

# Muditā - Pure Joy

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 15:12

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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.*

Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So, this evening I want to do the third of the Brahma Viharas, which is *mudita*. Remember it's part of the Buddha heart, in other words how the enlightened person actually experiences the world, how they connect with the world rather, how they relate to the world.

So one of them is this *metta*, kindness, gentleness, friendliness, all that sort of stuff. Compassion, which is the desire to help. And there's equanimity which we'll come to next week or next time I come. And there's this joy, this *mudita* which is translated as sympathetic joy or reciprocal joy. It's a joy you feel when somebody else is happy.

And its obvious enemy is envy, envy and jealousy. That kills your own ability to enjoy other people's happiness, to share in their happiness. And, well, I'll come to how we can tackle that. But the near enemy, the one that we don't particularly recognize, is this excitement and that comes by — it's always this business of indulging in what — in a joyful state so you're always lifting the energy above what's necessary. One gets attached to it, you see, so that's always a danger with these things. So one has to remain at the level of just resonance, resonating people's joy and reflecting it back to them.

Looking all pretty good at the moment, I know. I was just wondering what you could do if they weren't joyful. That goes to compassion then, you see. At the moment we're presuming that the person is joyful. And so it's a sort of quiet joy. It's a happy, quiet joy. When you start jumping up and down and all that sort of stuff, then it's sort of a bit over the top.

And with this, when you actually develop it within yourself through the practice like *metta*, then you get the same lovely blissful states that you would with any other concentration meditation. And you'll see for yourself if you're just wishing somebody well within yourself, you'll see it just builds up a very pleasant resonance in the heart.

Now remember when you're doing this practice, and we'll come to the actual practice itself in a minute, you're not trying to feel happy. You're not trying to feel anything. It's always the intention — may you be happy, may your happiness increase, may your happiness not decrease. These sorts of well-wishings are given with the intention of helping the other person to be happy. The fact that we then begin to feel happy, we have to take as a happy consequence. That's the karmic result within our own minds of that

sympathetic joy. Then if we start doing it in order to be happy, then we get into this subtle enemy, you see.

It's not something that we particularly practice. We're very good at do-gooding — the compassionate bit — but we don't — there's not that much practice. We're mainly miserable and whingeing. That's what we normally practice — bloody weather and it's always raining and the job and all that. We don't — we don't actually unless there's an occasion like a birthday or something, and then because we tend to go over the top.

So you can get right up to what's known as the third absorption, which is a pretty beautiful state. And remember that these things are known as *Brahmaviharas*, the dwelling place of Brahma. In other words, these are the most beautiful states of mind that we can develop. And they're illimitable, remember, which means that the mind, the heart is not like the physicality which is limited by space and by other contingent things. The mind seems to be able to develop these things indefinitely. It's a bit like number. Remember I always say about numbers — no matter how big the number you imagine, you always add one. So it's like indefinite, there's no end to it. To say infinite is a little bit too definite. We can't say infinite — would be metaphysical — but indefinite gives it that understanding that there's no need ever to stop it. One can just continue to develop these beautiful states.

Now, how do you do it towards yourself? Well, you start — always start with yourself, you see. So, basically, you count your blessings. You count your blessings. And in counting your blessings and all the lovely things that have happened to us in our lives and the present things that now we enjoy, then we can feel glad for ourselves. We feel happy. We feel happy for ourselves. Even though we might be going through a miserable state, it's a case of looking at the glass as usual as half full. So it's actually just reminding ourselves of the joys that we have experienced in life and the pleasures that have come our way. And the fact that we're living now in not, shall we say, a too uncomfortable state. And it's just recognizing that and recognizing that as a blessing.

Remember, because of this self, because especially of Western ideas, we think that we've arrived at this place through my own efforts. A self-made person. I did my own thing in my own time. But actually, when you look, it's because of all the relationships that we've had, of the particular state the economy's in. Everything is contingent upon our particular happiness. So there's a part of us which is, shall we say, to do with fortune in the sense of being in this particular place at this particular time. It's nothing to do with our *kamma*. It's to do with the fact that we happen to be in a fairly fortunate situation.

So one begins to count one's blessings, and then to wish somebody just very banal things, like good sleep. There's a meditator at the moment with me, and because of not good sleep, you can't get the concentration, you can't really get the energy up — you need sleep. So even to wish somebody good sleep, to wake happily, health, safety, fruitful work, loving relationships, a meaningful spiritual life — what you mean by that is that life has some meaning to it beyond the obvious, beyond the job, beyond the relationship. There's some sort of purpose for life which is as it were beyond the normal things that we're

doing.

And then don't forget peaceful death. You don't want to die in agony. Nice peaceful slipping away. And then to offer them either a rebirth in the heavenly realm or that they achieve some spiritual depth. So these are the sorts of things that you would be wishing for somebody else in order to increase their happiness. That's what you do. And you do it to yourself.

Remember, you're always to start — I mean, I know that in our *metta* practice, the way I do it is I put the self a bit further along. That's because really to overcome this, often what I find in people is a lot of negativity. They don't want to offer themselves any love. They feel horrible about themselves. So if you begin to feel nice about other people, then you get that nice feeling up and say, oh, me too. I wish I was like that too. So it's sort of turning the offering towards ourselves.

So this particular state, this *mudita*, sympathetic joy, is one of the illimitables. And we develop it by finding blessings that we know will make ourselves and others happy. And then just like we do the *metta*, you would do that as well. And remember that these things are not — you don't have to do it in a formal way. You don't have to be sitting in a meditation or you don't have to be sitting anywhere. You'd just be on a bus. You'd be driving along and stop at the lights and just wish somebody happiness. It's like it's just cultivating that constant — cultivating that constant relationship within ourselves with others. And of course it affects us and the way we are, and that affects how people see us, how people relate to us.

When your face is very relaxed, you should feel a natural smile appear on your face. Is that right? Would that be a common experience? No. If you relax your face completely, you'll see that there's just a smile. It comes with just that relaxation. You can almost call that the Buddha smile, that enigmatic smile. It's the smile of contentment. And to other people, it might still look grim because it's so subtle, but it's there within you. It's there within you and that's how you greet people, from that position of joyfulness.

So we'll come to that another time perhaps after this talk, but I do want to now talk about the smile. Just a bit of science really. Even a Richter smile, a smile that you don't mean but you just shape your mouth in a smile, even that affects the brain and begins to release this dopamine and the sort of pleasure system within the brain. And this is research that I read about, and as you know research changes, but what they discovered is that every cell in the body has receptors for these different chemicals. And if a person is constantly depressed and down, the cells actually begin to manufacture more receptors for this downer than it has for this joyful stuff. So that when somebody's depressed, even when joy comes up, the body can't feed that back to them because the body still feels depressed. You might say, you see what I mean? So when you understand that every time you make yourself happy, you're actually encouraging these cells to develop these receptors so you get that feedback from the body of pleasure which is resonating with the actual state of mind.

And with that, you see, the body and the mind always act together. I mean, we do that with the breath — just the gentle motion of the breath, beginning to see it as a pleasurable, neutral sensation, really calms

the mind. You calm the mind, calms the body and the breath becomes finer, the breath becomes more subtle and more gentle. So the body and mind are very intimately connected and in this way they sort of tumble down into a deeper concentration, or in this sense they begin to resonate this joy, you see.

And the other effect of that is, remember that these things has an effect on our thymus, it seems. That's another thing, which is to do with our autoimmune system. So often when people are depressed, when they're stressed, etc., that's when you get ill. So somehow we can counteract that by just developing this constant state of kindness and joy, just reminding ourselves of our blessings and just letting that smile appear.

So that's this psychosomatic organism that we're living in, that we're actually inhabiting. And when you connect sympathetic joy, love, compassion, but especially I think this sympathetic joy with physical health, then you really want to start doing it. And as I say, it's more like a little practice every day. I'm always amazed at the power of just five minutes a day of joyful thinking and how it can affect your day. And in the end it becomes a sort of memory thing and you just remember to just make an offering of joy.

Like when you meet people, it's there naturally. When you meet a friend and all that, you're naturally joyful. So that comes naturally. But to actually have that sense of constantly developing it, it just becomes habitual. Just like this mindfulness becomes habitual. I mean, that's our problem. There's no problem in establishing mindfulness. The problem is remembering it, remembering to establish mindfulness. So it's a case of just encouraging ourselves to just do these little practices just often throughout the day. And it has this lovely continuous effect.

So that brings to the end my little homily on *mudita*. I can only hope that my words will increase your own sense of joy. May you be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

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