

Dharmette: Love (64) For All Beings

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Oh, so today is the last talk on appreciative joy. It'll be the 10th one. And to bring it to a kind of completion, fullness, to say that appreciative joy is part, is a form of love, as is all the divine abodes, the *Brahma-vihāras*. And we've talked already about goodwill, kindness, loving-kindness, compassion. And what these have in common, what appreciative joy has in common with these other two in terms of love, is that it does involve a capacity to stop long enough, pause long enough, to really take in the full humanity of other people.

And the idea of full humanity is not to be caught or stuck in seeing them in one particular way, to hold a certain resentment or hold a certain value, hold some desire. We love people so that they will love us, so we can get something from them. That's what we really love, is getting something. But to really open up to appreciate people for themselves, who they are, and to respect them, to wish them well, wish the best possible life for them in terms of inner well-being, inner happiness that's independent of material things around them. May they find deep peace, may they find meaning, may they find community, may they find joy, may they find, you know, a deep appreciation of themselves. Each person is valuable, and may each person realize that for themselves.

And so this love that really wants the, you know, the psychologically, spiritually best for people, connects with that part of them, sees them, the fullness of them, the full humanity, is then what we then will offer in appreciative joy, in the sense that we offer our aspiration, our delight, our joy, that may this continue, may this grow for them. We share in the delight. Things that are shared often get strengthened, get reinforced. If we share our complaints with other people, that's what will grow. If we share our anger and our fear, that's what will grow. There's a way of sharing suffering that we all suffer more.

There's another way of being present for suffering. And we don't exactly share it, but we're open to it. We listen to it. We recognize it deeply so that people are not alone in their suffering.

We accompany them, but we're not sharing in the suffering in a way that just brings us down even more. And so this capacity to be present and see the joy of others so that that grows, so that in a sense we accompany them, we let it grow and strengthen. The good things we share, the things that bring us down, we stay open and present for with mindfulness.

And so with joy, joy grows with joy. And so to be able to recognize and appreciate how people celebrate, what's going well for people, and to go along with it and not close down, not envious, not doubt it, say yes, big yes. And then to tie appreciative joy to how there's much more going right for us usually than what's going wrong. Even though we focus on what's going wrong, and it seems like it's the whole world, that's often a mental kind of locking in or being stuck in a certain way. And what we learn in meditation is to step out of that, to relax out of it, to begin having a wider view of what's happening, to make room for what's good. Not to lock in or hold on to what's good in a Pollyannish way or a romantic way, pastoral way like this, but to make room for all of it and feel the joy of the openness, feel the delight of the mindfulness, the non-resistance to all of it.

Even the non-resistance to suffering, the non-resistance is really healthy and good. Not to suffer more, but to really be free in the midst of it. So to find what's going well. And when we're with other people, there's the art of not distracting them exactly, but there's the art of gently, maybe quietly, speaking to, focusing on what brings them joy, happiness, delight. Focus on the good thing, what's going well, and without exactly changing the subject, without them knowing that you're gently moving the conversation in the direction to what brings energy, what energizes and uplifts people, rather than what deflates people. And to share this appreciative joy, share gratitude.

And so when we do appreciative joy, at some point as meditation practice, as it goes deeper and deeper into it, it makes sense just to keep opening it up to this *samādhi* of it, to all beings, because at some point it feels like we want no limits to it. We don't want to hold it in. We want to maybe even relax the mind that's thinking about particular people, because that's a little bit limiting. And just let it kind of begin flowing, radiating, glowing in all directions. And sometimes when I do some of these *Brahma-vihāras*, at some point what really is meaningful for me is just to have it radiate or be there, and the heart's smile around it, absorbed in it without even needing to have an object, without there being a person that comes to mind. It's just the heart's delight and joy for appreciative joy.

And even the words fall away. And to do that, to have the *samādhi* where even the words fall away, there's a kind of, then we immerse ourselves, we center ourselves, we stabilize ourselves, we enter into the deep sensations, the deep feelings, emotions of appreciative

joy, that's just kind of flowing and moving. And it just feels like it goes in all directions and includes, if you think about it, it feels like it includes everyone. No one left out, because there's no limits, there's no boundaries. It's just whatever it touches, that's where it goes. And so to enter into the *samādhī* of it really deeply is one of the great pleasures of life.

Each of these *Brahma-vihāras*, love just... And this is one of the great gifts of Buddhism, is its emphasis on this deep *samādhī*, that they call boundless. It's boundless capacity for love in all kinds of ways. And to do that in meditation, then we know something about how to meet the world that way. We know something, then maybe we don't do it as well, but we have something about offering our goodwill, our kindness, our compassion, our appreciative joy without limitation, without it being in exchange, without it being held back in check, without any conditions associated with it. And now just, yes, just yes. Not expecting anything in return, just yes.

Or if we're expecting something in return, it's not from other people. It's from our own joy, our own freedom, our own openness to just yes. Maybe with this big yes. Yes to joy. Yes to what's going well in the world. Yes to this person's delight. Yes. It's possible we benefit more than them because of how it just lights up a kind of great smile in our hearts itself.

So I hope that I've brought appreciative joy to life for you. It's one of the wonderful possibilities of a human life. And maybe you can avail yourself of it. And the way to do that is to just be present more for people. Pay attention to them when you're with them. And look around and notice what is going well here. What's happening that's good. And maybe speak to it and talk to it and say, you know, appreciate it.

And sometimes we do it with conversation. You know, it could be as simple as appreciating the love and the care in which they made a meal for you. Thank you. This was really great. I appreciate it. Or, you know, someone has some kind of project they're working on, and we say, you know, wow, I can see how much fun you have, how much joy that brings you, and it's just a delight to watch your work. Or there's all kinds of ways.

People who are dying, sitting with them, sometimes it's nice to help them review their life in a way that kind of highlights for them, not forcefully, not in this Pollyannish way, but let's give a chance to talk about what went well in your life, what do you appreciate? And some people come alive in a very different way. And so to be able to discover the world of appreciative joy, to experiment with it in conversation, to experiment with it in meditation, to experiment in just walking around and being around other people, to see what it lights up for you, to see how to do it in a way that feels healthy, psychologically healthy for you, appropriate for you, so that you avail yourself of joy that's already here, or the opportunity for it is here. Notice

it more often, that opportunity, rather than some people avail themselves of what's going wrong a lot, and that wears them down, makes them more and more afraid.

So appreciative joy, a wonderful form of love, and to be able to live a life of love is one of the purposes of the *Dharma*. And so we've been doing this now for almost six months, exploring it. And next week, we will start the final one of the divine loves, the divine abidings, which is equanimity. And for this day and this weekend, perhaps you can focus on availing yourself of more opportunities to delight and enjoy your joy and the joys of others. And with carrying with you for the weekend, the three-letter word, yes, yes. So thank you very much, and I do look forward to continuing Monday.