

## Dharmette: Love (62) For Friends

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So hello and welcome as I continue with these talks on appreciative joy, where this week's emphasis is the *samādhi*, meaning to really give ourselves over fully to this capacity we have to have appreciative joy. And this idea of giving yourself over to it, people might have some resistance to that because they might think things that might be challenging then. People will take advantage of them, or people will misunderstand it. But the wonderful thing about doing this in meditation is that it's a safe place. It's a place where nothing has to be done or said. You don't have to put yourself in a situation that later you regret.

It's just here that you don't have any reservations. You don't hold yourself back. You don't continue with mental preoccupations, with mental resistance, with problems, conclusions about the world, yourself, that you kind of put aside so many things that limit you or keep you caught in order to make room for an unconditional positive regard, for your heart's capacity, for well-wishing to flow through you in a full and complete way.

Now, as a practice, a practice of appreciative joy, be careful we don't set it up that it's only about being successful at doing that. A very important part of this, what makes this kind of a real, realistic practice, is that, of course, we'll be up against places where it's hard and where we do hold back. And rather than being discouraged discovering that, the idea is to be encouraged. Oh, this is where I get to practice. This is where I get to stretch or question or open up or understand what's happening with me.

And so this is built into the practice of appreciative joy because the idea is to start with where it's most easy and then progressively and slowly do it where it's more difficult and more difficult. And there are these five categories. There's where it's easy, the person who's the benefactor, a friend, a neutral person, and then an enemy. And then the sixth category is all beings. And these categories, we can go through them and choose people for whom it's not so difficult to satisfy each one.

But then we go through it again and again. We start stretching into where it's a little bit more difficult, a little bit more difficult, to see what's happening for us and see, can we let something go? Can we quiet? Can we open? And as we do that, to then allow the joy, the pleasure of this open kind regard, to nourish us, to fill us, and to allow this dual benefiting that we're wishing benefits for our friend, we're appreciating what's going well for them, we feel their joy, but in doing that we start feeling joy and happiness.

And the very wish for their happiness to continue is also a good thing. So there's this triple joy. There's a quadruple joy which can exist, which I think is really important for Buddhist practitioners. And that is a certain kind of joy, pleasure, delight, satisfaction, in knowing we're up against where it's difficult for us, where we are in check, where we are resisting, where we are reserved, reserving, you know, holding back our love. And see that, okay, here I get to look at it. Here I get to find it and understand it.

And one of the reasons why that can bring a certain degree of joy is that we have some intuition that there is another side of that that we can move to. This is a good direction to go. And rather than being discouraged by the resistance we have or the holding we have, okay, now I'm going to be with it and see what's going on here and see if I can see to the other side and be able to have this more, not limit myself through this.

And part of the teachings of the Buddha about these *Brahma-vihāras*, including appreciative joy, is that it's possible to bring it into a state, into a way of being where it's unlimited, or say it in a little bit more precise way, because unlimited just seems kind of too vast. It's where we no longer, we put no limitations on ourselves. There's no holding back, no resistance, and discovering what that's like. And then from there, what we do in our regular life becomes wiser, maybe, from that reference point of that love that we have.

But it doesn't mean that we have to put ourselves in danger. It doesn't mean we have to compromise our well-being for a difficult friend. So in terms of using this practice to begin stretching into that, it could be that you have a very good friend, but they have one thing that troubles you. Almost every time that you have set up a schedule, a time to meet, they always come late. And they're always coming late.

And so the question is, do you hold that against them in your meditation? Do you limit yourself in your meditation because of that? So one of the kind of growing edges of this kind of practice is, do you hold yourself with your resentment or your criticism or your complaining or something? When you know doing that, you're limiting yourself, holding something in check inside. Why not? Why do you harm yourself, in a sense, based on someone else?

It's bad enough that they're late. Why make it harder for you? It doesn't mean that you're condoning it or necessarily accepting it, but you're not allowing yourself to limit yourself because of it and this growth. So appreciative joy, meaning feeling joy in the joy and success of others, you might really go through the day today, look for places where not only where you can feel that and participate or share in people's joy and success, however small.

But also start noticing where you hold back from appreciating it, saying thank you, or that was really nice, or I enjoyed watching that, or I really appreciate how well that was done. And see if there are ways that you can express your appreciation of people, express what's going well for them, what's good for them, and appreciating their joy, their happiness, in a way that is not so intense for them, just enough to kind of be able to share it with them. But notice where you hold back. Notice where you have, notice where you kind of don't want to do that. And see what you learn about yourself, and question it, and see if there are ways of developing and growing through that.

So, appreciative joy. Take time for it. Be very careful with the insistence of a busy life, busy mind, things you have to do, things you're supposed to think, ways in which you want to preoccupy and occupy yourself with being entertained, or having things happen, that holds back, prevents you from really cultivating these qualities of heart. In the long term, these qualities of heart are what's going to support you the most into your life. So thank you very much. And I will look forward to coming back here and continuing this.