to be supportive of it. Love that's only about what we get from them is limited. Maybe not the full potential of love, but love in which we care for others is maybe how love fills, steps into, its full potential to nourish and support this world of ours.

And so one form of love in Buddhism is called *muditā*. And these days I often call it building up. And this is what we've been talking about this week, building up. We're building up for next week to do the *samādhi* of *muditā*, to practice the *samādhi*, the deeper meditation of absorption or immersion in this state and orientation of appreciative joy. And hopefully this week kind of opened up the field and laid down the different elements of it enough that next week you can give yourself over to this, to experience the tremendous well-being and even stillness and depth of the *samādhi* of appreciative joy.

And in this definition of love that I've given, that it's a deep appreciation of the goodness, what's really there, or the deep appreciation of other people, and caring, supporting the best for their hearts, their best experience of ease and peace and safety, the best qualities that they have, to let them grow and make room for them. When we realize that for love to be really full, we have to have goodwill for them. And one of the forms of goodwill is to appreciate deeply what is good in others, what's going well for others, to appreciate their healthy joy and delight and share it with them and make room for it, and sometimes to make room to celebrate and delight in it. And maybe when it's not there, to know that that's in the other person, and to love them and make room for their goodness, their well-being, their good qualities to come forth.

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So that love is, we're not just a consumer when we love. Maybe Buddha's love is more like we're a producer. It's more about what we can offer the world than what we receive from the world. And the reason that's so important is that to only receive love and receive goodness is to kind of stay on the surface. It can only go so deep. The deepest source of love is that which we produce, that flows out of us from our depths.

And part of that love is goodwill, friendliness. Part of it is compassion and care for people's suffering. And part of it is the appreciation and care for people's joy, their delight, their goodness, their well-being. And to be able to really enter into this world of appreciative joy kind of multiplies joy. Joy begets more joy.

And so to allow ourselves to recognize, to spend time taking time with, all the goodness, all the things that are going well. And as I said in that meditation, there's a way of analyzing ourselves, our world, other people, to realize that there's actually much more goodness in the world, much more love, care, generosity, than you would realize if you just read the news. The news tends to bring out and highlight what's going terribly and what's dangerous and how people are suffering. And whatever we see in the news of people suffering, chances are there are people there trying to help. And there are people who have stepped forward.

These days, we see bombing and buildings that are shattered, horrible things that are happening. And those explosions happen quickly and kill people and injure people. And then for a long time after, there are people who are helping, caring for the sick, caring for the injured, caring for those who are homeless. There's a lot of generosity that happens, a lot of giving and caring in the world. If we stay stuck in the place where we're horrified, stay stuck in the place where we're afraid, stay stuck in the place where we're predicting how it's going to spiral out, we are not supporting the growth of how people help each other, how people support each other.

We have to be able to include in our vision and appreciate in a genuine way all the goodness that exists in this world, all the generosity, all the support, all the love that exists, and say yes to it. This too is part of it. And maybe not, certainly not do it all the time. But to realize that our capacity to say yes and to appreciate and see what is good is the very capacity that's needed to be able to hold suffering in a compassionate, kind way. In a compassionate way that supports people, supports ourselves, rather than the opposite.

Love is what supports the best in us. We love ourselves so the best in us can come forth. We love others so we see and enjoy the best in them. And how do we see the best in them? To be able to really take time to notice it, and not just notice it, to make room for it, to say yes to it, so that our capacity to see what's really good grows.

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I would say that one of the surprises of my Buddhist practice over these years is to begin shifting how I see people. And at some point, I started to see the beauty in people more than anything else. Like there is beauty in people. There is, maybe there's more beauty in people than some people realize for themselves. And there's something precious, some spark. There's something that's just so wonderful about people. And to be able to live in recognizing that makes it much more meaningful to love people and to care for people, including when they're suffering, including when things are difficult.

So appreciative joy, part of the richness of it, the importance of it, is that it is much more obvious maybe that it's part of the love that we're the producers of love, not the consumers of love. That appreciative joy is something that we generate, that comes out of us in some way. And so we want to be able to expand and grow that heart's natural capacity for this generative love, supportive love, the fullness of love that is caring and recognizing the best in people, the best qualities that are there, and not to be distracted by or worship the worst qualities that people have. Not to shut down or give up on people because the bad qualities come out. There's goodness there, and to believe in people, to believe in their goodness. For some people, they've never been believed in. No one's ever seen them for their goodness or their capacity for it being a different way.

And appreciative joy is part of this shift to become one of the people who's contributing and growing well-being for this world. So next week we'll continue on this theme. And for today, and for maybe the whole weekend, maybe we can appreciate that today is Juneteenth Day, and it is a kind of celebratory day for freedom for the Black slaves in the United States, and to appreciate that. And an encouragement to use this day to appreciate that many of us can become freer. Many of us can contribute to others becoming freer. And the movement towards freedom in this country and around the world is probably never-ending. And may our appreciative joy for the depths in people, our love of people, contribute to the growth in freedom for all people.

So thank you all, and look forward to coming back on Monday to our *Samādhi of Appreciative Joy*.

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