

John Makransky

Week 4, [The Healing Power of Innate Love and Wisdom: Meditations from Tibet for Westerners](#)

June 23rd, 2014

“Becoming a Benefactor”

Welcome back. In the meditation practice that we’re going to be doing this week, we’re going to be gently shifted into the position of benefactor. So as in our prior meditations we learned to recall a benefactor moment, inhabit that moment as happening now, and experience ourselves as the object of loving affection, care, joy; in the meditation I’ll introduce now we’re going to be shifted into the position of the subject of loving care for others, without losing our experience of our self as also always being the object of care. From the object of care, the power comes to be the subject of care. You’ll see when we get going.

So the loving energy that we accept in the benefactor practice—the prior practices we were doing: loving wish and energy—we opened to that. We accept that into our being. And that helps draw us into the depth of our being more—into the basic ground or openness of our awareness. And from there we can increasingly also sense others in the depth of their being as much, much more than anybody’s limited thoughts of each other. And we can begin with familiarity with that practice—to experience softer more permeable boundaries between self and other; less rigid sense of separateness; more ease of communion or sense of pre-verbal connection and affection. And that leads naturally towards the next meditation. It helps bring out a kind of an inner urge to want to be shifted also into the position of a benefactor for others.

So in the next meditation we’re going to move into extending loving wish and energy to others. And the understanding, from the Tibetan tradition that I’m speaking from, is that we are thereby learning to cooperate with our underlying capacities for loving affection and pre-verbal connection, communing, reverencing persons’ beings. We are not in this understanding, not trying to fabricate more love and niceness. We’re not trying to just make our self a nicer person. Rather, we’re learning to stop holding back our underlying capacity of loving connection, which is always already here; so that the natural openness of heart and mind that has been hidden or obstructed by our habits of reaction to our own labels for each other—the natural openness of heart and mind—can begin to unfurl.

So we’re not trying to fabricate more niceness. We’re just learning in a way to get out of our way a little bit and let the underlying power of care, empathy, compassion and kindness begin to unfold. It’s a little bit, in this example, like if a very friendly little dog suddenly came walking into this room and it’s tail is wagging and it’s raising its head and it’s so happy to see you. We feel like we’re

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just drawn like a magnet to just reach down and pet the little dog. It’s like the dog’s endearing nature is magnetizing our underlying nature of loving connection, drawing it to the dog almost like an inner urge to have to care for, take joy in, wish well and happy by petting. Like that—very natural. Learning how our being with others can be experienced as magnetizing in that way, a natural affection for them in their basic being—the way that their own basic being works like a magnet to draw our capacity of affection and care for them.

So let’s, before we begin in this meditation—since it’s our last one for this month’s online retreat—I’m also going to first instruct us to bring to mind beings or people that it feels most natural to wish wellness to: persons or beings that are dear to us naturally bring out this underlying capacity. When we think of them, we just think of them in this way, taking joy in them, wishing them well. They may be our friends or dear relatives or someone that we’d love to be with, and so that’s the first kind of person that we’ll bring to mind.

Like with the benefactor practice, we bring to mind first what’s easiest to practice. But after a little while in the practice that we’re about to enter into, I’ll also introduce the possibility of bringing to mind someone we experience as a stranger, somebody that we have not been personally introduced to and feels like just a stranger to us. Meaning: not so important, not so dear, just sort of somebody, but no real strong feeling of wishing them well or anything like that. It’s kind of like if you walk out on a street in a city near you home and there are lots and lots of people on the street and suddenly a dear friend of yours you had not expected to be there, appears.

Doesn’t it feel like now the one—who is really dear and deserves love and that I would really wish well—has appeared? But notice the contrast between how you see and feel that person compared to everybody else, hundreds of other people in the street that—if we’re observant and frank—I think we would have to say we experience them as merely strangers, just strangers, not really important, not fully people really. The one who’s really a full person has arrived: my dear friend. That’s a contrast. So we’re gonna bring to mind in this practice also a stranger to help us begin to explore the possibility of letting our underlying capacity of loving connection come through, even with someone that we think of—have thought of—as just a stranger.

Okay, so let’s begin the practice. And, again, sit up straight in a comfortable and a relaxed way. The eyes can be open and gazing gently downward, or closed if you

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prefer here. And we'll begin with the cleansing breaths again. Are you ready? Okay, here we go. Inhale, tummy expands, imagine the mind drops down in the lower abdomen, holding and release. As if all your worries are being released on the outbreath. Inhale and hold—mind drops down into oneness with the breath below. Holding and release; inhale and hold, and release; inhale and hold, and release. Now just breathing normally.

We'll drop into the three letting be's for a moment, dropping into the body and feeling the body as a whole, in a relaxed way. Letting be within the body. And letting the body draw you into oneness with it. And feeling the breath wherever you feel it most in the body. Letting be within the breath and letting it draw you into oneness with it. And then relaxing and letting be within the mind, to let the mind just fall open. And letting that openness of mind draw you into oneness with it. And letting the patterns of thought and feeling that arise just relax and unwind within this compassionate openness—this space of deep accepting and letting be.

And now recall the benefactor moment. It makes you happy to recall. This time imagine your benefactor in that moment as behind you, if you can, or just imagine that's happening. And that moment is happening now and imagine that your benefactor is communing with you in the basic goodness of your being beyond all judgments, just wishing you deeply well. And receive the loving energy of that wish from your benefactor into your whole body and mind. Just opening to it, accepting it, allowing it. Every part of you, loved in its very being.

Every part of you, loved in its very being. Just accepting that as much as you can right now. And now bring to mind someone that is dear to you, for whom it feels natural to extend this loving wish and energy. And, while still receiving this loving energy from your benefactor behind you, let the loving energy now come through you to the person before you, the dear one that you imagine before you, as if you were a windowpane for it. And imagine this loving energy that comes through you to the person in front of you, pervades his or her whole body and mind, that you are communing, connecting with her or him in the depths of her being from beyond all limiting judgments—affirming her deep dignity and goodness and worth and wishing her deeply well, or him.

You can think of one or two more persons or beings that are dear to you, human or a pet, and similarly—along with the other one that you thought of before—you just let the loving energy come through you to them in front of you. Communing with them in the goodness of their being, taking joy in them. Wishing them deeply

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well. Kind of reverencing, affirming them, below the radar of everyone’s limiting patterns of thought.

Just wishing them well. And now you can also, in addition to the other people in front of you that you’ve experienced as dear, now bring to mind a stranger, somebody that you’ve seen or heard of around where you live or anywhere—in the news—someone that you feel you don’t know personally. And do similarly: Let loving energy from your benefactor behind you just come through you to the so-called stranger in front of you along with the dear ones. Communing with that so-called stranger in the basic goodness of his or her being, wishing her deeply well, or him.

And explore then the possibility of trusting that this wish—wish for him or her to be deeply well, more than the thought of her or him as just a stranger, by communing, connecting with her or him in her fuller being, fuller history, fuller potential; rather than staying at the level of reaction to the impression of her as just a stranger or him. Communing with her in her fuller being, or him, wishing her well.

Again, with regard to the seeming stranger who is with the others before you, explore trusting this wish for him or her to have deep wellbeing—more than the thought of him or her as just a stranger. Communing with her or him, reverencing, affirming her fuller worth and dignity and potential, below the radar of everyone’s limiting thoughts. Just wishing well. Now imagine that your benefactor from behind you just merges into your heart within this loving energy and becomes one with your heart. And just imagine that your heart is one with all benefactors and it’s just gently radiating like the sun to everyone in all directions now. Every living being. Every person. Just communing with them, connecting in the basic goodness of their being, just wishing them deeply well.

Heart gently radiating this loving wish and energy like the sun to everyone, everywhere, at once. Just imagining that’s happening. And now just merge into oneness with that loving energy, letting go of any visualization. And letting the mind just fall completely open. Letting patterns of thought and feeling just unwind and relax within this space of deep allowing and accepting. The natural kindness of letting all be.

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Gong! That’s the gong. So that will end the meditation exercise. This is the moment of transition. You just let the meditation practice continue to resonate, to whatever extent it does, into what we do now.

So in this practice we did the cleansing breaths and brief three letting be’s and then we recalled a benefactor moment and, again, received that loving wish and energy into ourselves, our being. And then, from there we began to think of persons or beings that are dear to us. And just felt the pull to naturally extend this loving wish and energy, which we’re continuing to experience from our benefactor behind us. Letting it extend through us to those who are dear to us and then, from there, to a stranger to begin to explore the possibility that this inner urge for loving affection, connection, wishing deeply well, care, that this inner urge really can extend also at a level below the radar, as it were, our limiting thoughts and judgments, like “just a stranger,” that we can actually sense at a more intuitive level or more basic level of our awareness that there is a fuller person there, who’s not just a stranger, and begin to relate to that more—that fuller being, or level of being, and not just relate to our label of the person, which is what we’re in the habit of doing. It’s quite a profound practice, isn’t it?

And then the last phase, as always, we allow the power of loving connection and loving energy to help bring a kind of a power to the mind to help it to relax and release even a little more fully into the basic openness of awareness—that’s the source of that love, a basic ground of wisdom in our mind. This meditation does two basic things. It raises up our limiting labels, like the exclusive “dear one,” itself, is a limiting label, if they’re the only ones that are really dear.

And also clearly with the “stranger” label, “just a stranger” is how we experience so many people and beings—not just human beings, by the way, but all kinds of creatures that don’t seem to really matter. So that’s the feeling of a stranger. So this meditation raises up the limiting labels that we’ve mistaken for person and beings, shows them to us, “See how you’ve been mistaking your label ‘Just a stranger’ for that person who’s actually a person?” showing us that.

And at the same time, it’s bringing out our underlying power of loving affection, connection, care, that had been held back by our reactions to our own limiting labels. Is that clear? It’s doing both at once. It’s showing us our limiting label, “just a stranger,” and it’s also bringing out this power for loving connection that had been held back by our habit of reacting to our limiting label, “stranger,” as if it was the person.

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So, in this practice we are learning. We are exploring the possibility of trusting the power of loving connection, communing, care, well-wishing, of loving connection with another full human being or person; trusting that more than the thought of others as merely strangers or, in a further extension, more than the thought of others as merely dislikable, as this gets further extended. And that, in Buddhist terms, is part of the real meaning of refuge and renunciation: We’re learning how limited our limiting labels have been, how much our reactions to our own limiting labels of others have held back our fuller potential and our ability to recognize the much fuller personhood of others. The many faults of that helps empower a kind of renunciation, and inner urge to be freed from our patterns of reaction to our own limiting thoughts.

Freed for more of our potential to come out and come through, freed to recognize others in their much fuller worth and potential, freed from our own limiting pattern—that’s renunciation. And at the same time, it’s bringing out the real; part of the real meaning of refuge, which is a deepening—exploring the possibility of a deepening trust and reliance on this underlying power of loving connection and the wisdom that it expresses, the wisdom that knows there is much more to everyone than our limiting labels. Learning to trust that basic love and wisdom more and more and more, is the power of refuge through the practice.

And in this practice we begin to experience with—as we familiarize with it an underlying unity with others that’s more fundamental than the apparent divisions between self and others that we’ve all been caught in. And, through that, we can learn to bring the voice and the healing power of that underlying unity that we’re sensing, that’s more fundamental than our apparent division “just a stranger, just dislikable.” We can learn to bring the voice and the healing power of that level of underlying unity into our life and into our work with others. When we become more and more familiar with this practice—perhaps after many months of daily use of it for those who feel a connection to it—the power and the perspective of this meditation can come more and more spontaneously into our life and our ways of working with others. There can begin to come—and we just sort of begin to notice that it’s coming; we’re not trying to make it happen—a greater ease of communion, a greater ease or naturalness of listening more deeply to others and also to ourselves, sensing others as more than just everyone’s limiting thoughts of them, including theirs. Noticing more of their hidden strengths, becoming a little more creatively responsive to them.

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So that completes our month-long meditation retreat. And you're very welcome to explore these practices, as I've led them here. The full manual for these practices is my book, *Awakening Through Love*, which is also available in various bookstores or through—online, really—through Amazon and through its publisher, Wisdom Publications. That book, *Awakening Through Love*, will provide much fuller background in the theory and practice of these kinds of meditations, which I'm calling innate compassion and wisdom training. And it's been a real pleasure to be with you all, whoever's been out there watching and listening. It's great to be with you and wish you all the best and all the best with all things. Thank you for joining me.