

LOVING KINDNESS

teachings by

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Loving-Kindness - teachings by Sonia Moriceau 2004-2011

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DEDICATION

To my main teachers John Garrie Roshi, Namgyal Rinpoche
and Norbu Namkhai Rinpoche
who tirelessly shared their wisdom and compassion,
and to the many students who attended the teachings,

A bow of deep gratitude for your support.

Discourse on Loving-kindness – Mettā Sutta

*This is what's done by one skilled in what's good,
who reaches toward that most peaceful state:
one would be capable, and straight – quite straight;
well-spoken, gentle, without too much pride.*

*Content with little, easily maintained,
not doing too much and lightly engaged;
thoughtful, with a peaceful demeanour, and
modest, without greed among worldly things.*

*One would not do even the slightest thing
that others who are wise would speak against.*

*May they be secure and profoundly well;
- may all beings be happy in themselves.*

*Whatsoever living beings exist,
without exception, whether weak or strong,
whether tall and large, middle-sized, or short,
whether very subtle or very gross,
whether visible or invisible
dwelling far away or not far away,
whether born or not yet born*

- may all beings be happy in themselves.

Let no-one work to undo another.

Let no-one think badly of anyone.

*Either with anger or with violent thoughts,
one would not wish suffering on others.*

*Just as a mother would watch over her
son – her one and only son – with her life,
in just the same way develop a mind
unbounded toward all living creatures.*

*Develop a mind of loving-kindness
unbounded toward the entire world:
above and below and all the way 'round,
with no holding back, no loathing, no foe.
Standing, walking, sitting or lying down,
as long as one is devoid of torpor,
one would resolve upon this mindfulness
- this is known as sublime abiding here.*

*Without falling into mistaken views,
endowed with insight and integrity,
guiding away greed for sensual things,
one would not be born again in a womb.*

All loving kindness practices and teachings in this booklet find their origin in the above discourse of the Buddha given to his monks as their practice during a three month retreat in the rainy season.

In the annex is a shorter version “Peace to All Beings” as composed by John Garrie Roshi, my first meditation teacher, which we use at the beginning of a sitting meditation practice.

The precious human birth

A favourable human birth with its potential and leisuers is rare and difficult to obtain, yet easily lost. Its attainment is much more meaningful than that of a wish-fulfilling gem. If we do not take this opportunity to practise now, then all will be senselessly wasted.

Recognising this, may I use these potential and leisuers meaningfully.

Having attained this precious human existence, like a ship that crosses the ocean of samsara, without falling into distractions or laziness of mind through ignorance, allow yourself to awaken to the preciousness of this moment.

When we recognise that our life, well-being and survival depend not just on oneself alone but on many other beings, an overwhelming gratitude engulfs us and moves us to care for others as we would care for our loved ones. Loving-kindness is a natural and effortless response once we appreciate our interdependence with all life forms. Having thoughts of loving-kindness is a first step, yet we need to actively manifest this state of mind in the world to all beings, even the ones we don't feel any affinity with. We need actually to do it and in the process we will find our life becoming more radiant and fulfilling, as love is flowing from and to us.

I want you to investigate today: what is loving kindness? When you are in loving-kindness, do you know you are in loving-kindness? Are you in loving-kindness, and what are the conditions that put you in loving kindness? You need to investigate in your body what it feels like when you are in loving-kindness, what happens in your body. Throughout the day I want you to have this question in your mind – what is loving-kindness, am I in loving-kindness? You focus on yourself today; tomorrow we focus on other people, but first yourself. So you investigate, you explore.

Loving-kindness is in you already, you don't need to put it there; you just need to shine a light on it, to emphasise it a bit more, to cultivate it a bit more.

I will give you some techniques to cultivate it.

I would like you to reflect on your life and to investigate the many events that come from loving-kindness, in you or to you. Do you think you would be here if you had not had loving-kindness, if loving-kindness had not been poured on you for a long time? Loving-kindness is simple, it is just opening your heart. So today also whenever you catch sight of someone you open your heart - not if or but, but now immediately. When you hear someone in the shower, you know someone is there – it is very important, that, even if you cannot see them you open your heart to them.

Richness

*If beings knew as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared,
if there were someone to receive their gift.
The Buddha*

Recollect - remember – moments, events, situations when you experienced loving-kindness, either as a giver or as a receiver. Loving-kindness is friendliness, care. Imagine yourself back in that situation, with the people involved, and how did it feel in the body. What we are doing, we are borrowing from our memories, our experience, and bring it into the present. Don't discuss, have a dialogue with it, just 'how does it feel in the body?' – the physical body or the auric body – and your body will tell you 'this is loving-kindness'.

Take some time to consider the many gifts you have received from each person in this room, and wider, in these few days together; and what source of strength and support did you receive from these beings? How were they supporting your practice? They are part of your backup. Everything involves other beings, so how can you not practise for their benefit? What gifts? – a question from someone, an emotion from someone, can be gifts for someone else. Someone bursting into tears and making a mess of themselves, is a gift. The being who has taken responsibility for bringing beautiful fresh flowers into the Zendo – does that support your practice? – then it is a gift. The plumber who came to fix the central heating – that was a welcome gift! The milkman who leaves milk on the doorstep. Whoever brought and laid the stone flags outside the Zendo door. It goes on and on.....

Exercise on richness

I want you to think of all the gifts you have ever received – material, emotional, mental. I want you to feel that you are very rich, you have a lot to give. This is the practice I was given years ago by my first teacher John Garrie Roshi – to write down every gift ever given to me. I want you to feel that you are swimming in abundance, like a feast. So if you have to work in the Zendo all night, that is fine. I want you to get the feeling of being so full that you want to overflow; you are already full but you don't know it because there is a tendency to focus on what is wrong. Imagine gathering all the gifts in one place. It will be an all-night work.

Q: Do we write down the gifts or just imagine them?

A: It would be better to write them down. So focus on all the riches you have received and if, in the midst of this, quite spontaneously you wish to take in the suffering of some being; some being comes into mind and you take in the suffering and give out some of the riches. Not forced, you want to give out peacefully.

Q: My dearest friend, I've known him since I was seven; the special gifts I've received from him, he never wanted anything from me except my friendship. Almost feeling guilty about how much I've been given.

A: That's right, you want to be in a position of being overwhelmed by the richness of gifts you have been given. That is how you can be in a position to start to give out.

There is no doubt that we have potential for enlightenment, for full loving-kindness, but we need techniques to help us towards that. You can't do it just by yourself, because you are full of ill will, you have to get the self out of the way and allow loving-kindness to take over.

Chanting of the Four Divine Abidings – the Four Brahma Vihāras

First imagine your body hollow, empty from the top of your head down to your toes, only space. Establish this feeling of space inside your body. Now notice the movement of your belly. Notice the rising and the falling and be with that, simply noticing rising, falling. Rising, falling within space, within emptiness. If you become too distracted go back to the spaciousness, the hollowness of the body. Establish again the space within the body, then return to the belly.

Now chant the *Brahma Viharas*, in *Pali*, three times:

*Aham avero homi, abyāpajjho homi, anigho homi,
sukhi attānam pariharāmi.
Aham viya sabbe sattā avera hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu,
sukhi attānam pariharantu.*

and for contemplation, spoken once in English:

*May I be friendly, calm and free from ill-will and may I live in happiness.
As I am, so may all beings be friendly, calm and free from ill-will
and may they live in happiness.*

In the *Brahma Vihāras*, 'homi' means self, so have good feelings towards yourself, shower yourself with loving-kindness. 'Hontu' means others, so do that to each one in the room, you are radiating good feelings towards others. There is a pulsation, 'as I am... may others be...'. When you do the chanting imagine a flower in your heart, it grows and grows to fill the whole room until you are all sitting together within the shape of a flower, and I am the stem. And in the sitting we can experience the attention of the mind rising above the crown of the head, then feel the energy fields of everyone in the room joined together above our heads, like a girdle around the room. So we are turning the mind to awakening, with *wholesome* thoughts, with 'reflections to turn the mind to awakening', thoughts that take the mind further.

Meditation on Mettā – Loving Kindness

First read the following short text on metta, then sit, contemplating on it:

1. *My mind is temporarily pure – free from lust, hatred and ignorance*
2. *I charge my pure heart and mind with thoughts of Loving-Kindness.*
3. *May I be free from suffering, troubles and worries*
May I be free from anger, jealousy, envy and malice
4. *Now I charge every particle of my system with thoughts of Loving-Kindness. My whole body is saturated with Loving-Kindness. I am the embodiment of Loving-Kindness*
5. *Mentally I create a happy and healthy aura of Loving-Kindness around me. By means of this aura I cut off all negative thoughts, all hostile vibrations. I am not affected by the negative thoughts of others*
6. *I am fortified by my own thoughts of Loving-Kindness. I radiate these loving thoughts of boundless goodwill towards all beings – above, below and around*
7. *May I be able to identify myself with all without any distinction*
May all beings be well and happy!
May all be free from suffering, troubles and worries!
May they be free from anger, jealousy, envy and malice!
May all live in peace and harmony!

Commentary on above text

The first line is very important, total letting go.. It is asking us to empty, true letting go and emptying. Without this first step you cannot begin the meditation. Do it through body work. Settle the body, the breath; be calm, free from your usual numbers. Free from your ‘stuff’, for one moment! – temporarily naked. This ‘stuff’ is lodged in the body, so you need to find a body technique to drop it, for a moment. You cannot do the practice without getting rid of the ‘stuff’, obscurations, anxieties. Emptying, the hollow body; and slow down, don’t just plant yourself on your cushion, in busyness, do it mindfully.

The second line: now you have emptied the anger, jealousy, envy, malice you can let in the loving-kindness. Start in the *hara*, the warmth rises to the heart and becomes a beautiful flower, an orange flower. Feel the auric field as a cushion of loving kindness, a warm peachy glow.

In the third line: *malice*: put in whatever negative you are familiar with, maybe competition.

In the fourth line: rather than charging every particle of my system, make it every cell in the body. Stay with it until you really feel charged throughout the body – the embodiment of loving-kindness.

In line five: feel the auric field as a cushion of loving-kindness, a warm peachy glow. 'Cut off' is too harsh, 'remove' is better. If you are full of loving kindness, negativity from others will bounce off; don't ignore it, rather it will just bounce off you.

In line six: you don't send out loving-kindness, it spontaneously overflows, flows out. When you are in a state of loving-kindness you are self-sufficient. Feelings like "you have not got enough so cannot give it out", is the false 'self' again.

For radiating loving-kindness, use the ten directions meditation (see page-17).

In the seventh line: "*Identifying with all without distinction*" – this is equanimity, no separation, union with all, having no sense of sending loving-kindness to others. Loving-kindness is identifying yourself with the pain, joy, suffering of others – so how can you hurt another? It would be like hurting yourself. When you are in a state of loving-kindness your mind is single – no differences, separateness or distinction.

Aspiration

I am sure that as you step into the Zendo you are stepping into the Zendo with the intention of benefiting all beings. Did you do that? Honest? In the future think about it, you are not just coming into the space, you are coming here to benefit all beings.

I want you to write your own text about loving-kindness – your own aspiration, prayer, whatever, for loving-kindness. Like a contemplation. Do walking meditation and body work and see what comes out for you – when you feel really inspired, in a good calm state; whatever arises, springs out of you. In walking meditation, see each step as a sharing of loving-kindness. If a disturbing thought, a negative arises – immediately flood it with goodwill, an open heart.

Make contact with the spine, make contact with its uprightness, alertness, gentle and tender. Feel the spine upright, and a softening in the hips and pelvis. Being upright doesn't mean being rigid, it is like a bamboo, upright and soft. Take a moment to adjust your motivation. We are here to practise for the benefit of beings. May our practice be of support to the many sentient beings.

*Sentient beings are numberless,
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest*

This is the first *Bodhisattva* vow - it applies to all beings, not just the ones you love or like. Interest (*vicaya*) is the second of seven Factors of Awakening: its aspect is focus, attention, investigation; this reduces focus on self. To have an interest outside self, in other beings, reduces dualism.

The numberless beings include your own; there are numerous beings within you. The being that woke up this morning is not the same as the being that is now in this room. All beings within you –such as a being that is fearful within you, in pain, a being that is forceful. During the day, meet yourself; can you choose to stop and meet this moment with kindness and interest? Interest involves investigating, come close to whatever arises, have a good look at it, be still with it. What is the mind state for example during pain? Give it mindfulness and interest, going right into it. If we can do this with ourselves, with all phenomena going on in the body, it will overflow to others. Have interest, investigate, then kindness will come out of that. Use every opportunity to apply this view; not just with external things – food, the weather - but internally also.

Choose an event in your life that you feel good about: maybe feeling 'I did this all by myself'. Then recall the numberless beings who have helped bring this to fruition, to create this successful story; even people that you don't like or don't know. Be really thorough, write down the names of the people; this is the motivation behind the practice of loving-kindness. 'All by myself' is a wrong view, you cannot have done this – anything – all by yourself. There are beings directly involved, but also indirectly: an article you have read, something on TV. We are connected with so very many other beings and they are connected to many others – it is limitless; feel the vastness of how inter-connected we are. You have to think subtly. In all practices that we do here there is the external form; but there is also the motivation, the internal practice, and that is the strongest aspect. We practise loving-kindness and generosity together, they are connected.

May I be generous and helpful

This is the first *Pārami* (*dāna*) the quality of openness, offering. *Dāna* is not just about giving something, it is the practice of opening up, of interest. When we are more open we are more generous with our mind, our thoughts. The practice of opening up not just to what we know, what is familiar, but also to something we are maybe not comfortable with, what we don't know: the practice of interest. When things are going well, we are fantastic; but when we meet obstacles, how do we react: do we meet them with aggression, rejection, contraction?

If you want to make progress in your practice, you have to strengthen the *pārami* of *dāna*, of generosity, opening – it is not just a matter of putting some money in the pot. *Dāna* is opening the heart, opening the mind; for example towards someone you don't like, or towards something on the inside of you, like a pain in your body.

Loving Kindness Practices

The Rose meditation

I want to do a meditation with you so you can experience more the loving-kindness, so follow the instructions as well as you can and relax, have no fear.

When you do meditation, you always need to check your motivation for doing the practice. So why do we do this practice? The practice is always to put us in a better place so that we can give to others, the practice doesn't stop with ourselves. So the first motivation is for you and then you can extend it to others immediately. So you check this motivation first and clear your mind of distracting thoughts, just put them in the trash!

If you need to change your position you can.

- Now imagine a rose or ruby coloured light surrounding you. It enters your body, clearing the mind of greed, hatred and delusion; you now have a pure mind.
- Visualise a rose within your heart chakra. This rose sends out waves of warmth which heal your body, you feel heat and your feel a glow throughout your being which is accompanied by rose light.
- The rose glow expands outwards filling the auric body until you are sitting in the centre of this bubble of rose light, filled with loving-kindness. Connect with the auric field around you which is filled with light, with gold, with sunshine, with power, with energy.
- Now you send out a beam of love to all things and beings in front of you. The beam is unstoppable and intangible and brings benefits to everything and everybody it encounters.
- Now in your own time, send out similar beams in all directions – behind you, to the left, to the right, above and below you. Then to all the intermediate directions until the entire universe is filled with the vibration of love. And imagine it is like a rose expanding in all directions with you sitting in the middle.
- The rose light then returns to the bubble which collapses slowly into the rose inside your heart. The rose then contracts into a bud, then to a point which then vanishes into the stillness which is at the heart of all things.
- Remain in this stillness for as long as you wish.

You can go outside now and do the same practice imagining the beam of light to the front, to the back, to the right, to the left, and come back and tell me what has happened.

Would you be able to describe the quality of loving-kindness from your experience?
How does it feel to be in a state of loving-kindness?

- *Q:* I was sending rays out then they were coming back, it was directionless.
A: It is normal, if you send something out you get something back, like a pulsation.

- *Q: What is the auric body?*

A: The auric body or auric field, is a field of energy around us

I want to ask, are you ready to focus on the difference between the thought of loving-kindness and actually doing it, how it is when it is manifesting? The difference between the idea of loving-kindness, the thought of loving-kindness, and manifesting it. Throughout the day I want you to ask yourself:

1. is this loving-kindness?
2. am I in a state of loving-kindness?
3. what is loving-kindness?

We can also use words to support the state of loving-kindness, for example:

- *mettā* which is the *Pali* word for loving-kindness,
- *maitreya* which stands for loving-kindness practice in *Sanskrit*, or *metteyya* in *Pali*;
- ‘may I be well and happy’ (that is English!),
- or *sabbe sattā sukhita hontu* – may all beings be well and happy in *Pali*.

You can use it like a *mantra*, just to focus attention, it supports the experience. And so whatever, whoever, comes through your mind – bathe them with loving-kindness; anyone that comes up, greet them with an open heart immediately and say *mettā* or ‘may you be well and happy’, whichever you want. You can tell me later if this is easy for you to do or not. I want you to focus mainly on yourself, on your being, on creating ease in your being and noticing the quality of loving-kindness; when it is present, and also when it is not present. You can only be in one state, you cannot be in loving-kindness and not in loving-kindness at the same time. It sounds obvious. So before the practice sequence this afternoon you chant the “*Aham Avero Homi....*”, that will put you in a state of loving-kindness. And throughout the practice you study loving-kindness in your being, how it manifests in your being, when it is present and when it is not present. Rinpoche used to say there is only one thing that stands between us and enlightenment – *mettā*! You should be happy with this thought! *Metta* is already in you, you just need to cultivate it, to be in the state of loving-kindness, and you start with the structure I have given you today. Everything that comes into your mind, greet it with an open heart, with warmth. When you are having lunch, when you put the food on your plate, send *mettā* to the food. You can place your hands over the food, and wish it well and happy. It is a practice if you have food that you don’t like, or you have an allergy to, then it will not affect you. You have to be in a good state of loving-kindness, not just the idea of loving-kindness. Today is a very important day. I want you to really focus on yourself and to really get the loving-kindness more and more in your being. You need to shine the light on it more. The more you focus on it the less you focus on what upsets you. Tomorrow we focus on what upsets you.

In the text, *homi* is about us, and ‘well’ is about the physical body and ‘happy’ is to do with the mental body, and with *hontu* you send it to others. And again you have this pulsation of energy: out-in, out- in. You can always replace any thought you

have in your mind with this chanting. Instead of the normal thoughts that you have in your mind, any negative thoughts, you can chant this.

Summary of the rose meditation

First check your motivation, why you are doing this practice. It is so important, even when you step into the Zendo you should ask yourselves ‘why am I stepping into the Zendo?’. And when you bow it is a time to empty yourself of what has happened before and be open to what is happening now. So try to do this whenever you step into the Zendo, and to let go of your distracting thoughts.

The rose light enters you being and establishes you in a state of no greed, no hatred, no delusion – if only it was that easy, so until then we have to pretend! The rose in the heart chakra sends out warmth through your being. At that point you feel the warmth, the heat, the glow, and it expands outside your body to fill the auric field. That happens automatically, you don’t have to try to do that. Now you start the ten directions – you send out a beam of love to all beings and things in front of you, and then you continue with the ten directions. And then at the end of the meditation you dissolve everything: the rose collapses into a bud, into a point, and this vanishes into the stillness. It happens quickly.

First you take care of yourself, then you extend it to others – this is classic in meditation.

When you do your activities, you do them in a state of loving-kindness, if possible. So I suggest you do something like chanting before you do your activity, or something else that puts you in a state of loving-kindness and I would like you throughout the day to connect with *mettā*, *maitreya*, *metteyya* .

This afternoon when I meet you I want to know from you what is the state of loving-kindness, how does it feel in the body, and what are the conditions that put you into loving-kindness. So explore.

Rose meditation to the four directions

Now I would like to do another rose meditation, in the four directions. So first adjust your motivation for the practice: know that this practice should not help yourself only, it should spread to all beings. So your motivation could sound like this – ‘I do this practice to help all beings’. Now begin to clear your mind of distracting thoughts.

Once you have cultivated warmth in the auric field, and the heart and the whole being is filled with loving-kindness, try this:

- Imagine a rose or a ruby coloured light surrounding you. It enters your body removing the seeds of greed, hatred and delusion in your mind.
- Imagine a rose in your heart, in your heart chakra. See the rose opening a little bit more, a little bit more, and notice how it sends out waves of warmth and rose light throughout your body. Feel the contact, the glow and the warmth in your body. Then this glow extends outside your body, it expands until you are sitting in a rose coloured bubble of loving-kindness. Your *auric*

field is filled with light; a field of gold, of sunshine, of power, of energy around you.

- Now from your heart and your entire body, you are going to send loving-kindness in front of you to your spiritual teacher. If you don't think you have a spiritual teacher, send it to a radiant being. This radiant being symbolises your potential for enlightenment, for awakening in the future. Overflow loving-kindness to this being.

In order to keep the focus as you send the loving-kindness, you can mentally say the word *mettā*, or *maitreya*, or 'may all beings be well and happy'.

- Now on your right side imagine your father, and you send waves of loving-kindness out to your father on your right side. On your left side you place your mother, and you send loving-kindness to your mother.
- And then behind you, you place all the other beings in your life, the beings you know - your friends your family, your teachers. The list goes from people you are closest to, to the more distant. And finally to your enemies, those people with whom you have difficulty or who have difficulty with you. And you bathe all of them in loving-kindness.
- Now you are in the centre of this *mandala* and you send loving-kindness equally in all the four directions, unconditionally
- After that the rose light returns to the bubble, which collapses slowly into the rose inside your heart. The rose contracts to a bud, and then to a point, which vanishes into the stillness; and you stay with the stillness as long as you can.
- Maintain this awareness of the four directions as you come out of the meditation.

You can spend a few minutes outside please.

This practice is very important for you to do. Check how much you lean to one side or front and back, in terms of your energy – are you going more to the mother, or the radiant being, or the father? Are you sending equally loving-kindness in the four directions? Is there a direction that is more difficult than another one?

It is a nice practice to do as you move forward with the practice. Some people have difficulty and don't want to send loving-kindness to the father or the mother, or find it difficult to do that. So you can just imagine the female principle and the male principle; do you know what I mean? You can imagine other female or male beings in your life and place them on the left side and the right side of your body. So practise with the radiant being in front, mother on the left, father on the right and all the others behind. This is another cross, which side do you feel more pulled towards to?

A radiant being is your full awakened potential, work with the energy field rather than with particular teachers (because stories may come up). It is the potential of energy, which can change at any time.

All these beings are manifesting in you, we embody the father principle and the mother principle, and all those beings that have shaped us. If you radiate to the right, the left and become caught up in stories about your father, mother – drop it, you are no longer in loving kindness but in duality: anger, prejudice. Unhook, go back to the heart.

This is a very powerful healing practice; it can heal your relationship with parents, friends, even if they are no longer in this world, it can heal your hook with them.

Questions and answers

Q: The back one, that's a lot of people.

A: Imagining a density of people, you don't have to imagine every single one. Start with your immediate family and other people will come through, people you are not thinking of at all will just come through.

Q: Why do friends and family go at the back?

A: Because they are our back-up in the form of our ancestors, they are people who have shaped us to what we are now, they are support. Try to feel the tenderness behind you. Mother and father are separate because mother and father are vital to us in the world, and that is why we select them to be on one side or the other, otherwise we would not be here. The radiant being is in front, our future; the friends and family are at the back - we can use the image of a cushion, they are behind us. We can imagine them anywhere – sitting, standing, walking.

We should not practise the directions with people who are dead; to improve your loving-kindness you cannot practise with people who are dead – it is surprising, eh? It is what Rinpoche said, I have not made it up. We can practise sending loving-kindness to them, but not to increase our loving-kindness. It is because nothing comes back from a dead person, there is no pulsation. There are other practices for dead people.

Q: Father and mother wanted to swap sides.

A: Let what happens happen, you start with the basic idea and go with that. And your parents can go behind you at some point too. I want you to keep awareness of those four directions as you eat, as you walk. You can see how those beings have shaped you completely: your mother, your father, your friends, your teachers. And the radiant being is also shaping you, the seed of enlightenment is shaping you – otherwise you would not be here today.

Q: I still have a problem with sending to my mother, because of what she did.

A: You need to start with the nurturing, your mother nurtured you. So remember everything that nurtures you in life; work with the nurturing principle.

Q: I have a problem with concentration, I focus then it's away, I mix everything up.

A: You could practise more in nature. What is the problem?

Q: There is anxiety in me, I don't know what – something that doesn't want to engage, to be touched.

A: That is why I say to go in nature. And short practices – when you prepare food, do that with loving-kindness. Rinpoche suggested that we draw a rose. If we paint a rose on the outside, and we look at it, then we can feel the rose on the inside, the intuitive side.

Q: Is this a state of loving kindness, or is it a thought?

A: You can have a thought about loving-kindness, but it is not necessarily a state of being in loving-kindness; it is not the same thing. For each one of us, we need to find out about how it manifests in our body / being; to know how we are in a state of loving-kindness. It can be different for each one of us, but there are general guidelines for everyone. You always need to come back to the experience in the body, always. It is what Rinpoche said, what stands between us and enlightenment is

loving-kindness. We need more loving-kindness, and if we have loving-kindness we have more curiosity, joy, energy, mindfulness, concentration, tranquillity and equanimity- these are the seven factors of awakening. With my condition I need a lot of loving kindness, otherwise it is tragic. I would not be able to face you if I did not have loving-kindness for myself, for my condition. And that is why you have to practise. It would be interesting for all of you to explore what conditions lead you to having more loving-kindness, just to check.

Q: *What do you mean by conditions?*

A: Explore the inner conditions and the outer conditions like the sunshine, something outside you; and the inner conditions are your state of mind. In the morning, when you open your eyes, before you do anything else, you can chant three times the loving-kindness – you can do it aloud or mentally. And the same when you go to bed tonight, chant three times the loving-kindness. Just for short-time practices: five minutes in the morning, five minutes lunch-time, in the evening, this will really pay off for you.

So how was your day today, do you have more idea of how loving kindness feels in your body?

Q: *When there is busyness I want to give it to you, and not to you; but when there is stillness inside me, giving it out becomes unconditional.* A: Yes.

Q: *At the beginning I felt heaviness, 'oh I've got to find this loving-kindness'.*

A: It is already inside you, you don't have to find it, it is already there in your body.

Q: *I didn't feel strongly that I was giving out loving-kindness, but could feel it coming back towards me.*

A: This shows that you are giving it out.

Letting go, not making an effort, just feeling it. It is a pity we have to practise it!

Have you all spent some time reflecting on events in your life and your history that supported loving-kindness?

Q: *I can't see the distinction between loving-kindness and compassion, are they the same?*

A: Loving Kindness, Mettā, we can relate to it as a moment of tenderness in one's heart towards challenging events or people in our life including ourselves. Compassion, Karunā, is present when we work at relieving the suffering of others without considering if they are worth it or not.

See also the Four Brahma Viharas:

The Four Limitless Meditations – the Four Brahma Vihāras

Mettā, Loving-kindness: may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness

Karunā, Compassion: may all beings be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow

Muditā, Sympathetic Joy: may all beings never be separated from the sacred happiness that is sorrow-less

Upekkhā, Equanimity: without loving dear ones only or being unfriendly to another, may I live more peacefully and know each being is born unique

Why do you think it is called limitless meditation? Because it has no boundaries, it encompasses all beings.

Strengthening the fire in the belly

We need to activate warmth, strengthen the fire in the belly, then it can rise to the heart; through body work. Lie on your back, both knees up, thumbs touching at the navel, index fingers touching on the belly to make a triangle. Imagine embers in that triangle in the belly, fan them with the out-breath, rekindling heat. This is done with the mind (imagination), breathing (out-breath) and location (belly).

Alternatively, or additionally, you can work with a visual image of what fire in the belly looks like. It is an image to trigger warmth in the kidney energy, like moxa. Go outside, place a lit incense stick in a plate of earth, or piece of bread, and focus on the glow, the fire; occasionally fan it with a hand movement or blow with the breath to keep the ember burning. Like fire, if you don't attend to it, it goes out. The incense stick is a device for concentration. When it burns out, take the glow inwards, into the belly. Outer experience leads to an inner experience. The external incense stick is preparation, eventually you don't need it, you can contact warmth in the belly directly. The warmth then rises to the heart centre, turns into a flower, then fills your whole being, every cell in the body. Waves of loving-kindness, every cell is beaming with loving-kindness. It overflows into the auric field, take time to cultivate a bubble of protection, an aura of loving-kindness around you. Only then, from the auric field, when it is filled with loving-kindness, can it overflow to other beings, to all beings.

Variation on the meditation to the four directions

1. First notice the posture of your body, the support from your back – this is contact with your ancestors, water energy.
2. Focus on the rise and fall of the belly at the navel, to put you in touch with your earth.
3. Imagine an ember in the *hara* (three fingers width below the navel), each out-breath fans the ember, feel some kind of warmth or presence (if you can't get this, keep going with the meditation anyway – it will come). Make this image very stable – of the ember in the belly and the out-breath fanning the ember.
4. Allow warmth (not fire) to rise up the central channel to the heart – imagine a flower, an energy field of warmth. Use images simply to have the mind stay with what you are doing. The flower is slowly unfolding. Allow the flower and the colour (orange, peach, pink or soft red) to rise spontaneously. Positive energy has a tendency to expand, so the warmth radiates outwards into the body and out into the auric field – it's important to define the auric field, don't leave any part unattended (the actual width can vary).
5. Then you feel strong, 'well and happy and free from fear', and you can radiate out and send warmth to your father / the male principle, on your right and then the same to your mother on your left. Train the mind not to go with the story line of the father, or the mother. Stay with the male principle, female principle, in yourself, and place father and mother in again when you are feeling stable.

You can return to the body, the ember, the flower, then allow expansion to happen again.

6. Then radiate the warmth behind, to the ancestors, and feel the loving-kindness coming back. It is a natural expression (in your heart) towards others, and it returns – like being surrounded by warmth, in a big armchair. You are not sending out loving-kindness to others, that is patronising and one-sided.
7. You spend time and energy nurturing friendships and enmity, so really those qualities are in yourself. There is a part of you that is closing down when you're feeling 'enemy', so come back and make your auric field whole again. So you are beautifully 'held' – then radiate to the front. Watch your attitude to want to see something – open all the senses, not just the seeing or a word; to catch a glimpse you have to use all the senses. (All the other people – right, left, back – are in you, so they have to come with you.) If there is even an impression of what's in front, just notice it. Don't be caught up in expectation and wanting something to happen, no preconception, fabrication. Stay a short time with the sensation of the being you are yet to become – the seeds are already in you now, all they need is the right conditions, good nurturing. Repeat: the seeds of change are already in you now and all they want is to grow – preconception, fear, impatience, gets in the way. So come back to loving-kindness, to the moment, The loving-kindness and warmth is in you, just make it stronger, more obvious, more conscious. Once you have a glimpse of the being you are yet to become, come back to the present and close the session with the *Brahma Vihāras*, Peace to All Beings, and sharing the merit.

Practising loving-kindness to the ten directions

Settle the breathing in your belly, and reconnect with the rose in your heart centre.

- With each out-breath send the energy of loving-kindness in front of you, and with each in-breath imagine it returning back to your heart centre. Now do the same towards the right side of your body: as you breathe out, send the energy of loving-kindness out, as you breathe in the energy of loving-kindness returns. Now continue with the same practise behind your back and then to your left side.
- Continue with practising in the intermediate directions: starting with the left diagonal in the front; then diagonal to the right side in front; then to the left diagonal at the back, and then to the right diagonal at the back.
- Finally do the same in the direction below you and finish with the direction above you.

After having completed all ten directions, continue with twenty or thirty minutes 'sit'.

How was the practice with the ten directions, how did it work for you? They say that this is the easiest practice to do at first to develop loving-kindness - is that your experience?

Q: In front the light is strong, in each other direction the light gets weaker.

A: Imagine you turn yourself round so each time you are facing the front. You can also practise it as you walk, imagine the ten directions as you walk, it can be with you all the time. In everyday life, if you go for a walk with the dog, you can imagine the ten directions.

Commentary on the above practice

1. The first four directions make the foundation, the 'cross of stability': in front of you, to the right, behind and to the left (clockwise); going just a bit beyond the auric field
2. The four intermediate directions - diagonally to the left, right, behind right, behind left (clockwise again) - make the 'cross of creativity', going beyond as far as the mind can go, representing movement. Observe any differences; if you can only go a limited distance in one direction, this is information.
3. Down through the body and into the earth. Then above into the sky, into space. As far as you want. Up and down, as far as the mind can go, is the central axis.

You can practise the ten directions coming from the heart or from the third eye in the forehead. Some directions may feel more difficult because of your own imbalances in the body. If you have had a trauma on one side, there can be a "no-go-area" there, a shadow on that side. Be relaxed, at ease; loving-kindness is already in you, we just need a device to trigger the feeling, it needs to be woken up. It is also a healing meditation, from the third eye you can heal any shadow in the body, any trauma in the brain. When you are in a state of loving-kindness the eye, the state of seeing, the perceiving, is single. Normally it's dual, caught in attachment and aversion: 'I like' / 'I don't like', which leads to mistrust and anger.

Imagine an orange glow in the heart. With each direction, in sequence, on the in-breath take in the pain, suffering, hurt of all beings in that direction; and on the out-breath send loving-kindness as a glow of orange light. While saying *Om Maitreya svāhā* (the short mantra of Maitreya Buddha, the Buddha of Boundless Love). Be spontaneous, it may take longer or less time in some directions. Take around forty-five minutes. It is a realignment of energy, an energetically re-balancing the body. Orange is a combination of red and yellow, energy and spontaneity, fire and earth. Have warmth (red) and share it spontaneously (yellow). Work with different shades of orange, the balance between the red and yellow elements. Before going to sleep at night, scan the body for areas that feel warm and comfortable, so fall asleep in positivity; do it when you wake up too.

Classic Loving-Kindness meditation

I would like to guide you into another meditation on loving-kindness which is a classic meditation on *mettā*; it is the main one for loving-kindness practice.

It would be better to face out, to face a blank wall, for this one. So first adjust your motivation for doing this practice, why am I practising?

And now remember a moment of loving-kindness that you have experienced; and let this feeling grow inside your heart. Feel it fully into your body, allow it to grow in

your body. You can feel yourself back in the situation where you experienced loving-kindness; feel the situation perhaps in detail, to evoke the loving-kindness in you.

- Now visualise on the blank wall in front of you, yourself as you are now. You are impartial, gentle, tender and upright and from your entire body, especially from the heart, you radiate out loving-kindness to this being in front of you. You may mentally need to say the words ‘may I be well and happy’, *mettā*, *maitreya*, or simply ‘love’. Any word that resonates for you. It is very important that you spend enough time on this first phase so your heart is full, so you are able to give to others. Maintain this feeling of loving-kindness towards your own being for a while
- now bring in front of you a being for whom you have deep respect, deep affection, a being for whom it is easy to radiate LK towards. The text says someone who is older than you and still alive. Not someone you have a sexual relationship with as you may go into something else. Visualise that being clearly and from your heart, from your entire body, you radiate out waves of loving-kindness, of warmth, of kindness. You need to open the floodgate of positive emotion towards this being, let it pour out of you, let it pour out of every cell of your body. Until there is no more ‘you’ there; only the vibration of love is there. Open the floodgates! Then go back to the first being, you as you are now, and see if you can open the floodgate to this being, you. Now you go back to the being for whom you have deep affection, and open the floodgates wide open, wide open – it feels good, doesn’t it?
- Now you visualise a being you don’t know in front of you, a stranger, a being in the crowd, someone you do not know and who you have no personal relationship with. See them as just a shape, no distinct features or expression; they are still a being. And in the same way you radiate out loving-kindness to this being from your heart, from your entire body, with the floodgates open – wide open
- next you visualise a being for whom you have aversion towards, or this being has aversion towards you. See them in all detail and radiate out again waves of loving-kindness from your heart, from your entire body, to that being.
- Now place all the four beings together, imagine them sitting in front of you and you radiate loving-kindness to each one equally. You can imagine yourself being a radiant fire and you warm each being equally. See if the beings change places.

Go outside for a few minutes, please, taking the loving-kindness around you.

Summary of above meditation

If beings fade, you replace them. Be sure you stay sufficient time with each being to allow the loving-kindness to truly embrace them. If the strength of the LK decreases, go back to the being where it was strongest, let it come back to its full strength, then return to the previous being. You can go back and forth if needed to maintain the LK. At the end bring back all four together in front of you and radiate loving-kindness to all equally, and watch how they change places – maybe the being for whom you have

deep respect becomes yourself, or the being with whom you have difficulty becomes the being for whom you have deep respect. Eventually there is no distinction, you become all these beings; that is a moment of true loving-kindness, when there is no separation between ‘them’ and ‘me’, ‘me’ and ‘them’.

Questions and answers

Are you full now, very full? You should be, you should be full. Could you open the floodgates?

Q: It was easier to open the floodgates when all four lined up together.

A: Not to send equally, to separate your loving-kindness will take an effort, because you say “I’ll send to you, but not to you”. That is what is so special about the preciousness of this human life, that this can happen between us – only with human beings, with no other beings.

Responding to feedback:

It is good to be emotional like this, to be stirred like this, then you can make it happen. It is very important to choose well your first starting point so that you are full of loving-kindness. When I asked you at the beginning to recollect a moment or event of loving-kindness that you have experienced, that is the moment I referred to, so you have to do this very well. It is important to do yourself first, otherwise you have nothing to give, it is just an idea. So take as long as it takes. You have to get yourself out of the way; and if you get out of the way there is no ‘you’ any more and you are not sending anything, you are in a state of loving-kindness. When you are sending something it is not very true, there is a separation – you and them, you and them. It is not conditional love, it is unconditional love; and you are open to the love that is everywhere. So whatever your situation, all you have to do is open the floodgates and all is well! You can do the ‘we are all connected and all want to be happy’ meditation, from early on in the retreat, and the four limitless meditations – first thing in the morning and last in the evening – these are things you can do at home.

Was it difficult for you to contact the various beings?

Q: A great tiredness came up, with aversion. A: You are pushing away...

Q: With the stranger, I found it quite difficult to concentrate. A: So stay with it.

Q: The person with aversion was someone who beats their children, a lot of difficulty.

A: Do you think someone who beats their children does not merit loving-kindness?

Q: I know they do really, but...

A: You are not expected to condone the act, of course that is wrong, there is no question about that; but you can have some understanding and feel loving-kindness for the being who does it. *That is different!*

You are all the beings inside you – you are the being who deserves respect, you are the being you push away, you are the being who is neutral.

You can do loving-kindness practices in any posture, as classically taught (standing, walking, sitting, lying down).

In walking meditation: each step is a gift of loving-kindness to: loved ones; people to whom you are indifferent or don't know; 'enemies', people you dislike or who dislike you. Say *me-tte-yya* with each step (one syllable per step) - unless it's too complicated. This is to aid concentration, stop the mind wandering.

We have to train the mind to have more loving-kindness, we have to train it then it will become stronger and stronger. So today if you feel aversion to someone, or something, then try to change it by sending loving-kindness. Listen to the mind, hear what you are saying; listen to the attitude, and change it with loving-kindness. I've said many times in workshops don't avoid them, come close to them and that will give you the opportunity to practise, with loving-kindness. Or if there is something you don't want to do. Don't try to avoid it, try to change it with loving-kindness; otherwise you will spend the rest of your life avoiding things. It is much better to find a way to deal with it than to avoid it. So today I would like you to work with things that upset you; to practise we start with little things and build it up to the bigger things, then you practise opening your heart and embracing them with loving-kindness. They can be physical, mental or emotional or anyone that comes into your mind who upsets you, radiate out loving-kindness to all of that.

Loving-kindness is a natural feeling, we can have it like a mother for a new child or for a dog or a cat. We are practising loving-kindness to make it stronger and more permanent not so much on and off.

Q: I've noticed myself doing bad things, like leaving cupboard doors open in the kitchen, and how I don't let these negative judgements go, allowing them go on and on, and feeling really bad about it.

A: It is not bad to have these thoughts, it is all right. You need to take a break, doing something you enjoy, short breaks of wholesomeness; don't imagine you are going to have twenty-four hours of wholesomeness, just little things here and there. It is all about training the mind, when we do loving-kindness that is what we do. Taking refuge in loving-kindness – chanting the *brahma vihāras* (see page 5) three times at the end of a session. Do you feel different now than before the chanting? We chanted for a minute, maybe two minutes. I want you to promise me that you will do this more often. You can do it in the car, at work, at home, under your breath quietly. I want you to tell me tomorrow what conditions in your life support loving-kindness in you. What activities, what thoughts, what people, what environment. Maybe the food that you eat, if you have flowers in your home, is that a condition that supports *mettā*? You could include anything, like the colour of your curtains; it is very practical. When I came into the Zendo I asked Amarana to turn the orchid towards me, so I could get the energy of loving-kindness.

You have all been talking but now you are back in silence again; the last twenty-four hours of a retreat is very important, so we are still practising, and this is where it starts.

Variation on the classic Loving-Kindness meditation

Prepare with body work and walking meditation.

1. Establish the posture, the right hand supported by the left: the left is the intuitive side, the right is discursive, intellectual reasoning. Imagine the hands are in the belly, either small and inside, or the belly extending around them.
2. From a flower in the hands in the centre of the belly, warmth and light and pulsating energy fills the whole body (colour is as it comes). Then you are so full it overflows outside the body, into an egg-shaped cushion around the body (which may by now have no edges) into the auric field and beyond in ten directions. Pay attention to where you feel weaker, where light doesn't go or not so strongly. You are using the concept as a key to trigger an experience, once you get the experience the concept can fall away, so the flower may turn into a warm fire
3. Then extend loving-kindness, warmth to others in the room, to those who you like, are indifferent to, and dislike.

With practice the flow is equal to all three groups, this is equanimity. First it starts with yourself, warmth and loving-kindness to fill yourself - with all your weaknesses, criticisms, tendencies – then it can overflow and awareness of your own negatives helps in spreading equanimity to others.

Loving-Kindness by categories

Radiate Loving-Kindness towards specific categories of people: to people in gaol, women who have been raped, children wounded in war, to a foetus being aborted – whatever your understanding is of suffering in the world. You will find it becomes endless. Walking around this little village where we live, I realised that in each house there had been a tragedy: the death of a baby, cancer, someone in hospital, someone lost their job, suicide. You may not like those people but you can open the heart; they too are in suffering, it takes away the distinction of 'I' and 'others'.

This is a life-long practice, by itself loving-kindness practice leads you to a state of full enlightenment (the *sutta* text says 'no rebirth', which has the same meaning). It is more than just being kind to people, it is when your seeing becomes single. At the beginning you can have just glimpses of full loving-kindness, but eventually it is your full potential. You can stay with one technique till you feel you know it; or others may prefer to move from one to another, needing more variation. For now, still at the beginning – every time you catch sight of another being, even in your head (there are lots of beings popping up in our heads), extend loving-kindness to them. Including past beings within you and beings from your past. If you start thinking 'but I don't want to send to that person', say the 'Sharing the Merit' text to yourself, or *sabbe sattā sukhita hontu*. If you are very threatened by a particular being, chant '*Aham avero homi*' (the *Brahma Vihāras*, see page-5) and she/he will disappear.

If you move into a new house and there is bad energy in a room, light an incense stick and do some chanting, or recite 'Peace to All Beings' (see Annex); change the

ambiance with this aura of loving-kindness. If you can do this to a room where some violent action may have taken place, we can do it to our own memories. Place it in everyday life, send loving-kindness to food before eating; it is also good protection when travelling. When walking towards someone, some situation, think loving-kindness, may this person be well and happy. Consciously opening the heart, softening, not pushing away; there is no fear with loving-kindness, no me and mine, no you nor I. In everyday life, look at people, how they walk, contact their suffering and open your heart to them. If you really do this, you will have radiance, a glow about you. You will have more inner strength.

Embodying Loving Kindness

Recollection of ten moments

Go back into your life and recollect, remember ten moments, events, situations (or they selected you) when you experienced loving-kindness, either as a giver or as a receiver. Loving-kindness is friendliness, care. List them, write them down numbered 1 to 10. Then focus on each one in turn and see how it feels in the body, compare the subtle difference in feeling in the body with each one of them. It doesn't have to be a precise moment, it can be just a general feeling, the ambiance, having different textures. It can involve animals – cats, dogs, birds, nature. Take your time to choose the ten. What we are doing is we are borrowing from our memories, our experience, and bring it into the present. Settle yourself, be centred, don't discuss or have a dialogue with or about it; just 'how does it feel in the body?' - the physical body or the auric body - and your body will tell you 'this is loving-kindness'. This is a preparation for a deeper journey (see below).

Guided meditation on the ten moments

This is a practice to help you become an embodiment of loving-kindness, not just an idea; to feel it in every cell in your body, so it's not an effort to emanate loving-kindness.

1. First establish good posture in the body and you state your intention for yourself.
2. Then you bring up your ten events or situations where you have experienced loving kindness and you take some time to touch on each situation and 'how does it feel in the body?'. Take some time to do that, then of the ten you choose four: four moments, four situations. Then take a bit longer with each one of them; again, 'how does it feel in my body?'
3. Then you choose one, and with this one you're going to go deeper into the sensation in your body. You want to come to a 'body in the body' experience, so there is no separation between you and the experience; it's not an idea anymore.
4. As you go deeper into your body sensation, you might find a word that describes what you are feeling. You choose this word and you repeat it with the breathing, silently; this is to help you to go deeper and deeper. A word that describes what you are feeling, use it to go deeper, to describe the texture that we call loving-kindness, to get to the essence of it. It is important to use the word with the breathing, as you breathe out. Come to a full 'body in the body' experience so the mind is very quiet, no chatter.
5. Once you have gone very deep in your meditation, then you ask a question. This moment is very important, so ask as if you are dropping a stone in the water. Ask the question then let go, and remain open with all of your senses open, because the answer may come through a smell, taste, image, body sensation, or maybe a sentence. Ask the question when you feel very still, calm; you ask the question into your depth, into the very depth of your being.

And the question is, *'where does this feeling go, where does it take me next?'* Say the question three times silently, calmly.

6. And after that you spend some time (ten minutes) in nature, because the answer may not come straight away; maybe it will come in nature, or later in your dreams.

The important thing is to ask the question from a state of calm, from the depth of your being, to be in a place where you can ask the question. Having the experience once is not enough, you have to cultivate it more. So ask yourself, 'What do I need to do to cultivate this state of loving-kindness, and what do I need to avoid?'. Listen to what you need to maintain this quality that you have now; we all have it, it is tangible. Daring not to pick up your busy self, daring to stay in that gap. What you do with your body, speech and mind. Consider what would be the most conducive activity of your body, speech and mind to maintain this quality.

Loving-kindness to the senses

- Place your attention on your right eye. And imagine sending loving-kindness and warmth to your right eye. You can say mentally 'may my right eye be well and happy', or simply *metta*. Now you do the same with your left eye. Then you focus on the divine eye, in the centre of your forehead, and again send it loving-kindness.
- Now bring your attention to your right ear and send it also loving-kindness; warmth, gentleness. And you can focus on your left ear and do the same, bathing the left ear in the light of loving-kindness. Then focus on the divine ear, between the two ears in the centre of your head; focus on the divine ear and send it loving-kindness.
- Next focus on your right nostril and the same thing, you send loving kindness to your right nostril, 'may my right nostril be well and happy'. Then you go to the left nostril, and the same thing to the tip of the nose.
- Then you move on to the lower lip, and apply loving-kindness to the lower lip. Then to the upper lip; and now to the tip of the tongue.
- And now to the whole of the right side of the body; and to the left side of the body. Centred on the spine.
- Now to the right brain, then to the left brain; and finally to all of the brain, the whole brain.

Loving-kindness to the senses in pairs

You can do this practice for others in pairs, so you ask your partner to sit up or lie down, whichever is more comfortable for them. So first of course you have to generate loving-kindness in your heart, you could do that with chanting. And then you ask your partner, you speak to them, and you ask them to place their attention on the right eye, and to send loving-kindness to the right eye. And you could also do the same thing, you send loving-kindness to their right eye. And then do the left eye; then do the divine eye. Then do the right ear and then the left ear and then the divine ear. With the divine ear you will hear sounds that you don't normally hear, very

subtle sounds; you can understand languages that you have not heard before. Then the right nostril, and the left, and the divine nostril which is the tip of the nose. When you do right and left you are in duality, and when you do the centre it is unique, it is the one sense; that is why it is called divine, it is not right and left, it is not duality. Then you do the right and left lip, which includes the upper and the lower part of the mouth, and you centre it at the tip of the tongue. Then you do the right side of the body then the left side, and you centre it at the spine. Then you do the right side of the brain, the right brain, then the left; and you centre it in the whole brain. And that is the end of the meditation. When you practise on your own you do it one time very slowly and two times much quicker, like a waterfall. You do it just once in a pair and then you change over, half an hour each.

I have a question for you: what are the benefits of practising loving-kindness? Can you tell me, from your experience of having practised it? The teacher has to do many different things to help the student to progress.

“If the liberation of heart by all-embracing kindness has been cultivated and developed, made one’s vehicle and foundation, is firmly established, brought to greatness and full perfection, one may expect eleven blessings:

One sleeps peacefully; awakes peacefully; has no evil dreams; is dear to humans; is dear to spirits; heavenly beings protect one; fire, poison and weapons cannot do any harm; the scattered mind becomes composed; one’s features brighten up; one will have an untroubled death; and if one does not penetrate higher, one will be reborn in the Brahma-world” (AN 11:16)

Is that enough incentive for you to practise?

Q: *What is the Brahma world?*

A: The *Brahma* world is the world of loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity and tranquillity – all the time!

Have you got an answer to my question of what supports loving-kindness in your daily life, and what doesn’t support it? It is an important question for you to explore, and I ask for feedback on the question of what conditions in your life support loving-kindness.

Q: *How to cope with busyness and work pressures?*

A: To practise for five minutes at intervals every day, and it will help. You can do the chanting, or you can just open your heart to what is happening now.

Inner smile meditations

Start each of the following three inner smile meditations with steps 1 & 2:

1. Reflect on how helpful and essential it is to be friendly, at ease with the body

2. Recollect the feeling of smiling, either you smiling or when you see someone smiling; feel it in your eyes, in your lips, and see the spark in the eye. Loosen the eyes move them in all directions.

First inner smile meditation - front line

3. now from the eyes takes this smile into the:

- cheeks – ears – nose
- jaws
- throat
- thymus area (notch of breast bone)
- heart area
- blood system
- lungs – skin
- liver – gall bladder
- spleen – pancreas
- kidneys
- adrenal glands
- bladder
- urinary tract
- reproductive organs

4. One time thoroughly, then back to the eyes and a few times down like a waterfall

5. Then sit quietly

6. Review

7. Draw mandala(s) of the images, sensations, impressions that came up during the meditation

Second inner smile meditation - middle line

Start as above 1. And 2 then take the smile into the

3. Digestive tract:

- palate of mouth
- back of tongue
- gums
- teeth
- lips
- oesophagus
- stomach
- sphincter
- small intestines
- large intestines - ascending and descending
- rectum
- anus

Finish as above with 4, 5, 6 and 7

Third inner smile meditation - rear line

Start as before with steps 1 and 2, then

3. take this smile into the nervous system, and first you start with the top of the head.
 - Then move into the right brain and take the quality of the smile to the right brain. And then to the left brain. It would be useful to tilt your head to the left brain, or turn your head. And keep going back and forth like this – to the right, to the left – several times.
 - And now you settle at the pineal gland, it is right at the centre of your brain, behind and above the pituitary gland.
 - Now settle at the brain stem
 - Then focus on the spinal cord.
 - And now you focus on all the nerves that come out from the spinal cord.
 - Next, in your own time, focus on the nerves in the arms and the legs, coming out of each vertebra.

Finally you go through the process two times very quickly, like a waterfall. Starting with the head, the brain, the pineal gland, the brain stem, the spinal cord and the nerves that come out from the spinal cord, and in the arms and the legs.

Now just sit quietly, don't do anything special, then go outside for a few minutes.

Any images that have come up, you could draw them; you could make a *mandala*¹.

You do one of the inner smile meditations in a single session.

Q: I found it more difficult to bring the sensation to the left than the right brain.

*A: So repeat the practice, go back and forth between them. It makes sense to focus first on the top of the head, often when you invite something to come in it comes through the top of the head. In the *vajrayana* practice, with practise this part of the head becomes soft as the practise becomes more in touch, more subtle. Rinpoche always used to wear a hat to protect the crown of the head because it becomes soft, and he used to check students by tapping on the crown of their head.*

¹ To make a small mandala, the size should be a hand span (spread out) plus the other four fingers close together.

Meditations on embracing dis-comfort and what upsets you

Today we are going to have fun! I want you to focus on the things that upset you. This is the test of the practice, not when everything goes well. Do you agree that when things go well you have lots of loving-kindness, and it is all fine? And when things go not so well, there is not so much loving-kindness. So we are going to focus on when things are not going so well – the little things, not so big things

So basically don't avoid the things that upset you; you need to practise, you need to come close to them, and see if you can open your heart no matter what. Come back to the person for whom you have deep respect, so take that as your benchmark and come back to that whenever you need to, with the things that upset you. You need to be strong to deal with the things that upset you; we tend to arrange the world to avoid the things that upset us, but they don't go away. It is better to find a strategy to deal with them and the strategy is loving-kindness. You can leave space around those things, and everything that upsets you; you should come close to it, make friends with it, come close to it. First we apply loving-kindness, and we see if it changes. It may not need to change, you are never going to make the world perfect.

Q: I realised I don't give enough loving-kindness. I respond to difficulties by closing off.

A: This is the instruction for today's practice: we have to experience the feeling of loving-kindness and reproduce it again and again and again. You could maybe make a list of when we have experienced loving-kindness, or when we have given loving-kindness to others. To make your well full! Otherwise it is just the thought of loving-kindness and it is not activating. Remember the on-going questions to ask yourself: what is loving-kindness, am I in loving-kindness, what are the conditions that put me in loving-kindness?

Just to shine the light is enough, if it is there it will manifest; don't fabricate it, don't think it should be like this or like that. Loving-kindness practice always starts with yourself, to practise radiance on yourself; if you are not in loving-kindness you cannot manifest, cannot send it out. So you can make yourself radiant by doing the rose meditation, or chanting, and to check the conditions in your life that support loving-kindness.

Settle your attention in the belly noticing the movements of the belly in and out, rising and falling. Within the ease and calm of the body, allow a happy memory to come to the surface. See yourself back in that situation, allow yourself to embody this feeling, this happy feeling. What do you notice in your body: a change in breathing, a change in temperature; softening, warmth, expansion?

- Now imagine a flower at your heart, a beautiful flower barely open. The flower in your heart wants to open, wants to grow more and more – allow it to do so. Notice how the flower opens sideways, back and front, up and down. The movement of opening your flower is spontaneous, it doesn't take any effort. What takes effort is maintaining a closed heart. Take your time to familiarise yourself with the flower opening in your heart, take as long as you need. The flower is your heart, your heart is a flower

- Now find in your body a place of discomfort, of tension. Don't push it away, just meet it. And you open your heart to embrace this discomfort. The discomfort is like a child, the heart is like a parent. See how the heart can open to hold, to embrace this discomfort. And see what happens to the discomfort when you do that. Open the heart bigger than the discomfort. You don't need to push away or be afraid of the discomfort; you don't need to make it an enemy, just open your heart to it.
- Now go back to the happy memory, the happy event; feel it again in your body, embody it. It can be a different memory, not the same one. Now check that your heart is still wide open, soft, ready to embrace anything that comes. Now bring to mind a mental discomfort, something that is upsetting you mentally, emotionally – and open your heart to it, embrace it, open your flower to it. You can place it right in the centre of the flower, and see what happens next.

The idea is to give you time to practise it in everyday life, you meet the dis-comfort, you embrace it. Look for trouble! I mean it actually. If you have a tendency to be quiet, look for noise. If you have a tendency to look for sunshine, look for rain. If someone annoys you, look for their company. Expose yourself and open your heart. Don't start with too big challenges, work with small things first.

What happens when you make your heart much, much bigger than your fear? Watch what happens. You can meet all your fear with an open heart, the heart doesn't mind. The heart can open, open any time. If you remember to open the heart no matter what, you have found the key to happiness, no matter what. When your heart opens the change can be quite quick, quite immediate. The habit to close the heart may come back, open the heart again. Coming back to choice of intention, intention to maintain an open heart no matter what.

*As I smile, may your being receive warmth and comfort.
 As I breathe, may your pain and hurt dissolve into emptiness.
 As I walk, may my steps lighten up your heart and give you life.
 As long as I live, may I see my face in yours and
 may I hear your voice in mine.
 (Sonia)*

Openness of the heart and mind that includes ourselves and that extends to all beings is our natural capacity. This practice offers the means to cultivate that state of being. Open your heart to whatever is happening in the world. That is the practice we are doing. Do it with the little things then with the big things it will happen naturally. The key is opening the heart, no matter what, no exception. I am sure your mind will have some objection – that's OK, meet the objection with an open heart. Explore the practice of opening the heart in everything you do – in washing up, thinking, eating, going to the toilet. What I want is for you to know if the heart is open or closed; it is quite subtle. You either have an open heart or not, there is no in-between. No 'but...'

Guided meditation for opening the heart

For this practice you can be sitting or lying down, whichever is most comfortable for you.

1. First establish the hollow body. From the top of your head down to your toes, you are empty. Imagine, experience space within; including your head. Now within that space you notice the movement of the belly. Rising, falling. Settle your attention at the belly. Just stay with the belly, without expectation.
2. And now, within the ease and calm of your body, allow a happy memory to come to the surface. See yourself back in that situation. What do you notice in your body – a change in breathing, a change in temperature? Allow yourself to embody these happy feelings. Notice what happens in your chest, and turn your attention at the chest. You may feel a spark of lightness, of warmth, of softening, or expansion. Stay with the feeling that you have now, in your chest.
3. Then imagine at your heart a flower, barely open, a beautiful flower. Allow this flower to gently, slowly open. The flower in your heart wants to open, wants to grow more and more – allow it to do so. See the flower in three dimensions – opening sideways, back to front, up and down. The movement of expansion of your heart, of the flower opening, is spontaneous, it doesn't take any effort – what takes effort is maintaining a closed heart. So take your time, familiarise yourself with the feeling of opening the heart. The image of the flower is a support. Now I would like you to talk to your heart, to your flower – to say words of appreciation, of respect. To talk to your flower, to your heart, as a friend, as a dear friend. Come to a feeling of no separation between you and your heart, of no disconnection. You and your heart are in union. The flower is your heart, the heart is a flower. You create with your imagination this flower, then comes the feeling, the experience.
4. And now, if you like, you can imagine someone that you feel safe with, someone that you trust. Imagine that person holding your heart, touching it gently, one hand on your front one on the back, not pressing, just holding it gently. Someone you have deep trust in, someone you feel safe with. Imagine that person holding your heart, to make you aware of this part of your body.
5. Now find in the body a place of discomfort, of tension. Don't push it away, just meet it. And you and your heart open to embrace the discomfort. The discomfort is like a child, the open heart is like a parent, holding the child. Or you can use the image of the flower, placing the discomfort at the centre of the flower. So you meet your discomfort with an open heart, and see what happens to the discomfort. The petals of the flower are hugging the discomfort; your heart is hugging the discomfort; your whole body is hugging the discomfort. So you are trying to stay with two things, the discomfort and the opening of the heart, and you see what happens to the discomfort. Where is the discomfort now? The practice is to maintain an open heart no matter what is happening in your body, maintain this open flower. When you work with the mind you work with the intention. The intention is to keep the heart wide open, to embrace everything that comes into it. Open your heart to the discomfort, open the heart and feel the discomfort – holding with the warmth, the kindness of the heart. Like a mother would do to a child. What happens to

the discomfort that is held by the mother, by the heart? You open your heart bigger than the discomfort, you don't push away the discomfort; you invite the discomfort, you see it, you inspect it. You don't treat it as an enemy but as a friend.

6. So now contact again a happy event, another one. Feel the response in your chest, in your heart, and allow this feeling to grow. Feel your heart as a flower, a flower that is opening, opening – gently, softly. Now bring to mind a situation in your life that creates some agitation. Don't choose something too big, choose something you can manage. Contact the agitation in your mind, in your body. And open your heart, embrace the agitation with an open heart. Or place the agitation in the centre of your flower and see the flower hugging the agitation. What happens to the agitation now?
7. Choose a second example of agitation of mind and body, and meet it with an open heart, an open flower. You need to open the heart wider, bigger than the discomfort of the body and mind. The heart is wishing to open, it doesn't ask why, it just opens. Where there is pain, where there is suffering, the heart is willing to open to embrace it. Only our stories, our ideas of who we are, get in the way of opening the heart.
8. Now say some words of thanks to your heart for this practice.

It is a simple practice but not so easy. Our heart is either open or closed, there is no in-between, no 'but'. The practice asks us to maintain an open heart no matter what – when you are tired, putting your shoes on, in the shower. Is my heart open? Challenging, eh? For the rest of the day everything you meet, like the weather, anything to disturb your mind or your body, you open your heart. And if you have some time you can draw a flower, the flower that you saw in you heart. Remember it is less effort to open your heart than to keep it closed. And don't avoid situations that upset you – on the contrary seek them out, then you have a golden opportunity to practise opening the heart. If you can do that with yourself, you will be able to do it with other beings. So seek out the people that upset you most. And if suddenly you are surrounded by a crowd of people, don't take it personally. Think that you are giving them an opportunity to practise opening the heart. Don't forget the deeper aspiration to practise for the benefit of all beings.

Question and answer

So what happened when you tried to maintain an open heart?

Q: The open heart is very warming, expansive. When thinking of a difficulty, a wave of contraction went through it. I was able to feel the warmth again, but why do we keep doing it, contracting? It's so simple, so powerful. Yet we constantly want to close off.

A: It is a choice of intention, remember this, a choice of intention. Sometimes the intention by habit is very subtle, that is why we need to create new habits. There is no half-way, not 'maybe my heart is open', it is either open or it's not. That is why we maintain the image of the flower, that will support the feeling of opening the heart. You have many moments in the day to notice when your heart spontaneously opens - flowers, sunshine, good soup - to the cook - your soup yesterday evening was very good, I had two helpings, it is rare for me to have two helpings of soup! If you notice

how often the heart is opening, you will be amazed how many moments there are in the day. And of course if you have negative thoughts, agitation, you can use it to open the heart.

Q: Negative emotions?

A: Maybe a feeling of pride coming up, you don't push it away, you maintain the emotion, the physical pain, and you open your heart. Of course there will be suffering, negative space, and in response to this you open your heart.

Q: I get caught up in a story, and it leaks.

A: Don't push away the story, you know the story is there, notice it, and you open your heart.

Q: If your heart is open, is it impossible to succumb to the negativity?

A: There is no more separation with the open heart.

Q: I find it hard to open the heart and open the mind – the mind can be joyful, the heart still cut off. Outside there was a choice, opening the heart or movement, and movement seemed to be more joyful.

A: It is a choice of intention, the intention to be more strong. You have to come to a decision, a conclusion, if opening the heart is more healthy for you.

Q: I'm trying to open my heart.

A: Your trying is pushing, the open heart is not. Go looking for trouble, another example! You don't like bare feet? Walk bare-foot and open your heart.

Q: Some emotions are more difficult than others, with big emotion it can be heavy to open your heart. Somehow the pain in my knee is easier.

A: Start with small things and then go to big things. Having an open heart is being upright, not pushing nor pulling away. You can give anything to an open heart, it is bigger than all your fears.

Q: Interruption by noisy lorry outside.

A: Look at what happens when you open your heart to it.

Q: It goes away? If you're lucky! You let go of it physically and emotionally; your attachment to it goes away.

In walking practice, did you get the feeling of the heart opening?

Q: The feeling was of the chest opening, really widely.

A: This is what I want you to do. When you get the feeling of the heart opening spontaneously, say 'thank you' (internally) – at the sight of a bird, a flower, a memory.

Q: What if when feeling the heart opening, tears come?

A: Say 'thank you', say 'I'm a lucky girl, I have lots of pain in my body, I can open my heart'. First thing in the morning, go into nature, find something that opens your heart, say 'thank you'.

Q: To have the wisdom to discriminate in our response?

A: I think that you are going down the line that you don't want to open your heart to some people, and actually you should open your heart to anyone, to be in a position that you can open your heart to anyone – it takes some practise of course. Because when you open your heart to anyone you don't injure yourself; when you close your heart you injure yourself.

Q: Sometimes I feel I want to hold the loving-kindness back, don't want to give it away.

A: Step out of the way and let the loving-kindness shine forth.

Q: My mother is only happy through her children, but it doesn't work; so we are all in a cycle of unhappiness. When should you stop trying to help someone be happy?

A: Just practise loving-kindness. Cover her in radiant loving-kindness – it is your wish, your intention; it is all you can do.

Q: How to deal with someone who is a problem to you?

A: Always start with yourself first. Be radiant with loving-kindness then offer it to the other person.

Q: I have worked in mental health, where some people have been through really horrific things. So I wanted to help, but not giving them the license to behave badly.

A: You have to emphasise the positive in everyone. With someone who has gone through horrendous things, as you say, you have to strengthen that being by focusing on the positive in their life. You could ask them to write twenty-one things that they are happy about. And (if the situation is difficult for yourself) you have to have loving-kindness for yourself, that is the main thing; and you have had it otherwise you would not be alive, you would not be able to function if you didn't have loving-kindness.

Q: One of the things that I got out of practising was seeing another person and just saying 'you are loving-kindness'; and when I wasn't doing that, realising that there are opinions that I have, or boxes that I have about people. And it was really nice the glimpses that I had of how nice it must be to walk around the world and feel loving-kindness to everybody; and how, in the body, that must feel such a relief. And it was really nice to see that is almost like a chemical change in the body.

A: It is a chemical change!

What is the difference between meeting with an open heart and not?

You have your difficulty, that's OK and open your heart to it, ask the heart what to do about this. Don't try to fix it, don't push it away. Meet both joy and sorrow with an open heart, not to shut the heart to the sorrow. Image your heart holding, for instance an irritation, like holding a child. Whatever happens you don't push it away, you include it in your big heart, the pleasant and the unpleasant: 'I open my heart to this', embrace it. It is changing a habit – instead of closing off to an irritation, embrace it. Catch yourself going into your tendency and instead of playing it out, ask yourself 'Can I open my heart to this? Can I embrace it?' Mindfulness is not difficult, it's just we keep forgetting! To pause, not to act - be quicker and quicker to catch it. When you really and truly have a big heart there is no sense of my heart, no more separation of 'I, me, mine', you are the big heart. When you have an open heart, there is a knowing, a merging with what is happening; you lose the sense of 'I, me, mine'. When we are not in a state of open heart we are fighting for 'my' corner, 'I, me, mine', it will always be limited, being partial. So you can use the open heart as an antidote for anger, irritation, but it is much more than this. It is forgetting yourself.

Q: I kept hearing a voice saying 'it's not you', and I understand now.

A: So any time you get in a position of strong opinion, 'I know what's right', check yourself, notice what you are trying to put across and open your heart. It is loosening attachment of the idea of 'I, me, mine'. So at the moment you are having to remember to open your heart, but eventually your heart stays open.

The Zen master Dogen said:

*To study Buddha-Dhamma is to study the self
To study the self is to forget the self
To forget the self is to be realised by myriad things*

There are different ways to forget the self, I choose opening the heart to represent it.

Q: I am so far from it, I am trying to understand it.

A: First you have to open the heart!

Q: By myriad things?

A: By everything: ... by the wings of the bird, by people, by emotion, by everything.

Opening the Heart in Pairs

The receiver is lying down, the giver sitting at their head. As the receiver you bring to mind a small concern in your life, not too big a concern. Name it and allow the agitation to arise; study the agitation. As the giver you open your heart, and make your heart bigger than their concern. So establish the connection with your heart and expand the feeling in your heart to contain their concern, their agitation. Find a way of doing this for yourself – through imagining, through feeling. You want to wrap their being with your open heart without touching, without speaking. You want to open your heart wide so they feel safe to explore their agitation.

I come back to the receiver - don't escape your agitation, study it, meet it, feel it in your body. When you feel you have had a good view of your agitation then bring in your open heart. Make the agitation the child, the open heart the parent that is holding the child. And see what happens to the agitation. Concern, agitation are natural, are normal. The point is how do we meet them, how do we receive them. We can choose to close our heart, we can choose to open the heart. Open the heart bigger, bigger than your concern.

As the giver, you maintain this same open heart holding their discomfort, their pain, as a child. You don't need to say anything, you don't need to touch. Your presence alone is beautiful. In opening your heart the agitation of the receiver may disappear or it may be viewed from a new angle; the giver may find a new solution for their concern. The giver – open your heart unconditionally to hold their concern, the child; you are the parent. You don't need to know what the concern is about, the concern that brings agitation to the body and the mind. And the receiver – if you have come to a change in your agitation, you may want to choose a second concern, the 'a bit more serious' concern. You have at the moment the support of the practice, the excellent practice you have done, your partner, the teacher. A beautiful opportunity to try to practise deeper, to come deeper into your fear, your concern. That is holding you back in your life. Name the concern, feel it in your body, feel how it brings agitation, and open the heart. You are being held by your partner and the practice, by the Zendo, by Sonia. You can open to your deep fear, an open heart. Try it.

For the receivers - if you feel you have come to satisfactory change, you can ease out of the posture, spend some time outside for five minutes.

I want to talk to the givers. Come closer..... :

So, were you able to maintain an open heart? What device did you use? Because the mind is tricky you know, by drifting, so you need to find an anchor and create something that you maintain an open heart. What did you use – an image, a *mantra*, a feeling? Sometimes we need a device to anchor the mind. And the devices can change, so I am curious to know what you did. The image, come back to the image of holding the child. The pain is the child, the open heart is the parent that is holding. But we all have a different way in. So for your work it will be very helpful. So you help them, they help you open your heart. That is why difficulties are our friend, they help us to open our heart. The difficulties are our teacher, if everything were easy it would be harder.

Signs in your practice

Do you know the signs when your practice is working, any practice? I give you a list. You know your practice is working when, in the post-meditation state:

1. you find yourself having more acts of generosity in your everyday life, when you are more generous in body, speech and mind. That means you are more generous to your mind states also. You are kinder.
2. your ethics, morality are tidied up.
3. you will have more patience, not so easily upset by things. At the moment sometimes you are very quickly upset, you have not enough patience.
4. you will have more energy to make effort, not so easily prone to giving up. So you'll have more energy to start something and to finish it.
5. your focus and your concentration has improved, which you need to go deeper into your practice,
6. you gain wisdom.

These are the six *parami*'s. *Parami* means virtues that help you go beyond. So if you want to check your practice you check the six *parami*'s of generosity, ethics, patience, energy, concentration and wisdom.

So you see it is not about having fantastic experiences, it is about everyday life; how we conduct ourselves in everyday life. It is said that if you perfect one of the six *parami*'s you perfect them all. And the first one is giving, it is not by chance that it is the first one. My first teacher used to say 'I give you a bag of seeds'; the seeds have to be sown in your life, in your environment. And then you nurture the seeds. You could say that you have the seeds of the *parami*'s; to perfect the *parami*'s you have to take them into your life. So I trust that you have the seeds, that you are going to plant them in your life and that they will come up as beautiful jewels, beautiful gifts for the benefit of all beings. This is all you can do. And you know the seed wants to grow, it is destined to grow. There is no magic, no secrets; it's back to practice, back to doing it.

Is that enough to go back into your life?

Advice for everyday life

So shall we talk about the practice at home now, what are you going to do to maintain it?

How do you see your practice at home after this workshop? What can you put in your life that you did here in this workshop? You can put at least five minutes in the morning and the evening, and at any time during the day you can stop sometime. Breathing in 'may I be well and happy', breathing out 'may others be well and happy'. We have also from this workshop that when you catch sight of a friend, then you send them loving-kindness. Whenever someone is in your mind, you send them loving-kindness. That should be lots of people, eh! I think there is no harm for you to continue with the three questions that I asked you: what is loving-kindness, is this loving-kindness, am I in loving-kindness? So throughout the day you can punctuate the day with these three questions, three times a day. You have to take your medicine three times a day! And of course if you can do the formal meditation on the four beings, which we did yesterday twice. Chanting is very good, you can do chanting any time. There is someone who comes in to clean my house and chants while she cleans. It is nice doing the chanting. Of course the main thing is that if you are upset, if something arises in your mind, in your life, you have to open your heart; this is the heart of the loving-kindness practice. We know when everything goes well it is easy; but when it goes not so well, that is when we have to apply the practice. In that sense you change your emotional response to life with this practice. You turn the other cheek.

As soon as you wake up, you sit up in your bed and then spend five minutes contemplating that all beings want to be happy, we all want to be happy, including yourselves, and that we are all connected. So you reflect on that all beings want to be happy, all beings including little sentient beings - spiders, wasps and little crawling bugs; and that we are all connected. And when you meet someone during the day, and when you catch sight of someone, you send them loving-kindness. That should do it!

Q: *How are we all connected?* Ponder on this.

Q: *How to cope with picking up things that are not yours, knowing that something bad has happened before hearing it on TV news?*

A: Settle yourself, do not to take it so personally, don't take it as 'me, mine'; it will come, it will go.

A short practice for opening the heart

First we adjust our motivation.

1. There is a flower at your heart. Allow it to open, till your whole being is contained in that flower. There is a flower at your heart that continues to open to include the person that sits next to you. Open the flower until the person next to you is contained in the centre of the flower. The flower at your heart continues to open even wider to embrace and contain all the beings sitting in the Zendo.
2. As you breathe out you send out kindness, understanding, acceptance to all those beings in your flower. As you breathe in you take in all their pain, their

confusion, their fear. All this is happening within your heart, within the flower at your heart.

3. Now let the image of the flower, of the beings, fade away. And return to the rise and fall of your belly.

So this is a short practice, not too long, for opening the heart. When you are so busy in your life, you need something short to do. All teachers now give both the long and the short practice. If every day you did this short practice for ten minutes you would see some big changes. Better to do the short practice several times a day than once the long practice, if you find the long practice too difficult. It is important to touch on this practice daily, so I wanted to give you something you can do quickly. The long practice, you put it on the shelf and think 'one day I will do it'. The short practice, you can do it quickly: ten minutes, three times a day – it is your medicine, take your medicine! It comes down always to intention, to motivation.

Dedication – sharing the merit

After each practice you share the merit; this is one way we can benefit others. Place your hand on the heart, or have the hand open, and speak or chant the sharing the merit text:

*Idam te puñña kammam
āsavakkhaya vāham hotu
sabbe sattā sukita hontu*

By these wholesome actions,
may the emotional confusions of myself and others be removed

*Through the power of these wholesome activities
May my life become rich with awakening
Living thus, may I abandon all unwholesomeness
Through the endless storm of birth, ill-ness, old age and death,
May I help all beings to cross the ocean of the suffering of the worlds*

Sabbe Sattā Sukhita Hontu – May all being be well and happy

Open your heart and maintain the motivation to practise for the benefit of all beings. That is the practice of loving-kindness, to share it with everyone, not just with those you feel good with.

Thank you very much for your practice, I am sure it will bring you lots of benefit, to practise. You are all looking very beautiful, that is the loving-kindness.

ANNEX

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS

*Peace to all beings,
may all beings be well and happy and free from fear.*

*Peace to all beings,
whether near or far, whether known or unknown,
real or imaginary, visible or invisible,
born or yet to be born,
may all beings be well and happy and free from fear.*

*Peace to all beings,
within and beyond the imagination,
in the world of ideas, in the world of memories,
and in the world of dreams,
may all beings be well and happy and free from fear.*

*Peace in all elements,
of earth and air, fire and water,
fulfilled in space,
peace,*

*Peace in all universes, from the smallest cells in the body,
to the greatest galaxies in space,
peace and light rising.*

*Peace to all beings,
within each being here,
those beings that are of the past,
and those that are yet to be in the future,
may all beings be well and happy and free from fear.*

*Peace and love and comfort and ease to all those in need,
may they all be well and happy and free from fear.*

Sources

Mettā– Loving Kindness retreat (Feb. 2012)
 The precious human life and loving kindness (Nov.-Dec. 2012)
 Opening the Heart, Transforming the Mind (November 09)
 Purification with the Five Elements, May 09
 Instant Presence, April 09
Kusala, March 09
 Four Divine Abidings, December 08
 Flowering the Mind of Loving-Kindness, November 08
 Five Elements Exploration, May 08
 Intimacy of Silence, July 07
 Loving Kindness and Maitreya Buddha, December 07
 Flowering the Mind of Compassion, November 07
Mettā Text, September 06
 Deity Meditation, June 05
 Compassionate Involvement, April 05
Samatha, *Vipassana* and Deity Meditation, June 04

Notes

The intention has been to present Sonia's words as she spoke, to preserve the flavour and the spirit of her teaching. Anything else is in italics: contributions from students, texts, editing links, other languages (mainly *Pali*).

Only two significant aspects of the teaching have been omitted:

1. instructions for body work exercises / movements, which are learned from demonstration and experience;
2. the texts for deity practices which traditionally are available only to those who were present during the retreats and thus received direct transmission of energy from the teacher.

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