

Joshua Bee Alafia

*The Three Beautiful Roots: Cultivating the Three Wholesome Qualities in Unwholesome Times*

Week Three: “The Benevolence of Clarity”

May 21, 2022



*Amoha* is the third of the wholesome roots of mind, translated as clarity, wisdom, or nondelusion. It's the seeking and cultivation of insight that we associate with meditation and *bhavana*. We often translate *bhavana* as meditation, but cultivation is a more precise definition.

I want to read this quote from my mentor, Gina Sharpe: “The Buddha called the faculty of wisdom the fifth and final spiritual faculty, the crowning virtue, among all the requisites of enlightenment, as it illuminates the meaning of karma, the weaving of causes and effects in our interdependent world, and the characteristics of phenomena, naggingly incomplete, impermanent, and without self. Wisdom also includes establishing intentions of goodwill and harmlessness in all actions of body speech and mind.”

We constantly find ways of deluding ourselves, usually having some kind of investment with our egos. I look at my 20s and the turbulence of a lot of the reckless decisions I made. Thankfully, I feel like I learned a lot from those decisions. But I think when we really look back at some of the calamity in our lives that we self-imposed, it always comes back to this sense of confusion or delusion or ignorance, not seeing the whole picture and jumping the gun, not from an intuitive place but perhaps some kind of denatured rationalization, some corrupted impulse.

Meditation is this insistent revisioning, re-envisioning, of reality that is aligned with clarity. It takes courage. My thesis of this talk is how much courage it takes to be real. What we're focusing on with wisdom is reality, not things that we have blind belief in but things that we know to be true through experience or through data that is very much trusted. *Ehipassiko*, come and see. Come and try for yourself. This is what Gotama Buddha would say to uphold the teachings. He didn't say, “Come and have faith in what I'm teaching because I'm enlightened.” He'd say, “Come and meditate with me. You can have a taste of what I'm saying. This is the only way you can be free from confusion.”

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I find it so true. Meditation has really changed my life and enhanced it for the better. I used it to find clarity and sobriety in my life after being really addicted to ganja in my late 20s. I have found meditation to be my path of sobriety. There's this excitement of being clear. It feels good to see things clearly. It feels good to be present. It feels *great* to be present. So easily we become disembodied, sometimes from trauma, sometimes by choice. The temptation is to be everywhere but right here in this moment.

Amoha is the alignment with that which is as it is without any spin, without any corruption of integrity. It's this bold gaze at the truth, and the truth can be hard to accept if we're emotionally invested in the truth being different than it is—and so often we are. As I've meditated and as I've aged, I've shown some restraint in some of the generalizations that I would make in my youth. We start to observe the variety of expression and experience and the human condition. We let go of some of the ignorance that may have served to be the punchline to a joke or something that made us feel comfortable somehow. We look at oppression, the ignorance that is the cornerstone and infrastructure of oppression, and it always comes down to these ways of elevating oneself over someone else because of feeling insecure and inadequate or threatened. In a way, it's pitiful—we could have compassion for it.

So amoha really seeks to vanquish ignorance. It seeks to grow beyond ignorance. I'll even put some warmth on it and infuse some metta in it in saying that amoha is forgiving in its bold case, its bold view. I'm very thankful for clarity because ignorance has riddled so much havoc in my life when I think about it. Next week, we will be summing it all up. Please join us. We will be wrapping up this conversation looking at the three wholesome roots of mind. I really thank you for your attention, your practice, and your presence. Be well.