

WHERE DOES LOVE COME IN? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So, tonight's our last night, and there were several requests to talk about the iconic
00:00:19 representation of human happiness, so I'm going to do that. First, though, I want to
00:00:28 respond to a question, actually Aisha gave a really good question, and so I just want
00:00:36 to briefly respond to that, which is, on this path, where does the love come from? I think
00:00:43 that was the takeaway piece, right?
00:00:45 Where does it fit in?
00:00:48 Yeah, where does it fit in? So, I would say that the actual word that's used in a lot
00:00:58 of the Buddhist world is, this would be the, God, I'm forgetting how to write Chinese.
00:01:14 Is it, or lose it? Good enough? Alright. Yeah, yeah, this guy's familiar too. Pretty sure
00:01:29 it doesn't have that stuff, right?
00:01:34 Tsebe in Mandarin Chinese, jihi in Japanese. This one means love, it's maitri in Sanskrit,
00:01:47 metta and pali, this corresponds to the love, and garuna, compassion. And these are sort
00:02:00 of linked concepts, so when you say where does the love come from, within a sort of
00:02:05 Buddhist way of thinking of things, it's where does the maitri, garuna, come from, or how
00:02:10 does it fit in?
00:02:14 So that got me thinking, and it seems to me that within the framework that I present to
00:02:22 you, the procedures and the categories, it comes from four sources. One is, it's just
00:02:33 natural. Human beings are born with a natural sense of love. In fact, because I'm getting
00:02:44 sort of Chinese tonight, but there's a word in Chinese that means, according to Confucius,
00:02:53 it carries this sense of the natural love that everyone's born with. It's pronounced
00:03:00 ran, and it's the character for person and the character for two. So it's like the natural
00:03:08 thing for people is to love each other. That's the way we're born, according to Confucius.
00:03:14 So then what happens? Well, what happens is that we accumulate a lot of poison and pain,
00:03:21 and our primordial sort of instinct to love gets covered over by many physical, emotional,
00:03:33 mental, uncomfortable experiences in the process from infancy on the process of socialization,
00:03:42 the process of discovering that the physical world can hurt you. That natural, spontaneous
00:03:54 love gets covered over.
00:03:56 So as we work through that stored poison and pain, as it percolates up in our practice,
00:04:05 and we essentially don't do anything about it, we just open up to it and let it dissipate,
00:04:11 don't reinforce it. So that stored poison and pain gets worked through. And to the extent
00:04:20 that the suffering, the seeds of suffering are being extirpated from us, to that extent
00:04:28 that primordial love just gets uncovered again. It's always been there. So that's one source
00:04:36 of it. Another source, actually related but a little different side to it, is, remember
00:04:44 it's compassion and love. So that the struggles that we go through when we do this path, particularly
00:04:57 in the beginning, and gotta be honest, the beginning's about the first 20 years. Particularly
00:05:05 in the beginning. Particularly in the beginning of the beginning, which is maybe the first
00:05:11 five years. We are very, very, typically we humans who take on this path are very uncomfortable

00:05:20 while we're doing the practice. I mean, we do everything we can to show you how to have
00:05:26 fun and so forth, but there's the achiness of the body, there's the scatteredness in
00:05:35 the mind, there's all sorts of emotions, confusions, sleepiness. And within the context of North
00:05:45 American vipassana practice, of course you can take a break any time you want, but within
00:05:50 the Asian sort of traditional training and whatever, if you're in a monastery, there
00:05:57 are no breaks. It's merciless. And it can be pretty damn hellacious during those initial
00:06:08 years of training. So you might say, well, gee, that's sort of like really bad, but the
00:06:15 effect of that is to impart within a person an unforgettable lesson in the nature of human
00:06:27 misery. I know you wonder, like, why do I have to face all this shit when I sit here?
00:06:34 My personal shit. Well, part of it is that later on down the line, when to a certain
00:06:42 extent that's gotten worked through, you will never forget how miserable you were and you'll
00:06:49 realize that most human beings live in that kind of misery. And you will have a sense
00:06:57 of compassion for them because of what you had to go through. So that's one of the uses.
00:07:04 You don't realize it at the time. At the time, it's just like, you know, why does this have
00:07:09 to be so hard? Why am I so miserable? Et cetera, et cetera. But then you look back and you
00:07:15 realize, oh, I was learning a lesson that's going to stay with me for my entire life.
00:07:23 I really know what it means to be miserable. I can tell you in the monastery in Japan,
00:07:32 I definitely knew what it meant to be miserable 24-7. And it was relative to Japanese standards,
00:07:41 by no means the most rigorous kind of environment. Now, the most rigorous training environment
00:07:50 in Japan is myoshinji, zen temple. It's called oni-sodo. Oni-zendo. Sodo and zendo, they
00:08:00 mean the same thing. Oni-zendo. Oni in Japanese means demon. Demon meditation hall. The expression
00:08:10 is for the first three years, the novice never shows the white of their teeth, meaning they
00:08:19 never smile once in the first three years of the training. It's just abject misery.
00:08:27 Kurushimi no renzoku in Japanese, it means like an unending sequence of miseries.
00:08:38 But as the result of that, it produces people like Sasaki Roshi, my teacher Sasaki Roshi.
00:08:46 That's where he trained. 10 years at least, I'm thinking, at myoshinji. And now 104, the
00:08:57 activity of compassion does not stop. There's no retiring, there's no vacations. It's all,
00:09:05 it's like all service all the time to anyone who wants to do the practice. Where does that
00:09:13 kind of vitality come from? Where does that endless patience come from? From those horrific
00:09:21 early years where, you know, he will never forget the misery of the average human being,
00:09:30 however transcendent he becomes, and he'll care. So there's a, it's compassion and it's love.
00:09:37 So one thing is, well, as you work through your poison and pain, the natural love is just there.
00:09:44 Another is that in the process of working through your own poison and pain, you have to face your
00:09:51 poison and pain. And that gives you this sense of compassion for the human condition. That's
00:10:01 the gold standard of spirituality is love of the human condition. It's beyond love of humanity.
00:10:12 I mean, you can love humanity, but you have to love the human condition, which is really screwed
00:10:18 up. So that's another source. Then there's merging. There's I-thou, there's the experience of other
00:10:33 as yourself. And that comes in two flavors, relative and absolute. Most of you are familiar
00:10:39 with the focus out technique, where you anchor yourself in the physical senses, sights, and so
00:10:44 forth. That causes a relative merging of inside and outside. So you experience other as yourself,
00:10:52 quite literally, not as a concept, but as an actual sensory event, because it's all about
00:10:58 expansion and contraction. And so if the touch, sight, sound of another expands, and you allow

00:11:03 the image talk and emotional body of your subject of world to contract, then you experience other
00:11:13 as self. And if you have many, many, many experiences like that, well, that leads to an
00:11:19 I-thou relationship with other, as opposed to an I-it, or we're still an us versus them relationship.
00:11:28 So that merging that comes about by focusing out, that's a relative oneness. And so that with which
00:11:39 you are one, you naturally feel some love for. Then there's the absolute merging, which is to share
00:11:46 zero. Not only does the subject disappear, the object disappears, and you and the other abide
00:11:55 in the source. The dimensionless point before the big bang of each moment of self and world,
00:12:06 each mind moment, is a sort of little version of the big bang, a little big bang,
00:12:14 like little big man or something. So we have these little big bangs.
00:12:21 And before each little big bang, quote before, there is the one, the singular, the singularity,
00:12:30 the zero. And so having those absolute merging experiences with people, you come to
00:12:40 the sense that we all sort of have our feet placed, whether we know it or not,
00:12:46 we all have our feet placed on the same groundless ground. And so that gives you
00:12:54 another reason for viewing others as brother and sister. You share the womb, the formless womb.
00:13:05 That's what brother and sister in Greek, adelphos, it means a delphos. A means share and delphos is
00:13:16 womb. So that which you share the womb, the formless womb, the same source, naturally there's
00:13:23 a sense of love and concern. So those are, I can think of within the theoretical and practice
00:13:34 framework that I give you, that that would be four places where that love comes from, comes in.