

Guided Meditation on Gratitude and Compassion
Lovingkindness and Compassion as a Path to Awakening
Rob Burbea
February 9, 2008
<https://dharmafeed.org/teacher/210/talk/11952/>

This morning we'll start with a meditation, a guided meditation on gratitude and compassion.

[0:33, guided meditation begins]

Settling again into a posture of ease, a posture of uprightness, openness. Just connecting with the body, the sense of the body. Establishing that open sensitivity to the body. And when you feel ready, bringing into the heart, bringing into the awareness the image and the sense of the benefactor. And just reflecting for a few moments on what you have received from the benefactor and their obvious kindness, whether it's large or small. Just remembering and tuning into the gifts you have received from them, whatever they are. And at the same time, opening the heart, tuning in, to be sensitive to their pain, their measure of pain, their difficulties. Just open to their pain and sorrow, such as it is. Just wishing: "May they be free of suffering. May they be at peace."

Letting the awareness open up and just remembering, reflecting on others, many others, perhaps, who have shown you kindness at some time in your life or given you kindness. Who have cared for you in different ways. Who have helped you, who have given of their time. And with each, again just opening up also to their sorrow, their pain, their sense of difficulty and challenge. Allowing that sensitivity in the heart. And wishing each one: "May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace." Bathing them, holding them in the care, the tenderness of compassion.

Reflecting on the different kinds of beings: all the beings that we have received from, do receive from, will receive from in this life. How much we have received from our teachers. Just bringing to mind, bringing into the heart the spiritual teachers we've had or we have, the Dharma teachers. Sharing their wisdom, sharing their compassion, giving generously. Just opening to the sense of receiving from them, of what has been received. Their courage, their goodness, their truth. Allowing the heart again also to open to, to be sensitive to their challenges, their difficulties, their pain and sorrow in this life. Just tuning in sensitively there, open, receptive. Allowing them to be held in compassion. "May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace." And likewise, too, the teachers who taught us in school. Despite all the mixed feelings we might have about school. Those who taught us to read, with patience taught us to write. These skills we use every day with numbers, with language, with knowledge. Take these for granted, but it has helped us to express and to navigate in the world. Just remembering the teachers who have helped us in this way. All that has been received. Aware, too, now, of their pain, of their sorrow, their struggle. "May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace."

Bringing into the heart the images, the sense of your parents. Just allowing them to be there in the openness, the spaciousness of the heart. Despite all the complexity that can be there in these relationships, despite the difficulty that can be there in these relationships, just reflecting on how much has been received. How they fed us when we were young, how they clothed us, housed us, nursed us

when we were sick or injured, provided us with a sense of security. How they even cleaned us when we were unable to clean ourselves, our bodies. Just opening up the awareness to the huge stream of generosity, of care that we have received from our parents. Allowing the heart to open, too, to their pain, their suffering, their confusion. Wherever they are now, “May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.”

And allowing yourself to recall, to recollect the friends that you have had over the years: friends, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends. All the different friends and what has been received in friendship. And what has been shared and the opportunities of sharing. Learning to share, learning intimacy. Feeling the gift of all that. The preciousness, the beauty of all that. They, too, with their struggles, their confusion, their anxieties, and their pain. “May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.”

Opening the heart, opening the awareness to include, to reflect on the countless beings that we don’t know, that we have never known, from whom we have received. Inventors, people who discover, scientists, people who have worked, who have invented or tried to discover, who have given us a whole range of what helps us today. The kinds of tools that make our life safer, easier; medicine. The artists throughout history, from whom we’ve received cultural gifts, books, literature, all the music that exists – the evolution of that art over time. Painting and sculpture. Reflecting on their care, their love, their attention, and their effort in their work. Just sensitive, tuning into their struggles, their pain. Holding them in compassion, allowing them to be held in compassion.

Reflecting, too, on the countless numbers of people we don’t know, beings we don’t know involved in the web of trade and cooperation, of business and distribution of goods. From whom we are receiving every day, every day of our lives. Nourishing and sustaining us. Each with their own pain, their own suffering, their own confusion. Holding them in compassion, embracing them, wrapping them in that tenderness and that care. “May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace.” The whole sense of that unentangleable web of human endeavour throughout history. People learning from each other, trading from each other. How much this life of ours now, this moment of our life now is receiving from that river. Going back and back.

Bringing into the awareness a difficult person. A person with whom there is some difficulty, or people with whom there has been some difficulty. Reflecting how the challenge there has helped us to grow, does help us to grow, to develop patience, to develop compassion, and even in this difficulty there is a gift that we receive. So it’s been so throughout our life, and it is so now. Opening, tuning into their pain, their sorrow. “May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace.”

Opening the consciousness up, opening the heart up to all the animals, the fish, the birds, what we receive from them in so many ways on this earth. Their beauty, and the sense of beauty, the wonder, the vast diversity of creatures, the wonder in that. Opening up to what we receive from the whole ecosystem, the whole fragile interconnectedness of our ecosystem. Just how we receive and receive and receive. Plant life, tree life, vegetable life. The colours. Sustaining us, sustaining each other, sustaining the ecosystem. Providing oxygen. Providing shelter. Aware of the suffering there. Holding it all in compassion. Allowing it to be held in compassion. Realizing, reflecting: nothing, absolutely nothing is outside this web, this infinite web. Sustaining us, nourishing us, giving to us. And that we too are part of that web. Sensitive to suffering. Letting it be held in compassion. And just allowing a sense of space

to open up. And allowing the body to just radiate out compassion in space, filling space, all space, all directions. Filling it with that tenderness, with that healing. Holding all things in compassion.

[44:00, guided meditation ends]

So today we are moving on to include all beings in compassion. Again, like when we did the loving-kindness, the *mettā*, there's a number of ways of doing it. Just to refresh – you can do it in terms of categories of beings, so humans or this type of human, or that type of human, different types of animals, etc. You can do it in terms of directions. So all beings to the north, to the south, to the west, the east, etc. Or you could also do this just sense of the body in space radiating compassion, which I think is the simplest and the easiest and the most also conducive to *samādhi*. But it's very personal, so just feel free to experiment and see which is best for you. If the *samādhi* feels strong enough or there's a sense of settledness in the mind and the heart with the compassion, it can be almost, at times, as if the body has *turned into* compassion. And you just let yourself *be* compassion, and just radiate that out. Let everything become compassion. It's just radiating out.

I think that's it. There's no talk tonight. There'll be a talk tomorrow. So this is the last day of compassion. Again, don't worry if you haven't got to certain people. There will be an option to continue doing compassion practice next week, as part of what we do next week. Tomorrow, going to introduce something new, so just enjoy the compassion for today. Okay?