

Dharmette: Love (67) Caring for our Inner Life

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Hello and welcome to this third talk on equanimity, laying the groundwork to understand equanimity within ourselves so that, when we're ready to do the *samādhi* of equanimity, there's a rich, kind of well-understood inner landscape that we can tap into that supports something, a very special, very beautiful way of experiencing being with equanimity.

So a little bit to repeat what I said for the guided meditation, one of the central principles, approaches in Buddhism is understood, well, maybe for some people here who grew up in a Western culture or grew up in a theistic culture, that Buddhism is not opposed to theism. But Buddhism is not a theistic culture, not a theistic approach to life. It's a karmic approach. It's an approach where, and what karma here means, is that we really focus on what we can do, the actions that we can engage in. And for people who know meditation, it's the inner actions, how we treat ourselves, how we meet our experience, how we relate to our experience, how we respond.

We become, because the quality and the characteristics of your inner life is something that is affected by the choices we make, the activities, the mental actions that we do, what we do with our heart. And the actions we have in the world are an expression of what is arising out of our inner life, arising out of our mind, our heart, our mind. And what we do with our inner life is paramount. That's the center of where we care for the life and organize and see the life.

And we don't look externally for forgiveness in Buddhism in some deep kind of existential way, but rather we look at ourselves. How are we behaving? What are we doing here? What have you contributed to suffering? And how can we make better? How can we shift that? How can we change the inner landscape so suffering won't be created in the future?

And how do we live with the consequences of our actions so that we don't fight them, we don't resist them, but we're wise about them, that we know what we should just accept, because that's the consequence of what we've done, and what we maybe make amends for, change, or do differently. But it's all about the place of choice within ourselves.

And one of the really important purposes of meditation, of mindfulness meditation, even deep *samādhī*, is to be able to become more and more sensitive to, more and more aware of, where we have choice, the inner choice, the choice of what we do with our mind, our hearts, and then we become the caretakers of that choice. If we don't see the choice, then we have no choice. And then we're kind of like being carried along by forces we don't understand.

But when we become quiet enough and calm enough that we can see, oh, there's a desire. And I never knew this before, but something inside is choosing to go along with that desire, choosing to act on it, choosing to believe in it, choosing to give it authority and importance, and following along. There's this choice we give ourselves to what.

If there is generosity that arises, a desire to be generous, it's very different than a desire to steal, desire for greed, desire for generosity. We can feel and know, and this place of choice would be, not now. Given the circumstances, it's not a time for generosity. Now is a time for patience or kindness. Or, yes, this is a time for generosity, let me get involved with that.

And so there's a place of choice that we get involved, don't get involved, we participate, we don't participate. We're not really responsible for what bubbles up in our mind on its own. We're only responsible for how we respond to that and live with that.

And so this ability to be responsive in a place of choice means that the quality of our inner life, the directions of our inner life, how we live with our inner life is all a matter of choice that we have. And we always have choice. We always have choice to choose what's wholesome over unwholesome, to choose maybe not for the unwholesome wholesome what arises, but we have a choice to go along with it, to pick it up.

Or we have a choice to relate to it wisely, not put on our boxing gloves and be critical and immediately attack. But rather, oh, look at that. That wasn't so good. That was unhealthy to have that thought or that impulse. But let me just kind of back up, open up, be aware of it spaciouly, because I have a choice here. I could attack it, I could go along with it, or I can just let it be.

And over time we get to realize that the quality of our inner life, the peace in it, the warmth of it, the deep satisfaction of being connected to our hearts, or even deeper than our hearts, that this is something that's invaluable to care for. It's something we don't want to harm. We

don't want to fracture or tear or rupture this beautiful inner life that we have. It's sacred, the heart. It's sacred, this life of ours.

And it might sound a little bit like this is selfish because it's all internal, but it's the opposite of that because selfishness is a choice that contracts around the definition of who we are, and that you can feel that that's off. If we really care for the quality of the inner life, we wouldn't be selfish.

And so the equanimity that comes out of seeing where we have choice is an equanimity that arises out of choices which are loving, caring, profoundly loving, profoundly caring for what is best in us, what is most wholesome, what is most beautiful within us. And the remarkable thing is that it's not selfish, but then it spills out beyond us. It begins to flow into the world.

Deep profound dharmic peace is not something you can keep for yourself. It flows outwards. It's a movement into the world. Maybe other people don't necessarily see it, but you feel it. You feel that it doesn't really be... it's not held in check. It's not held tight. It's like just, yes, it flows.

The peace spreads out. This inner quality of inner life becomes the quality of the world that we experience, the way in which we experience the world. And we experience the world peacefully, spreads out and spills out into us. We experience it without reactivity. We experience it without these sometimes seemingly unconscious choices to be angry, to be spiteful, to be jealous, to be envious, to be blaming, to be pulling in, being afraid, to being preoccupied with all the things that are going wrong, which keeps us from this open field of the inner life spreading out its peace, its love, its care.

It's a remarkable thing to realize how much choice we have and to not take that as an oppressive responsibility, but see it as an inspired possibility for love, for loving what's best in us, for us and for this world. And the choices we make become expressions of love, expressions of profound wisdom and peace. This is a remarkable thing.

And the choices that we make, even though it's a kind of a doing, are not tiring, are not stressful. Because it's almost an expression of what is most profound, most sacred, most treasured, most peaceful within ourselves.

So, thank you. And I'm hoping you appreciate how coming to this very special place of choice helps us to have kind of the byproduct be greater equanimity, greater being batted around or tossed around like a tumbleweed in this world and being more like a wonderful redwood tree, maybe.

So maybe you can see for this day the choice you have for how you accompany with attention

whatever's happening in your life. How do you accompany it? How do you attend to it? How are you aware of it? And can you be aware of it in a beautiful way? And does that beautiful way promote, allow you something in you to be equanimous, non-reactive? Thank you.