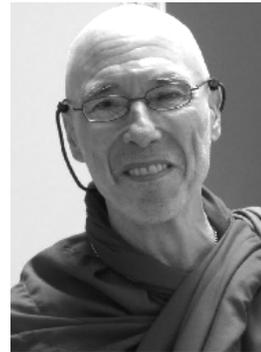


Love and Compassion

By Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi

Love and compassion are qualities essential to our stature as true human beings, and jointly might be considered the capacities that most distinguish us from the animals, except that animals sometimes display more kindness towards one another—and towards people—than we do. In the teachings of the Buddha, love and compassion are regarded as the foundation of ethics and important criteria of right speech and right action. They are also qualities to be developed by meditation. The Buddhist texts call love and compassion *brahmavihara*, divine abodes, for they manifest our inherent divinity even while we dwell in a human body. For Buddhism love and compassion should be balanced by wisdom, insight into the real nature of things, which alone can permanently eradicate the mental defilements that bind us to *samsara*, the round of birth and death. But the meditative practices of love and compassion purify the mind of such constricting emotions as resentment, ill will, anger, and callous indifference, which cause misery for ourselves and others. They promote communal harmony and break down the barriers that confine us in the prison cage of the ego. By developing love and compassion, our hearts can expand and radiate immeasurable good will to everyone we meet.



In popular Buddhism, love and compassion are sometimes spoken of as if they were near-synonyms, but Buddhist philosophical texts represent these two qualities by different words, each with its own distinct meaning. In Pali, the language of the oldest surviving Buddhist texts, these words are *metta* and *karuna*, which I render respectively as “loving-kindness” and “compassion.” While the two are closely connected, they are distinguished by a subtle difference in tone. The *Visuddhimagga*, a fifth-century meditation treatise, explains loving-kindness as the wish to promote the welfare and happiness of beings, and compassion as the feeling of empathy that arises when we feel the suffering of others as our own (chap. IX, §§93-94). Loving-kindness is opposed to ill will and hatred, while compassion is opposed to cruelty and violence. A person of loving-kindness doesn’t bear ill will or resentment towards others. A compassionate person doesn’t wish harm for others. Such a person’s heart is stirred on seeing others suffer, and he is moved to act to remove their suffering.

Loving-kindness is said to be the basis for compassion, for in order to feel empathy with those who suffer we first must sincerely wish for their well-being, and precisely this is the function of loving-kindness. It is the feeling of love for beings that makes us care about their happiness and suffering. Consequently, when they meet suffering, we feel their pain as our own and make an effort to relieve them of their pain.

According to Buddhism, through the appropriate methods loving-kindness and compassion can be awakened and systematically intensified. They are cultivated through a deliberate type of mind-training. The aim, of course, is for love and compassion to become natural, spontaneous, and all-embracing, but at the outset we must rely on specific techniques to replace our habitual mental dispositions, rooted in the sense of ego, with these selfless virtues. In many ways the mind is analogous to the body.

Just as athletes regularly practice the skills they need to succeed in their sport, so a person who aspires to be loving and compassionate has to work regularly, even daily, at nurturing these qualities. The mind, according to Buddhism, is normally weighed down by the debris of old habits, but it is also an astoundingly malleable instrument that can be molded through persistent practice. Buddhist tradition recommends particular strategies for developing loving-kindness and compassion. Since loving-kindness has a wider scope, as a meditative training it is normally developed first, and thus I will explain it first. Then I will explain the method for developing compassion. What makes these methods particularly practical is that, while they emerge out of the Buddhist meditation tradition, they are not necessarily tied to Buddhist doctrine in any restrictive way. Thus they can be practiced by followers of any religion or of no religion; they are openly available to anyone who aspires to become a more loving and compassionate person, even when this aspiration is not rooted in a specific system of religious beliefs.

As worked out by the tradition of Theravada Buddhism, the method for developing loving-kindness involves two components, the *recipients* and the *formula*. The recipients are the people to whom we direct loving-kindness. The formula is a set of words used to generate the feeling of loving-kindness. By applying the formula to the recipients, we can awaken and gradually intensify loving-kindness.

The recipients of loving-kindness fall into a number of categories, which are to be rotated in a particular sequence. The *Visuddhimagga* (at chap. IX, §11) recommends the following types, in this sequence: oneself; a dear and respected person such as a teacher or benefactor; a dearly beloved friend; a neutral person; and a hostile person. The people chosen to represent these types should all be presently alive. It is also said that one should not choose a person with whom one has a romantic or sexual relationship, or feelings of romantic or sexual attraction. In such cases, there is a risk that we might mistake these passionate feelings for success in developing loving-kindness.

The formula is a verbal statement that we repeatedly turn over in the mind as a means of arousing loving-kindness. I will explain the meditation on loving-kindness on the basis of a formula that I have found helpful. However, the formula is not fixed and inflexible but may be varied according to one's own disposition. The formula that I will use is the following, with X representing the recipient: "May X be healthy. May X be peaceful. May all X's good purposes be fulfilled." The formula is to be directed toward each person chosen as a recipient.

The Buddhist meditation manuals suggest that we begin developing loving-kindness towards ourselves because in order to generate real loving-kindness towards others—that is, to arouse a true concern for their welfare and happiness—we first have to feel genuine love for ourselves. When we recognize that the deepest urge of our own being is to be well and happy, we can readily understand that every living being also wishes the same for themselves. By extending our sense of identity to others, we can then feel their desire for well-being and happiness as our own.

To practice loving-kindness meditation, you should sit in a comfortable meditation posture, either cross-legged upon a cushion on the floor, or, if you find this difficult, in a straight-backed chair. Keep the body upright but not stiff and rigid. Place the hands on the lap, right hand over the left, thumbs lightly touching, and let the eyes close gently. Then, before your mind's eye, call up an image of your own face, smiling and happy. Repeat mentally to yourself the wish: "May I be healthy. May I be peaceful. May all my good purposes be fulfilled." Do not use the words as a mechanical formula, but with each phrase try to *evoke the feeling* that corresponds to the words. Go through the formula several times until you can generate a soft and warm feeling in the heart, a true desire for your well-being and happiness.

After you have applied the formula to yourself for a few minutes, move on to the next person in the cycle: the dear and respected person, who can be a teacher, mentor, elder friend, or benefactor.

Call up the image of this person in your mind's eye, smiling and happy, and then mentally repeat the formula: "May this good person be healthy. May he/she be peaceful. May all his/her good purposes be fulfilled." Running through the formula for several rounds, again try to generate that soft and warm feeling of loving-kindness towards this person. Again, after a couple of rounds pass on to the dear and beloved friend or close relative, and once again run through the formula for several rounds, trying to generate that soft and warm feeling of loving-kindness in the heart.

Almost invariably, success in this endeavor requires patient practice. Normally, at the beginning, we can't generate genuine loving-kindness. The best we can do is to incline the heart towards real loving-kindness. But we use the formula *as a means* to arouse genuine loving-kindness. The training consists in connecting our thought-process with the words of the formula in such a way that we actually come to feel the wish signified by the words. This is not, as some may think, a process of self-hypnosis. Proper practice means that we proceed with mindfulness, fully aware of what we're doing. The practice is a process of gradual training and gradual accomplishment that demands time, patience, and effort. We might compare the development of genuine loving-kindness to heating water in a pot to make tea. If, after we put the pot on the stove, we leave the heat on for a minute or two and then turn it off, we will never get hot water to make tea. To make tea, we must wait patiently until the water starts to boil.

For a beginner, I recommend working for some time—perhaps twenty or thirty minutes daily for several weeks—exclusively with the first three persons. It is only when you succeed with these three persons—"success" being marked by a softening and warming of the heart—that you should bring in "the neutral person." This is a person whom you might see regularly but with whom you have no personal relationship; it could be a neighbor, a clerk in the post office or bank, or a distant colleague at work. Normally, we regard this person with indifference or a mere minimum of human sympathy. To arouse genuine loving-kindness, we have to make a special effort to put ourselves into the other person's skin and thereby cultivate a sense of empathy, or *identification*, with the person.

You might work with the first four persons for a few weeks, until you can generate that warm and soft concern for all four. At this point you can bring in the hostile person. You have to be especially careful not to dwell on negative thoughts about the hostile person. If such thoughts do become persistent, you should put this person aside and revert to the first four persons. Only later should you bring in the hostile person. To break down your resistance to this person, you can use the same reflections that you used in relation to the neutral person, perhaps even elaborating on them in various ways. Work with this person again and again until you can feel a genuine heartfelt concern for this person's well-being and happiness.

At this point you should run through the whole gamut of persons—from yourself through the hostile person again and again—until you feel a warm, sincere feeling of loving-kindness for all of them. The ideal is to be able to generate love to all persons in the different categories equally, without discrimination. This stage is called "the abolition of the barriers" (*Visuddhimagga*, chap. IX, §§40-43).

Beyond this lies the extension of loving-kindness, which I can treat only briefly here. Loving-kindness is first extended by spreading it to all the people in widening geographical regions of the earth thus: "May such people be healthy! May they be peaceful. May all their good purposes be fulfilled!" Begin with your place of residence, your home or building. Then extend loving-kindness to everyone in your neighborhood, then to everyone in your state, then to everyone in North America. Next, take each continent in turn: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the South Pacific, then the whole earth simultaneously. Next, based on

classical Buddhist cosmology, one extends loving-kindness to all the different classes of living beings in all realms: to the deities, humans, animals, unhappy spirits, and beings in hell. Finally, one extends loving-kindness simultaneously to all sentient beings in all the realms of existence throughout the universe.

When one succeeds in developing loving-kindness, one can move on to develop compassion. The classical Buddhist commentaries hold that before one can meditate on compassion, one first has to master the meditation on loving-kindness. However, I consider this position too stern. I have found that as soon as you are able to stabilize a warm feeling of sincere loving-kindness for sentient beings, you can begin to cultivate the meditation on compassion. Even though the feeling may not be powerful, you will be creating a positive disposition towards compassion. As you continue your practice, your compassion will gradually become stronger. Practice, progress, and fulfillment are the three main stages of Buddhist meditation.

Compassion has a different characteristic from loving-kindness, a different “flavor” or “felt tone.” When one practices both, one can distinctly feel this difference. The two are as different as vanilla and almond ice cream: these two kinds of ice cream look the same but their taste is quite different. Specifically, compassion means the feeling of empathy with those afflicted by suffering. Therefore, to develop compassion as an exercise in meditation, one has to focus on those undergoing suffering.

In the meditation on compassion, the recipients are thus people afflicted with suffering. The initial recipient does not have to be a person one knows well; it may even be better not to choose a close friend or relative, for this may give rise to stress and anxiety. Because one has previously practiced loving-kindness meditation, one already has generated a wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings. Thus one can take even a complete stranger who is undergoing suffering.

I personally recommend taking *a child living under unfortunate circumstances*. Thus, to develop compassion, I often reflect on a report I read about a mother in Sri Lanka who lost both her children in the tsunami that struck the island at the end of 2004. The mother was in the house, the children were playing in front of the house. The waves came and swept the children away, leaving the mother struck with grief. Alternatively, you might think of a child in Africa who has lost both parents to AIDS, now in the care of his or her grandparents.

Or an abandoned street child in India or Brazil, begging for food, with no chance to go to school, no home, no warm family relations. Feel the child as one’s own, share that child’s suffering, and generate a strong wish for that child to be free from suffering.

As a formula, you can use the simple phrase: “May this person be free from suffering, may this person be free from affliction!” Focus on the suffering this person is experiencing, identify deeply with the person, and generate a sincere wish for that suffering to end. Do this over and over, until the compassion makes your heart shake and tremble. When we dare to look directly into the suffering of the world, without flinching, without anxiously turning away, often our heart breaks open. If this happens, let it happen. Just sit back and relax into it, as the compassion swells up and suffuses your heart. As you become familiar with this feeling, your mind will gradually settle down, and you will be able to balance compassion and calmness simultaneously.

To extend the feeling of compassion, choose next a few people undergoing different types of suffering. You might choose people from events you have witnessed, or from reports you have read, or from news that you have heard. Initially, however, you shouldn’t take groups of people; instead, you should choose four or five individuals. For example, you might think of the peasant in Afghanistan who lost his wife and daughter in an attack by a Predator drone; of the teenager in Cambodia whose legs were blown off by a landmine and who has to beg for food every day; of

a mother in Sichuan province in China who lost her children when their school was destroyed by an earthquake; of a woman in Sierra Leone who was raped and gave birth to the child of her rapist; of the woman in Niger whose children are mere skin and bones.

In each case, develop a deep sense of identity with these people, feeling them as being the same as yourself. Go through them in a cycle, from the first to the last, then back to the first, over and over, until the compassion shakes your heart. If you find it hard to arouse compassion, think of the person as your relative. Thus if you choose an older person, think of that person as your mother or father. If you choose a person your own age, think of them as your brother or sister. If you choose a much younger person, think of them as your son or daughter.

When the compassion flows smoothly, continue to strengthen it. Then you can expand it, just as you did with loving-kindness. You can take whole continents: briefly radiate compassion over all the people in one continent, until you distinctly feel the radiation; then move on to the next continent. Then take the different realms of existence, thinking of how beings in every realm are afflicted with their own distinctive suffering: the deities are blind to the fact that they might fall to lower realms; human beings suffer from hunger, war, poverty, exploitation, anxiety, and depression; animals suffer from fear, hunger, and violence; the unhappy spirits suffer from insatiable hunger and thirst; and the hell beings suffer the torments of hell. All must undergo old age and death. Finally, extend compassion to all sentient beings in all realms, and throughout the entire universe of the ten directions.

One of the strong points of Buddhism is its powerful meditative methods of developing loving-kindness and compassion. While all great world religions praise love and compassion, Buddhism stands out in offering precise, step-by-step techniques for awakening and cultivating these sublime virtues. It is perhaps because of this valuation of love and compassion that so many people who have visited traditional Buddhist countries have found their citizens warm, kind, and friendly.

At the same time, however, I believe that traditional Buddhism has a critical weak spot. This is an insufficient emphasis on expressing love and compassion in concrete action aimed at promoting a more just and equitable social order. We Buddhists tend to treat love and compassion as exalted mental states, which we value because they help us overcome negative personal qualities like anger, hatred, ill will, and spite. In my opinion, which some might find provocative, traditional Buddhism does not sufficiently stress the need to mobilize love and compassion as motives for pursuing social justice and a more harmonious world. While Christians have shown a keen interest in learning from Buddhism how to live a contemplative life, I feel that Buddhism has much to learn from Christianity about how to express love in action.

If our meditative practice of love truly plants in our hearts a genuine concern for others, we should do something positive to promote their welfare. If we truly have compassion for beings, we should work to relieve their suffering. Suppose we were to come home one day and see that our house had caught fire. Knowing that our children are inside, we would not merely stand outside, thinking, "May my children escape from this burning house!" Rather, we would do whatever is necessary to save them, and we would not desist until we were sure that our children had been rescued. Similarly, we should think of all humanity as our own children, beset by various sufferings, and do our best to bring them relief.

The ideal Buddhist practice, in my opinion, is one that unites inner meditative development with external action in the world. When we cultivate love and compassion as a meditative practice, we create in our hearts a powerful force that can be unleashed and effect momentous transformations, bringing benefits to many. But the love and compassion in our hearts have to find channels to flow out in the form of concrete action. How we express love cannot be left to

chance or to the whims of raw emotion. For love to be an effective agent of change, we need to examine the opportunities available to us to help others. Then we have to select a movement or a worthy cause that awakens our passion and inspires our wish to be of service.

In mid-2008, some of my students and I, seeking a way to give active expression to the Buddhist ideals of love and compassion, decided to establish an organization dedicated to providing relief to people worldwide suffering from poverty. We formally launched the organization, which we call Buddhist Global Relief (BGR), in June 2008, deciding to focus specifically on the problem of global hunger. The Buddha calls hunger the worst illness and he calls the gift of food “the gift of life.” In this world of 6.5 billion people, over a billion are afflicted with chronic hunger and malnutrition, while perhaps as many as 2.5 billion people live on sub-standard diets. Every year, ten million people die from hunger, more than fifty percent of them children. This means five or six million children annually die of hunger and hunger-related diseases—a child every five or six seconds.

We recognized that the problem of global hunger is too vast for us to combat alone, but we felt that (the call of compassion) required that we contribute our share on behalf of the wider Buddhist community. In our first year, we launched three pilot projects—in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. In the first half of our second year, we initiated four new projects: providing food aid to internally displaced persons in northern Sri Lanka; granting food stipends to young girls and their families in Cambodia so the girls could attend school; supplying low-caste children in northern India with school uniforms and other amenities needed to attend school; and in Niger, in collaboration with Helen Keller International, providing micronutrient supplementation to young children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers. Our staff works entirely on a voluntary basis, and thus our overheads are minimal, so that ninety-five percent of every donation goes directly to the projects.

In this present age, so full of danger and confusion, spirituality and social engagement cannot remain separate domains each sealed off by rigid boundaries. The major social upheavals of our age—global warming, widespread poverty, war, ethnic conflicts, the violation of human rights, the cruel treatment of animals—all stem from a deep crisis at the core of the human mind. To heal the maladies that afflict humanity calls for something far more potent than international treaties and technological innovation. A more stable solution must be ethical and spiritual. The only solution that can truly work must begin at the foundations, within the depths of human consciousness. Most of all we need a global awakening of the wisdom that embodies timeless standards of justice, and a boundless love and compassion that extends to all living beings. But to heal the crisis of our age, love and compassion must serve as more than lofty spiritual ideals. They must become spurs to action moving us to work indefatigably to eliminate the suffering of others and to promote their long-term welfare and happiness. 🌍

慈與悲 菩提比丘

慈與悲，乃是做為圓滿人類不可或缺的特質與能力，也被視為人之異於禽獸最不同之處。不過也有例外，動物有時候在同類間所展現的慈愛及對人類的友善，是我們所難以望其項背的。根據佛陀的教誨，慈與悲被視為道德的基石，也是實踐正語與正業的重要準繩。同時這兩種特質，也可以透過修習來培養。佛典中稱慈與悲為「梵住」，因為慈與悲讓我們住於人身之際，也能展現俱生的梵天清淨的品質。以佛法而言，慈悲要由智慧來平衡，唯有對諸法本質的內觀，才能永久根除繫縛我們於生死輪迴的煩惱。然而慈與悲的修習，在淨化為自他帶來痛苦的種種退縮情緒，如：怨憎、敵意、嗔恚和冷漠。這兩種修習皆能促進群體和諧以及打破自我本位的藩籬。修習慈與悲 我們的心得以開展，對我們所遇見的每一個人散發無量的善意。



在通俗佛教中，慈與悲時常被當作近義詞。然而在佛教論典中，這兩種特質，各自擁有獨立的義涵，也有不同的字眼來描繪。在巴利語，現存最古老的佛典語言中，有「metta」及「karuna」這兩個用語，我將他們分別譯成"loving-kindness"（以下稱慈心）與"compassion"（以下稱悲心）。這兩個字關係緊密，然而在基調上卻有微細的差別。在西元五世紀的一本禪修論著《清淨道論》中，其第九品〈梵住品〉，說明了慈心是提升眾生福祉的願望；而悲心則是一種能苦眾生苦的同理心。慈心相對於敵意與仇恨，而悲心則與殘酷及暴力相對。一個有慈心的人，不會對他人懷抱敵意或怨恨。一個有悲心的人，不會希望他人受苦。這種人一見到他人受苦，內心便掀起一陣波瀾，繼而以行動去解除他人的苦難。

有人說慈心是悲心的基礎，因為要能對受苦者感同身受，必須先能念念殷望他人快樂幸福，這也正好是慈的作用。這份對眾生的關愛，讓我們掛念著他們的喜樂悲傷。因此，當眾生遭逢劫難，我們也備受煎熬，並會奮力緩解他們的痛苦。

按照佛教的說法，透過適當的方法，慈心與悲心能夠被喚醒並且漸次增強，並通過特意的練心而修習。當然修習的目的，是為了讓慈心與悲心能夠任運自然並涵容一切。但是一開頭我們必須仰賴特定的技巧，以無私的德行來取代我們根植於「我」的習氣。其實在許多方面，身與心的運作是相似的。

如同運動員固定練習在運動上成功所需的技巧，一個有志成為有慈有悲的人，也必須經常——甚至是天天——長養這些特質。根據佛教的說法，我們的心，總是被舊習性的

殘留所重壓，不過這顆心同時也是一件工具，有著驚人的可塑性，可以透過鍥而不捨的修行予以塑造。佛教的傳統，對於修習慈悲心，提供了特定的方法。慈心由於範圍較廣，做為禪修的訓練，通常第一個修，因此我會先解釋。然後，我會解釋修習悲心的方法。這些方法之所以特別實用，在於雖然從佛教的禪修傳統而來，並沒有特別地捆綁在佛教的教義之下。所以任何宗教背景的人、或者沒有宗教信仰的人都可以修習，適用於任何有志成為更加慈悲的人，縱使這個志向並未源於特定的宗教信仰體系。

根據南傳上座部佛教傳統的解釋，修慈心觀的方法由兩個部份構成：一是接受者，二是祝願語。接受者是我們傳輸慈心的對象；祝願語則是一組用來生起慈心的文句。將這組文句套用在接受者身上，我們可以喚醒自身的慈心，並且逐漸增強它。

接收慈心的對象也分作若干不同的類型，他們會依照一種特定的前後次序，輪流接受慈心。《清淨道論》建議修慈的典型對象及次序如下：1. 自己。2. 親愛或崇敬的對象，如師長或恩人。3. 親密摯愛的朋友。4. 中立的對象（不憎不愛的人）5. 怨敵。每一種類型的代表者，都應該是現在還活著的人。同時，也要避免選擇跟自己有戀愛關係或性關係的對象，或者讓你有浪漫情懷亦或對你有性吸引力的人。因為在這種情況下，我們很有可能會誤將有情愛染著的熱情當作慈心修習的成功想。

祝願語則是一種口頭表白，我們拿來反覆在心中作意，作為引發慈心的媒介工具。我會在使用祝願語的基礎上來講解慈心觀，因為我從中受益匪淺。不過，祝願語的內容並不是固定不變的公式，它可以根據使用者的喜好而變化。我個人所使用的祝願語如下，暫以某某代表接受者：“願某某身體健朗，願某某心靈靜悅，願某某的善願皆能如意實現。”這些祝願會被導引至我們選定的接受者上。

許多的佛教禪修指南都建議，為了要生起對他人真實的慈心，也就是生起真實懇切護念眾生福祉的心，我們一定要先對自己修習慈心。當我們覺察到幸福安康是自己存在迫切的渴望，那麼我們就很容易理解，沒有一個眾生不是這樣希求。藉由延伸自我認同到認同他人身上，我們便能感知他人想要的身心安樂與我一般無二。

修習慈心觀的時候，先以舒適的坐姿安坐下來，你可以在墊子上盤腿，如果盤腿對你而言困難，不妨找一張直背的椅子替代。身體坐正，避免僵硬或過度挺直，把手垂放在腿上，掌心向上，右手置放在左手之上，兩手大拇指輕輕相觸，兩眼則溫柔地闔上。然後，從自身開始緣念，在心眼前，觀想自己的一張臉，面帶微笑與喜樂。心中反覆作意，對自己散發祝福：“願我身體健朗，願我心靈靜悅，願我的善願皆能如意實現。”揀詞用句不要刻板化，祝福時的字字句句都要引發內在真實的情感。如是反覆作觀及祝願自己，直到你的心能夠綻放溫柔與和暖的感受，並生起饒益自己的真實希求。

對自己練習祝願數分鐘之後，便可以轉移祝福到下一位對象：你所親愛及崇敬的人。他可以是你的老師、師父、長輩或有恩於你的貴人。接下來，觀想這個人的影像出現在

你心眼的前方，他面帶笑容，喜悅洋溢，然後心裡反覆默念對他祝福：“願這位好人身體健朗，願他心靈靜悅，願他的善願皆能如意實現。”反覆祝福他好幾遍後，試著對將心中產生的溫柔感及慈愛的暖意，傳送給對方。如此修習數回，接下來便轉移對象，觀想自己深愛的摯友或親眷，然後如同前面的練習，反覆為對方祝願，再試著將心中產生的溫柔感及慈愛的暖意，傳送給對方。

要成功地修習慈心，幾乎一成不變地，需要耐心的練習。通常，一開始修習時，我們無法發起真正的慈心。我們能做到最好的只是使心朝向真正的慈心。不過，我們運用祝願語做為工具，令真正的慈心生起。這個修學在於貫通我們的思路與祝願文句，透過言語導引思惟的方式，而使內心的真正感受到文句中的祝願。這並不是像有些人認為的，是一種自我催眠的過程。正確的練習意謂著我們以正念進行，全然覺知我們正在做的事情。這樣的修行是一段漸學漸成的過程，需要時間、耐心及努力才能有所成就。或許我們可以將修習真正的慈心比喻成燒水泡茶。假如我們把水壺放在爐上加熱，不到一兩分鐘我們便把爐火關掉，這樣我們永遠沒有辦法取得熱水泡茶。要沏好一壺茶，就必須充滿耐心地等到水煮沸。

我建議初學者，每天或許修習二十到三十分鐘，持續數週，這其間修觀的對象只能是「自己」，「所崇敬者」及「深愛的摯友或親眷」這三種。只有當你對這三種人修觀「成功」，你才能將下一位「中立對象」帶進來練習。這裡說的「成功」，意謂著你的心逐漸變得柔軟及溫和。「中立對象」，或許你經常見面，但是彼此卻沒有建立關係：他可能是你的鄰居，郵局銀行裡的辦事員，也可能是你職場中不太親近的同事。平常，我們對這個人可能漠不關心，或僅止於給予非常有限的同情。為了要對這種「中立對象」生起慈心，我們必然要特別下功夫努力。我們需要徹入骨髓般地對他修習同理心，並視他如己。

對著前四種類型的對象練習數星期，直到你能夠對他們生起溫情的關切為止。到了這個階段，你便可以嘗試對著怨敵修習慈心。練習的時候，你必須要非常小心避免耽溺在對怨敵的負面想法裡，如果這種負面情緒無法停止，你應該將怨敵暫且擱在一旁，然後轉回前四種對象練習。只有過些時候，你才可以再帶怨敵進來修觀。要卸下對怨敵的心防，你可以使用之前針對「中立對象」的人所下過的功夫，甚至用各種方法把這種努力更加深化。要鍥而不捨地對著他練習慈心觀，直到你能衷心地關切他的幸福與快樂。

到這個階段，你已經全方位地對所有對象修習過了，從你自己到怨敵，經過一遍又一遍的行慈，直到你對所有的人都抱有一份真情懇切的和善與慈憫。理想上是你能夠等念眾生，毫無分別心地慈愛每一種不同類型的人。能如此這般的話，就達到《清淨道論》第九章梵住品中所說的「破除(人我)界限」的境地。

「破除界限」以後，就是慈心的延伸，這在此我只能略述。首先，以擴大地理的區域的方式，對地球上的人們延伸遍布這份慈心：“願地球人身體健朗！願地球人能夠心靈靜悅，願地球人的善願皆能夠如意實現！”先從自己住家開始，然後擴及左鄰右舍，再擴

大到你所屬的州，乃至於北美地區千家萬戶裡的每一個人。接下來，依次將慈心擴大到各大洲去：北美洲、南美洲、歐洲、非洲、亞洲、澳洲、南太平洋，然後將慈心一次遍滿整個地球。根據傳統佛教徒的宇宙觀，還要將慈心布施給各道各類的眾生：天、人、畜生、鬼道及地獄的眾生。最後，把這份慈心同時延伸遍及宇宙所有各道的有情眾生。

當一個人成功地修習了慈心，接下來就要修習悲心。在經典的佛教論注中，主張修行悲心觀之前，一定要先精通慈心觀。不過，我認為這樣的立場過於嚴格。我發現只要對有情眾生一股暖暖的、真誠的慈心的感受能穩定下來，就可以開始修習悲心。即使感受可能不夠強而有力，但是你造作了朝向悲心的正面傾向性，持續修習的同時，悲心將逐漸增強。「練習」，「進步」與「圓滿」是佛教禪修的三個主要的階段。

悲心與慈心，各有不同的特質、味道和基調。同時修習慈心與悲心的人，會清楚發覺其中的差異。這兩種心就像口味不同的香草冰淇淋和杏仁冰淇淋：這兩款冰淇淋，看起來一般無二，嘗起來卻截然不同。更明確地說，悲心意謂觀眾生受苦，心亦極苦的同理心。所以要在禪修中修習悲心，必須要對正在受難的眾生起觀。

這也是修習悲心觀時，所緣的對象是受苦眾生的原因。一開始起觀的對象無需是自己熟識的人，也最好不要選擇熟稔的親人或朋友，因為這樣會徒增壓力和不安。因為稍早前練習過慈心觀，已經能夠對所有眾生的福祇與安樂發出誠心的祝願，於是在修習悲心觀時，便有能力嘗試對一位完全陌生的受苦對象緣想。

我個人建議，可以從一位出身不幸的孩子緣念起。為了修習悲心，我經常思維一則我過去讀到的新聞報導：一位斯里蘭卡的母親，在2004年年底的南亞大海嘯中失去了他的孩子。海嘯發生前，那位母親在房裡，她的孩子則正在房門外遊戲。海浪一來，沖走了她的孩子，留下她一個人茹泣吞悲，困在哀慟的牢籠裡。你也可以思維一個非洲的孩子，他的雙親因為愛滋病而永遠離他而去，現在則由祖父母照顧著。

或是思維一位被扔棄在印度或巴西街頭的孩童，正在沿路乞食，沒有家，舉目無親，更沒有一絲一毫上學的機會。你將心比心，把乞兒當做己兒，苦他的苦，並發起強烈的願望，希望他離苦。

至於祝願的文句，你可以使用簡單的詞語：“願此人免於苦難，願他解脫煩惱！”將注意力集中在這個人正在經歷的磨難，並深切地感同身受，殷切地希望他脫離苦海。如此反覆思維作意，直到這份悲憫撼動著你的心。當我們敢於直視整個世界的苦難，毫無畏縮，不急著轉身驅避，往往我們的心就能從此敞開，倘若它發生了，就讓它發生，只是坐著，放鬆進入其中，讓悲心充溢，讓悲心遍滿。當你熟悉這種覺受時，你的心就能逐漸安住下來，能夠同時平衡內在的悲心與平靜。

為了進一步擴展悲心的覺受，你可以選擇另一小群正在蒙受不同苦難的人來緣念。選擇的對象可以來自親眼目睹的悲劇，或是從報章讀來或耳聞的消息。無論如何，一開始的練習的對象不要取一群人，而是取四到五個人。譬如：你或許關切一位阿富汗的

農民，在無人偵查機的攻擊之下，失去了妻子與女兒；或是一位青春正好的柬埔寨年輕人，他的雙腿被地雷炸斷，現在只能每天過著乞食的生活；或是中國四川的一位母親，當四川大地震震垮了他孩子的學校，他的兒女同時也魂斷瓦礫；或是遠在非洲西北方的獅子山共和國，一位被強暴的女子生下了他與惡徒的孩子；或是觀想尼日這個國家的婦女，他們的孩子是怎麼被飢餓所困，只剩皮包骨。

針對每一個受苦的案例，發展一種深層的認同感，並學習自他不二的同體大悲。周而復始觀想他們的苦難，不漏掉任何一位，一遍又一遍，反覆修習，直到悲憫撼動你的心。假如你覺得悲心難以喚起，那麼將他們觀想成你的親眷。因此當你選擇了一位長者來修持悲心時，不妨將他觀想成你的父親或母親；如果你選擇的人與你年紀相仿，那麼就將他們觀想成自己的兄弟姐妹；如果你修習的對象比自己年輕很多，那麼就把他們想做自己的孩子。

當你的悲心可以自然地湧現，就要持續地強化它，繼而擴展它，就像前面修持慈心時一樣。你可以延伸悲心到地球各大洲去：首先，對著一個洲上的所有居民散發悲心，直到你強烈地感受到自己攝受在悲心的光芒裡；然後，轉移到下一個洲練習。再接下來，對著不同道的眾生修習悲心。想著每一道的眾生是如何地被各自的煩惱束縛而受苦著：天界的人不知道天福享盡後，還是會墮落惡道；身處人道的我們，也被飢荒，戰爭，貧窮，各種剝削，焦慮和沮喪壓得喘不過氣來；畜牲道的眾生則無時不在恐懼，飢餓和暴力的陰影下；鬼道眾生的痛苦是永無止盡的饑渴；地獄道的眾生則在地獄受盡折磨。想想我們終究都要經歷衰老和死亡。最後，將悲心窮遍十方，橫遍宇宙，遍及界一切有情眾生。

佛教的諸多殊勝處之一，在於提出了強而有力的禪修方法來修習的慈心及悲心。當舉世偉大的宗教都在讚頌愛與慈悲的美好時，唯獨佛教能提出一套精確的修學次第及修行方法，來幫助人們證入覺悟及修練這些至高無上的情操。或許就是因為人們對於愛與慈悲的高度評價，所以當他們造訪具有佛教傳統的國家時，他們會感受到那裡人民的溫暖，善良以及友好。

然而，當此之時，我也認為傳統佛教有一個關鍵性的弱點。那就是缺乏強調將慈與悲落實在具體的行動上，做為匡正社會，改造社會秩序之用。我們佛教徒容易將慈與悲視於一種崇高的心靈境界及狀態，這部份我們推崇，因為在追求這種心靈境界的過程中，會去除我們的負面習氣，比方說憤怒、嗔心、敵意與惡念。我的話可能有些人聽來會覺得刺耳，但是依我個人的觀點，傳統佛教並不十分強調慈與悲行動化的需要，並以此做為追求社會正義及促進世界更加和諧的推動力。目前，基督徒正興味盎然地同佛教學習如何過一種有禪修的生活，我認為佛教在如何將愛行動化的部份可以大量地同基督教請益學習。

如果我們慈心的禪修，在我們心中真實地植下對他人真正的關懷，我們就應該起而力行，積極地為眾生謀福利；如果我們對眾生的悲心是真切的，我們應該從事於舒緩他們苦難的工作。假設有一天我們回到家，眼見自己的房子著了火，又發現自己的孩子

都困在裡頭，此時此刻的我們不會只是光站在那裡想著："祈望我的孩子能順利逃出火窟！"相反地，我們會盡其所能去搶救，無有暫歇，直到孩子安全地獲救。心同此理，我們應該把全人類當做自己的孩子，想著他們正被各種煩惱苦痛繫縛著，而我們要盡最大的努力減輕他的苦痛，提供他喘息的機會。

我個人認為理想的佛教修行，應該結合內在禪觀的修持與外在的濟世行動。當我們在禪觀中修習慈心與悲心，我們在內心創造了一股強大的力量，這股力量可以被釋放出來帶動重大的轉化，並利益許多眾生。也就是說，我們心中的慈悲必須找到管道，透過具體的行動流露開來。我們表現慈悲不能碰運氣，或者只是一陣突發的情懷本身而已。要使慈悲成為改革有效的載體，我們需要慎選能夠幫助眾生的機會。然後，投入能夠激發我們熱情，鼓舞我們獻身人群的活動或是慈善組織。

在二零零八年年中，我和我的學生們，正在尋找一種積極的途徑，來具現佛教理想的慈悲觀。最後，我們決定成立一個致力於全球賑災濟貧的組織，並在正式運作時，起名它為「佛教環球賑濟」。兩千零八年六月，我們進一步決定，將專務側重在全球飢荒問題上。佛陀說飢餓乃是最嚴重的疾病，而布施糧食就是布施生命。全世界六十五億的人口，超過十億的人經年累月處在飢餓及營養不良的痛苦中，高達二十五億的人靠劣質的飲食渡日。每年有一千萬人死於飢餓，半數以上都是兒童。這意味著每一年有五百萬到六百萬的孩子死於飢餓或飢餓相關的疾病，平均每五秒到六秒鐘，就有一個孩子因為飢餓或營養不良而離開人世。

我們承認，全球飢荒問題如此龐大，無法單靠一個組織力挽狂瀾。但是，為了回應苦難者的呼喊，我們必須代表廣大的佛教團體貢獻我們的一己之力。成立「佛教環球賑濟」的第一年，我們就在緬甸，斯里蘭卡及越南展開了三個領航計劃。第二年的前六個月，我們加入了四項援助方案：分別是 1. 對斯里蘭卡北方提供糧食援助；2. 贈予食物及獎學金給柬埔寨的年輕女孩和他們的家庭，提供女孩們上學受教育的機會；3. 發放上學制服及文具扶助印度北方省低種性階級的孩子們；4. 我們與海倫凱勒國際基金會在尼日聯手合作，提供營養補充劑給幼兒、懷孕的婦女及哺乳中的母親。我們的組織成員，完全由義工一手包辦，人事支出極小，所以每一筆捐款裡的百分之九十五的捐款，都會直接進入救援計劃裡。

當爾之時，隨處充斥著危機及混亂，精神修持及社會參與不能再各自為政，各行其事。現今重大的社會動亂有：全球暖化，普遍的貧困、戰爭、種族衝突，人權侵犯及虐待動物…這些動亂其實都根源於人類心靈深處的危機。為了療癒人類心靈的痼疾，避免人性困頓在跨國協商及創新科技有限的方法上，長遠之計，唯有透過倫理道德與精神修持。而真正能行的解決之道，則要從人類意識的最底層徹底改變起。更重要的是，我們需要一份全球覺醒的智慧，這份智慧能夠體現公平正義的真理及象徵對所有眾生無盡無量的慈與悲。然而，要治療當務之急，慈與悲不能只是束之高閣的理想，它必需成為一股鞭策我們行動的力量，讓我們能夠毫無倦怠地為眾生拔苦，堅持不懈地為促進人類長久的幸福與快樂而努力。