

Dharmette: Love (77) Kind Speech

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So welcome to this third talk on the expressions of love. After these six months of talking about the practices of love, that love also is to be expressed in the world. And one of the key aspects of that that I would like to emphasize in this expression of love is that there's a way of expressing love that supports us in expressing it. There's something about some of the inner good feelings, inner positive dispositions that we have, that they're almost meant to be expressed or enacted in the world. They're not meant to just be there sitting in meditation and radiating love and then forgetting about that when we get up to start our daily life. There's something in them, deep inside, that wants to be enacted, wants to be shared, wants to be expressed.

And one of the great, I think, joys and great kind of gifts of meditation is to discover that there are very deep inner movements of expression that are being born and want to come from some deep source within us, and without any pressure, without attachment, to be expressed. But this is what they want to do: to be expressed. And the very expression of them supports them. The very expression of them cultivates and strengthens them. So the *Brahma-vihāras*, these four forms of love that we've covered, when they're expressed in the world, when they're lived in how we act in the world, how we speak in the world, they grow and develop.

And with them, with the growth and development of love, with the expressions of love, or kindness and friendliness, there are a lot of other things that also can grow that are wonderful. Generosity can grow. A healthy relationship to other people can grow. The desire to be harmless can grow. All kinds of beautiful things can grow within us. So it's actually very important to find ways to express what's happening to us through meditation, express it in the world, how we live our life, so that it changes how we live our life.

And one of the simplest summations of that change, maybe that covers a lot of territory, is kindness, or if you prefer, friendliness. To live in the world in a friendly way, to live in the world in a kind way. And one way that love is expressed is through kind speech, friendly speech. And to consider that and kind of orient yourself around that, and have a dedication to finding out how to speak in a friendly way. Maybe taking the practice for a while of, if it's not friendly, don't say it. Maybe it doesn't need to be said, or be very careful about saying it.

And this dedication to friendly speech needs to be done very creatively and intelligently. It might be that some things need to be said, that they're very strong, very clear. But even that, how would you say it in a friendly way? How would you say it so that there's not any animosity in it? There's not any pushing away or judgment or diminishing someone else, but rather stepping forward and saying, you know, I'm sorry, but we can't do this. But is there another way we can find to be together?

As opposed to saying, no, that's crazy. Can we find some way that everyone is cared for, others and ourselves? Because being friendly, being kind, maybe has better long-term results than the opposite. But regardless of exactly all the situations where you want to practice kind speech, the one expression of love is in fact kind speech, friendly speech. And to give room for that, allow for that, practice that, live that, is one of the ways that love can grow in us, can be expressed in us, can flow in us.

And it's a skill to do this that takes practice, of course. But it can start very simply, right? It can be saying thank you to people. Some people like to say sorry for themselves. So the simple act of maybe someone opens a door for you and you say sorry, as if you've somehow been a burden to them that they had to open the door. And I think that's not necessarily so friendly.

It doesn't create the same kind of friendly rapport. But if you kind of smile or say thank you, that actually can go much further to create a healthy relationship. And it can come from a place of confidence in oneself that sorry can't. And so there is the friendly way of saying thank you or asking how people are. How are you? And sometimes in English, when we say how are you and how's it going, sometimes what that's really communicating is, I see you, you're there.

It's not really meant to be answered with a long explanation. It's just, how are you? Oh, I'm fine. I'm good. And that's what you're saying: I see you. We're connected now. It's a ritual of just simple connection.

But there's also a way of doing it, of course, that you mean it. How are you? And it's not done kind of flippantly or quickly or habitually. It's really that you're there. How are you? And you want to hear, as an expression of kindness or friendliness.

Or sometimes there is a way of saying, I'm sorry, or, you know, I apologize, where rather than diminishing ourselves and feeling less and feeling like we have to kind of make ourselves subservient to the other person or somehow grovel or something, there's a way in which it can be from a confident love. I'm so sorry. And the person feels your friendliness, that you mean it, that you're hoping to reconcile or you're offering to be their friend and just, oh, I'm sorry. And I apologize.

And then, of course, a wonderful way of expressing love is to express appreciation for people, appreciation for the event. Thank you for dinner that you made. Thank you. Thank you. It was wonderful to have dinner here. That was delicious. I feel really satisfied.

Even if maybe the food wasn't that good, can you appreciate something? The fact that you got fed is a big deal in parts of the world. Yes. Someone went to the trouble to make a meal. And so rather than commenting about the flavor of the food, you say, oh, thank you. I feel so satisfied. Say something friendly, something appreciative.

And certainly we don't want to be insincere in doing that. We don't want to be Pollyannish in doing that. But to find a way that is simple, maybe occasional, so that it has more power and more impact. That was wonderful. Wonderful to see you. It's so nice to spend time with you.

And so what can you appreciate? What can you appreciate about other people? What can you say that's nice and supportive for them, to be a good friend? And sometimes that's hard to do because some people are very self-focused in conversations and very self-focused as they go through their life. And it's all about what I have to say and what is important for me or what I can get in the conversation.

But to relax, right? If you're relaxed, at ease, and you're coming from this place of love, then I think it's kind of natural to be less self-focused and more other-person-focused as a friend, and so to appreciate others. And then maybe for some people, the hardest way to express love is to do it directly, to say, I love you. Or if that's too much or too inappropriate, say something like, oh, well, to be friends with you. It's so wonderful to have this rapport that I feel with you, and how wonderful it is to have such an easy time, or this ease of speaking and sharing, and it's so meaningful for me and my heart.

And to say something that shares something deeper, that expresses your heart, your friendli-

ness, your kindness, and that with the idea that you're speaking from the depth of your heart, maybe with the idea of touching the depth of the other person's heart, without expecting it, without making them uncomfortable, without requiring anything from them in return. And so sometimes I've received cards from people that I know afterwards, and they will say, you know, just express kind of their warmth, their friendliness, their appreciation, their gratitude in a way that maybe it's awkward to do in person, but it's so nice to get the card.

So I'm not offering this to you, this idea of kind speech, as a should, that now you should go out and do it. What I'm offering you is that if you want your love to live and grow and spread in yourself and in the world, if you want to listen to your love deeply, that there's going to be an expression that wants to be spoken. And maybe at first you're not so skilled at that expression. You don't know exactly the words to say. But beginning to explore and consider, how do you share your kindness, your friendliness in speech? Kind speech, friendly speech, as a way to let this love be expressed in the world and to grow.

So, the expression of love through generosity, we talked about on Monday. The expression of love through non-harming, yesterday. And today, the expression of love through our speech. May it be that our speech benefits this world, benefits our friends, our strangers. May it be that the way we speak helps bring forth more smiles in the world today. May we all smile more. Thank you.