

# 2019-12-22 Caring For Yourself And Caring For Others

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddha, people, monks, loving kindness, loving, practice, world, kindness, monastics, teaching, retreat, buddhist teachings, nice, meditation, protect, friendliness, harm, caring, emphasis, life

## SPEAKERS

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Now I want to begin today with a little story from the ancient texts, time of the Buddha and involves king who was somewhat friendly with the Buddha was the same age and the texts that presents him as being a little bit self indulgent, especially with food and things. And they miss sanity. And he was talking to the Queen mollica. And he asked the queen who do you consider most dear? Who do you consider most dear? Now, perhaps, you know I kind of interpreted little bit that a self indulgent King is kind of expecting the queen to say, well, you dear. And, and she says, but what your answer is, I hold myself mostly And maybe he raised his eyebrows. And so she asked him, who do you hold yourself? Who do you hold most dear? And he said, I hold myself most dear. So apparently this was noteworthy enough for the king maybe because he got didn't get the answer he expected from the queen, that he went to his friend, the Buddha and, and recounted at this exchange that the we had. And, and the key and the Buddha have heard this story and said, Well, this is right. People hold themselves most dear, that's appropriate. So that's part of the story is not, you know, it's kind of interesting. But what's interesting is what the Buddha did next. He then continued his teaching, and it's preserved in verse And the Buddha stated searching all directions with one's awareness. One finds no one dear than yourself than oneself. In the same way, others are most dear to themselves. That's okay. Right. So we're similar to everyone if everyone holds themselves most dear in some way, that, that, you know, if we see that in ourselves, we can then kind of understand maybe even empathically, that that's the case for other people that they hold themselves to cherish themselves maybe. And then, but here is where the real wonderful emphasis comes at. Some people say is unique to the Buddha in this ancient context. Because this bigger teaching maybe is not particularly unique, and it's not particularly maybe inspiring by itself. But the last one So, one should not hurt others, if one loves oneself. So we see this emphasis on, you know, treating of holding oneself as dear. And so it's you know, that could be an extreme version be seen as a kind of selfishness to have that kind of set, you know, focus. And some people react to this kind of teaching is kind of selfish, you know that you shouldn't be that focused that way. And I don't think that the Buddha or maybe as people of his time saw it that way. But there certainly were at some of the records that survive some of the religious traditions of his time, put a tremendous emphasis on the self. And the goal of practice was to realize this, that the some kind of fundamental union communion, realization of the self that was really radically apart from the world we live in. And, in fact, we find some of these ancient teachings that preceded the Buddha to have very similar statement to this one here that weren't, you know, they want you to hold oneself dear. But then this is last line that's so significant that that the Buddha is concerned with how we treat other people. And he gets the Buddha gets the conclusion that if you love yourself, you shouldn't harm anybody else. And perhaps part of the motivation for the kind of the background for this which is explicit in other teachings is this sense of recognition to other people have the same feelings as we have that we don't want to be killed.

So probably other people don't want to we don't want to have things stolen from us. Probably other people don't want to we don't want to have others be the victims of Sexual Abuse. So

probably others don't want to be and it goes on and on and we don't want to be allied to other people don't want to be lied to. And this is right recognition of using oneself and the impact these kinds of ethical behavior has on them itself as a reference point to understand what the impact will be for others would I think support people to I don't want other people to I don't want experience this for myself this kind of hurt. Why would I do cause this kind of harm to someone else? So this kind of taking this teaching about self and turning it around and emphasize an ethical teaching. And this is something we find over and over again into Buddhist teachings that there is a phenomenally strong, ethical component to it. It seems like he doesn't tire in keep referring back to something about his teachings that gives it an ethical nature meaning ethical means ethics, not always very popular. The topic, but what it means is In short, 10, the Buddhist context, it means living a life that does not harm others, but rather, is living a life that benefits others. And but particularly this thing about not harming others, that's that he emphasized more than almost anything else. And if you could just imagine that that all the ways that humans harm each other stop How different would it be to read the newspaper when a different world it would be just that let you know even if people didn't do a lot of benefit for each other's if they just stopped harming each other what a different world we would be in. And, and so when the Buddha lays out the path of practice, he begins with an ethical component which is he has a lot to do with restraining causing harm when it every step along the way. Have the path even up to enlightenment that the Buddhists keeps referring back to the idea of benefiting others or not causing harm. It's a very same famous statement the Buddha made that, you know, he started teaching at some point and after some time, there were 60 people who had become enlightened. And when those 60 were enlightened, he he sent them off, you know, don't don't don't hang out here. He said, Go for out into the world, for the welfare and benefit of many out of compassion for the world. Go out and be benefit and benefit benefit them. So for him the you know, the consequences of enlightenment was go out and benefit people and support people. So we see a little bit this or not a little bit of this Interesting, if we go look at the, the Buddha's teaching, on loving kindness, there's a very famous text that called the Metta Sutta, the discourse on loving kindness. And, and that's, you know, title seems what this is about love. This is about kindness, you know, friendliness, whatever method might you pick to translate into English? And, but that's not explicitly what the text is about. It starts off being explicitly about, if a person wants to reach a state of peace, profound state of personal peace, to realize that for oneself to attain that, then he lays out what a person should do. So this is how it begins to reach a state to reach the state of peace. Those skilled and Good, should be capable and upright, straightforward and easy to speak to gentle and knock proud, contented and easily supported, living likely and with few duties wise and with census calmed, not arrogant, and without greed for supporters, and they should not do the least thing that the wise would criticize. There's nothing in here about being nice in the world. You know, it's nothing about being kind or loving or supportive in the world, even though, you know, the title is the loving kindness sutta. The explicit beginning is the titles usually came later, later editor so apparently, the Buddha just spoke and he didn't bother putting titles on what he said. But to reach the state of peace, so this is all kind of very personal personal practice. How you would live your life if you want to live a life that was peaceful and nice. But then it goes on.

So, to reach a state of peace, those skilled in the good and then all the things I read continues, they should reflect as follows. May all beings be happy and secure. May all beings be happy at heart. all living beings, whether they're weak or strong, tall, large, medium or short, tiny or big, seen or unseen, near or distant, born or to be born, may they all be happy. So this person who wants to pursue peace should live ethically in a good way. And they should be concerned about the welfare of others to actually be wishing had thoughts of wishing or intentions or aspirations that everyone be happy and

secure and safe. And then it goes on and it says, so the more this further what they should reflect or how they should be thinking about when they live in the world, they should be reflecting, let no one deceive another, or despise anyone anywhere. Like no one through anger or aversion, wish for others to suffer. Again, the emphasis here has been turned right that if you want to be at peace, it's the direction of the conversation now has changed towards in order to really be at peace, maybe you should be concerned for the welfare of others. So that's an important part of it. And it goes on and says more about how to do this and very kind of dramatic terms as a mother would risk her own life, to protect her child, her only child, so toward all living beings should one cultivate a boundless heart with loving kindness for the whole world. Want to cultivate a boundless heart, above, below and all around without obstruction and without hate, and without ill will, standing or walking, sitting or lying down, as long as one is alert, may one stay with this recollection. This is called a sublime abiding here and now, whoever is virtuous endowed with vision, not taken by views of anger, overcome all greed for sensual pleasures will not be reborn again. So, the idea of really discovering this path to peace that he takes at the end to kind of one of the ways that the final goal is described, but integrated in this whole thing, a major part of this text is this emphasis on loving others being kind supportive of others others. So generally the word in Pali the ancient language for for loving kindness is metta and it's a cognate to the word Mita, which is in Pali is the word for friend Mitra in Sanskrit. And so it's often referred to as a kind of love this kind of like philia kind of love of friendship, rather than erotic love or some other romantic love or something. But it's a kind of loving kindness or loving friendship or kind friendship that goes on. And, and to give you a sense of how much the Buddha emphasized that there the value he put on it, there's this other verse just as the light of all the constellations in the sky, do not equal one 16th the radiance of the moon. So no matter what the ritual sacrifice, the sacrifice of of royal Worldcon conquering kings does not equal one 16th the value of a heart well developed in loving kindness. So this idea of loving kindness as being so important. monastics, his disciples, who cultivate loving kindness for as long as a finger snap are called True monastics. They are not without meditative absorption, they cultivate the Buddhist teachings, they are receptive to advice and do not eat their alms food in bed in vain. How much more so Can this be said of those who frequently practice loving kindness? So some people who live lay lives like many of you, maybe you know sometimes

think will ever be nice. If you could be a monastic. You could practice a lot and Really dedicate your life to that if I can so but how could I do something similar and get the same benefits? Well for snap of a finger, if you have loving kindness for other people you get a lot of goodness comes from that. And certainly it's good for others to love them. But it's interesting that he then turns it around and focuses back on the individual. Those people have that that degree of loving kindness, just that short. They are not without meditative absorption. They have the beginning concentrated in meditation for oneself is very important in Buddhist practice. And here it's you know that something about this loving kindness puts you in that camp somehow that's quite something and they cultivate the Buddhist teachings and then they are receptive to advice, are you you probably know people who aren't but there's something about having some degree of friendliness towards people that apparently makes you a little bit open, receptive, you know, to what people say about you. It's kind of nice I think. And then elsewhere the Buddha says yes it's been aesthetics are ever announced. Well, the money know that they're not supposed to have any material wealth. So anybody's ever been monastic still have lots of wealth. their wealth is their loving kindness. Isn't it nice to change the wealth from material wealth to what's in your heart? The nice thing about heartwell if those of you who are collecting it, and is that it's portable. And, and people can really steal it. You can give it away or shut it down yourself, but but you know, it's there and so what is loving kindness? The ancient description or definition of it. The characteristic of loving kindness is to promote beneficial conditions for other living beings. So to be interested in creating good conditions for them it's essential quality is focusing on what is beneficial, focusing on what is helpful. Its manifestation is the removal of malice. So when when loving kindness is strong the way you know it's

apparently the way it's demonstrated is no malice, no hate. It's proximate cause is seeing the loveliness of beings. That nice if you want to love people, if you want to have this kindness or friendliness towards people First take the time to appreciate them, to value them. And how would you look? How would you take time to register people in order to appreciate them? I think most people want to be appreciated. I think it's you know, or feel valued or feels somehow and to take the time to really appreciate people and then seeing their loveliness, then it's easier to have loving kindness. The, you know, it's one thing to say, you know, loving kindness is a good thing. And then it's a duty obligation. And so you kind of bear down, get serious. That doesn't work so well. But what comes naturally from you, if you take the time to look at people to tune into people that get time to know them, so that you have some appreciation of valuing of them. And one of the advantages of meditation is to quiet the mind down quiet the physical system down enough so we're not antsy and rushing off to this thing and that thing. And so when we sit with people, we can just kind of a little bit kind of take time to take in the situation, rather than having our desires or our fears predominate and we're on to next thing or pulling away are so caught up in our concerns, but to relax our preoccupation, so we can take time to share each other be with each other. It's phenomenal, what can happen.

loving kindness metta is called loving kindness because it is loving. It refers to tender love. It is also known as metta because it arises in one's relate in one's relationship to a friend Amita. So the ancient texts clearly connected to the idea of friendship and How does one abide with one's mind accompanied with loving kindness extending outward in one direction? Justice one would feel friendliness on seeing a Dearly beloved friend. So does one extend loving kindness to all creatures.

So, then, I want to tell you a ancient story, kind of a fable. I think of the fable, and that meta suta that I read to you earlier, about, you know, how, if you want to reach or attain the state of peace, you know, have kind supportive well wishing for all beings. There's a story of how the Buddha first gave this. And, and I think that one way of looking at this story, this Fable is once again to see this integration or non separation of a personal path, a path of practice and being concerned for the welfare of others, that is who shouldn't be kept separate. And the story goes that the Buddha was in town and one of his places where he lived with his monastics and it was time for them to go off for the three months arraign retreat for monastics every year for three months, they go off someplace to just be and still not to be what moving around during the ancient when the monsoon season was in ancient India, when it was kind of hard to walk around anyway. And, and they would just sit and practice it in one place in practice, and they weren't supposed to leave that place during this three, three months, like a three month retreat. So he's monastics kind of headed off from town to find a place for the three month retreat. And one a group of them went up into The foothills of the Himalayas and they found this spot which,

in an outlying district, they came to a cool, dense green Forest Grove. In it, they found a stretch of ground covered by white sand that looked like a net of pearls or a silver sheet. Nearby was a clean spring with cool water. within sight was a great mountain forming part of the Himalayan mountain range are inspiring. The mountain sparkled like blue crystal and the sun. monastics spent a night here in the morning found a town not far away, where they could go for alms. Since monks and nuns seldom visit outlying districts, that towns people were quite joyful to see the monastics and happily offer them food. After the group had eaten, the townspeople requested they spend the rains retreat in the nearby growth. When the master monastics monastics agreed everyone in town quickly built little huts, one for each of the monks. The next day the monks re entered the grove and wholeheartedly began the retreat. With well established mindfulness, they each set at the foot of a tree to meditate. Isn't that idyllic. So we should all you know, find a place like that under a tree then we can meditate. But there was a problem. However, the Tree Spirits a tree devis that lived in those trees were dismayed by the dedication of the virtuous monks. They came down from their three homes, and from a distance wandered back and

forth with their children. It was like a king and his entourage commandeering a town displacing the Revit residents those townspeople standing in a distance asking themselves, When are they going away? In the same way those devils wondered when are those monks going away? Then the dead was realized that the monks were going to stay put for the entire three month period of the rains retreat. Since they did not think it was possible to live with their children away from their homes for so long. They decided to try to fry frighten the monks away. So in the middle of the night, the dead was created terrific apparitions that stood in front of each monk making horrible sounds. The monks shook with fear became pale and sickly. They could no longer keep their minds concentrated. As a debus kept up their fear attacks. The monks also lost their mindfulness. Then the Devas sailed amongst with awful stench. The smell seemed to suffocate the monks brains. Each monk felt quite oppressed, but did not tell the other monks what was happening during the night. This continued for several nights until the senior monk asked them, friends, when we entered this Grove, your skin color was pure and bright, and your faculties were clear. But now you all seem to withered up and pale and sickly, what's wrong? And then the other monks explained to him, what horrible fear they were experiencing at night. And they said, and the senior monk said, this place does not suit us. Let's go to the Buddha and ask if we can go to a more suitable location. that's reasonable, right? After all, they displace the device and it wasn't, it was a home of iDevice. Right, they should just walk in and take over. And, and so but anyway, they were so frightened, let's find a different place. So they went back to town to the Buddha explained what happened and he the Buddha and his great vision looked Around the world, and said, well turns out, there's no other place in the world that's better for you all. Then that place, you should go back there. However, if you want to be free from fear of devices, then learn the following as a protection. It will be both a protection and a meditation practice for you. Then the Buddha expanded the discourse on loving kindness. The monks then returned to their grove of trees and began reciting the discourse on loving kindness, and practicing loving kindness meditation. As a result, the Devas thought these monks wish us well and seek our good. filled with happiness. The debus began to support the monks and did so for the remainder of the retreat. The device kept the grove

swept clean, prepared warm water for the monks provide them with medical treatment and arrange for their protection. Practicing loving kindness amongst became established in an insight. And then all of them attain the highest enlightenment or hardship during that very retreat. So it's a nice fable. And, you know, it's simple story. But what I want to emphasize in this story is this integration of these two, the monks went off into practice to get enlightened themselves, which in some ways is an individual, the stick pursuit. And, and they were all all the conditions were there for them to be able to do it. Except one thing more was needed, which they didn't realize they needed to have hearts of loving kindness, for the location for the spirits. They were there for the unseen world, maybe for the seen world as well. And, and so what they did is they practiced this loving kindness, a practice having this heart of goodwill. For others for the three months, and according to this text, that was the practice that brought them their individual liberation. So, individual other, caring for others, concerned for others, loving others, loving oneself caring for oneself. These are deeply intertwined in the Buddhist teachings. It's easy enough to pull to kind of cherry pick and pull out of these texts, a certain emphasis. And I think not a few of the people here in the West, maybe myself included, have have gone like we went to Burma to practice many of us, and we went to monasteries that were meditation centers. And so they mostly taught us meditation, the individualistic side, we didn't get a lot of the social teachings. And then some of us came back and established centers here in the West and some of the meditation centers and since there are many retreat centers that you know, again to them Meditation. So sometimes that was the emphasis was kept emphasizing a particular kind of subset of the teaching. But if you read the sutras as a whole, and what you see is a tremendous integration of how we live in our social life is part of what the Buddha had to teach, that we would live ethically, we'd be very concerned about not causing harm in the world, we would cultivate loving kindness, goodwill, to care for others, to have appreciation for others to value

others, and not only to do it as just as a good thing, but also do it for our own practice. We benefit from doing it is kind of mutuality, that of concern for other benefits ourselves, benefiting ourselves concerns others. To go, you know, to go hand in hand, there's not they're not so separate from each other. I think that in some of the currents of Western thought, there's a very sharp divide Between altruism and selfishness, and there's some very, you know, they're ideal ways supposed to be altruistic in some circles in the West. And anything that you do that's not that is selfish. One of the ways I saw it when I first started practicing Buddhism, when I was in my early 20s. So I think maybe I've changed. I haven't heard this for a long time now. But it was common back then, for non Buddhists, when they learned that their children or family members were practicing Buddhist meditation, which criticized them for being selfish. You know, maybe they meditated an hour a day. And the people who are criticizing him for being selfish, or watching TV three hours a day. There's something about meditation, being maybe a religious, that expectation if you're doing something religious, you're supposed to be altruistic. But if you're not doing something religious, then it doesn't really you know, the fact it's TD three hours, six hours a day, you know, that's not in the same domain. So you wouldn't criticize someone for doing that being selfish. So it's a little goes a little bit strange back then I thought. And with this the strong divide between altruism and being selfish, that I think exists in some corners of the West. It doesn't seem to exist in ancient India. It's a really, there's often in Buddhism and other religions. So that time, a sense of the mutuality of these, that if you benefit yourself, your benefit for the world, if you benefit others, you benefit yourself as well. And in the Buddhist teaching, and there is just so wonderful middle teaching, that I can find in all these papers.

The know kind of maybe end with this. There's also a fairly well known Teaching of the acrobats and there were these two acrobats, Master Acrobat, and the apprentice. And they would do acrobats. addicts on their own bodies like one would climb on the other and do all kinds of things do handstands and all kinds of wonderful acrobatics and so they were going to do a show. And the master apprentice master Acrobat said to the apprentice, you watch over me, and I'll watch over you. And that way, we'll be safe. It's gonna be reasonable enough, you know, it's kind of dangerous to be up there. And the apprentice says, No, you watch over yourself, and I'll watch over myself and that way, we'll be safe. So this was you know, with a disagreement like that, they went to the Buddha and the Buddha agreed with the apprentice. And I think It's kind of like this idea of, you know, in an airplane you should put the, the air mask on yourself first and then you can help others. And the Buddha said, protecting oneself, one protects others, protecting others when protects oneself. And here we see this mutuality, these are knots, sharply divided, these two they call cut they come together. And how does one and protecting oneself protect others by repeated and frequent practice of mindfulness. So you practice you protect yourself. By practicing mindfulness, you certainly protect yourself from yourself, and who harmed you the most these days. Not a few people in our world are harming themselves with their attachments and fear and criticism and all kinds of things that go on. So in practice, when self protects myself by practicing mindfulness, remember the Buddhist said in doing so you protect Others, and how does one in protecting others protect oneself? By patience and forbearance by a non violent and harmless life, by loving kindness and compassion. So if you protect others with these attitudes with these motivations, he also protect yourself. So this neutrality they seem to go together. So the impression I have these days is that one of the great, great contributions of the Buddha was to offer a spiritual practice a path to liberation. That where the individual and the social work deeply integrated and connected, you can't really separate them out. And you want to really kind of be concerned with both so you or you want to develop the heart that was open and sensitive and loving or caring for both and for all in a sense, equally caring for oneself as we would be caring for Someone else, that we are worthy and valuable people ourselves and we're worthy of, of our own love our own care and trying to try to help ourselves kind of put the best in us to come out to become free and peaceful and, and to do the same thing for the people around us to not shut down, not close down not have blinders on not to live on our own

particular insulated world without paying attention to the world around us. But somehow to understand that maybe all of us in this world, every single human being and maybe all living life, are really in this together. And we can't really separate these two out. So they know and with this quote that I saw, I read last night that I really liked. Maybe I can apply it to what I'm saying

Something like, you know, we had history here, you hear the recent times the United States of banks failing. And then the government goes and saves them. But the biggest bank we have the bank that we are all relying on and withdrawing from all the time, and at the risk of going bankrupt now is the earth itself. And who's going to help you out of bankruptcy? You know, when all the resources are used up, and you know, who do we turn to, to say, Well, you know, we need we need to need a new loan. The so this idea of, you know, loving the world, you know, really opening up and including all and not keeping it so separate. I think it's, you know, US them are, but you know, really being encompassing at all, as part of our own welfare. I think it's more necessary now in this world than ever before. So I certainly hope that you will consider how to do the best for yourself and thrive in some deep inner way. And that you'll discover that if you thrive inwardly from your heart out that you'll see it's so obvious that it's a wonderful thing. It's a beautiful thing. It's the obvious thing is also to care for the world around you. May our lives be lives of deep caring for self and others and all beings. Thank you.