

Open Heart

*A Beginning Guide
For Boundless Love Meditation*

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By Bhante Ānanda

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Susukham vata jīvāma
Yesam no natthi kiñcanam,
Pītibhakkhā bhavissāma
Devā Ābhassarā yathā.



Surely, we are living in bliss,
We who have nothing,
Feeders on joy we shall be,
Like the Devas of streaming radiance.

—Dhp 200

Contents

Introduction	1
Part 1	5
Virtue	1
The Purpose of Wholesome Behavior	2
In the Buddha's words	3
Remembering One's Own Virtue	3
Boundless Love	7
Instructions	9
Fully Open	14
The Analogy of the Cloth.....	14
Samadhi Sutta.....	15
Mettabхавана Sutta.....	16
Troubleshooting Love	17
Distractions	25
Instructions	27
The Four Steps of Wise Practice.....	28
The 6 Rs	29
Voices in the Head	32
Part 2	35
Stages of Meditation	37

The First Four Jhanas.....	39
Samadhi Born of Happiness.....	40
Meditation: Aware of Body	41
First stage	42
Second Stage	43
Third Stage.....	44
Fourth Stage.....	45
Meditation: Aware of Only Mind.....	46
Plane of Endless Space	47
Plane of Endless Consciousness	48
Plane of Bare Awareness.....	49
The Limit of Awareness	50
Release from Experiential Awareness	51
Discernment.....	53
Wholesome Mental Development.....	55
First Comes Discernment.....	56
Second Comes the Practice	57
Third Comes Awareness.....	58
The Mental Revolution.....	59
Five Hindrances	60
Seven Supports of Awakening.....	61
In the Words of the Buddha	61
1. Awareness.....	62

2. Discernment.....	62
3. Inspiration.....	63
4. Joy.....	64
5. Calm.....	64
6. Collectedness	65
7. Mental Steadiness	65
Back to Awareness.....	66
Personal Development	66
Walking Meditation.....	67
Instructions	69
In the Buddha's Words	70
Forgiveness	71
The Purpose of Forgiveness	73
Forgiving Others	75
Forgiving Yourself	76
Forgiving Life	79
Asking Forgiveness to	81
Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha	81
Concluding Forgiveness	83
Forgiveness and Sariputta	84
Gratitude	87
Gratitude	89
Personal Practice	93

A Way of Life.....	95
Uposatha	97
Dhamma or Religion	98
Suttas on Mettā.....	101
The Conch Blower.....	103
[Simile of the Conch Blower].....	104
Benefits of Boundless Love.....	105
Finger Snap Love	107
Puññanumodana-Pattidana	109
Respects	111
Notes	113

Introduction

Boundless Love meditation, as taught by the Buddha in the early Buddhist texts (*Suttas*) is particularly special. Mettā was perhaps the foremost meditation subject taught by the Buddha himself, especially to people beginning on the path to awakening for many valuable reasons. He in fact called this practice, *Mettā-cetovimutti*: 'The liberation of the Heart by Love.' This was not only a kind of sitting meditation practice but a way of life also called *Mettā-bhāvanā*; 'The cultivation of Love.'

The natural wholesome magnitude of Love itself is quite extraordinary, let alone when it is practiced boundlessly. While harboring and nurturing the feeling of Universal Love, the mind is extremely pure, without a trace of anger as well as other distractions.

The feeling of Love is a powerful support for wisdom and discernment. The more a person develops Boundless Love, unwholesome states like anger or jealousy or pride will start standing out quite dramatically against the Loving background of the mind, allowing us to see with greater clarity and apply, the four awakened understandings. This

will in turn allow us to let go of these unwholesome, hurtful mental behaviors and carry on with a loving mind.

Love is a particularly potent vehicle of awareness. It carries much of the support of awakening of Joy within itself and therefore, it comes and strengthens our mental faculties including awareness.

The practice of Boundless Love cannot be faked. It has to be 100% genuine, otherwise... it is simply not Love! Therefore, this meditation practice helps us stay close to Truth, constantly. The Buddha said that one who practiced Boundless Love is undeluded. Why? Because this practice is all about Truth and wholesomeness.

It can be difficult to remain on the right path using other kinds of meditations, but with Boundless Love, it is always a tangible, direct path. When the feeling of Love disappears, it is quite easy to notice. When the feeling is there, it is quite easy to notice.

The practice of Boundless Love is of such potency that any hurt or unwholesome emotions or conditioned behavior that are stored unconsciously in the heart will have to surface and heal. That is simply the nature of Love. There is no more 'hiding things' when practicing Boundless Love. If any hurtful feelings are kept locked away in some secret corner of the heart, they will have to be cared for, dealt with, accepted and forgiven in order to move further into the practice of greater Love and awareness. This is one

of the most powerful advantages of this practice. No more pretending, no more concealing, only truth.

The practice of Mettā is not only a ‘side-practice’ that the Buddha taught ‘once in a while.’ It is one of the most essential building blocks of his teaching. To overlook Mettā is to overlook most of what the Buddha taught.

In this short beginning manual, a meditator will find the essential, down to earth, practical information on how to practice Mettā meditation, through each successive stages of meditation. Whether one is just starting on the path of meditation or one is an advanced meditator, interested in the practice of Mettā, as it was taught by the Buddha in the early days of his teaching.

May you all be happy.
May you all be successful.

Sabba satta bhavantu sukhitatta
May all beings be happy at heart 😊

Part 1

The Heart of the Practice

Virtue

The Uplifted Stand for the Mind

The Purpose of Wholesome Behavior

Virtue or good conduct is essential in the Buddha's wonderful teaching. Virtue, apart from being highly beneficial for oneself, societies, cultures and all of life, will keep the meditator's mind from experiencing remorse and grief from previous unwholesome hurtful deeds.

Virtue leads to Samādhi, to a harmonious and collected peaceful mind, that is: meditation. It is the ground upon which we grow our meditation practice. It is the garden. Virtue leads to Samādhi, Samādhi leads to virtue, like this. Generosity and virtue are essential preliminary steps to this beautiful meditation. Meditation always begins by purifying our own virtue and actions, to protect us and others, and to uplift the mind.

The five virtues are:

1. Not to hurt
2. Not to steal
3. Not to lie
4. Not to commit sexual misbehavior
5. Not to take substances that cause carelessness¹

¹ These are undertaken on a voluntary basis, understanding that they are for one's own mental peace and benefit in life..

In the Buddha's words

Remembering One's Own Virtue ²

At other times,
A wise meditator,
often recalls one's own good conduct which is

Unbroken, unbreeched
Constant, flawless,
Liberating, recommended by the wise,
Unspoiled and leading directly to samādhi.

[Not Overwhelmed]

Whenever this wise meditator
recalls one's own good conduct,
For that time, one's mind is
not overwhelmed by outward desires,
not overwhelmed by anger,
and not overwhelmed by confusion;

² As a real and tangible meditation practice.

[Straight and Uplifted Mind]

For that time,
Because of one's consideration
for one's own good conduct,
one's mind is straight and uplifted.

With a straight and uplifted mind,
A wise meditator
Knows and experiences the meaning,
Knows and experiences the Dhamma,
Knows and experiences
the natural gladness of Dhamma.

[Natural Samadhi]

From that gladness, joy arises in the mind;
From that joyful mind, the body becomes calm;
Calm in body, one experiences happiness;
With a happy mind comes Samādhi.

[Living in the Stream]

This wise meditator is one who lives
Harmoniously amongst the agitated,
Friendly amongst the hostile.

Having come upon the stream of the Dhamma,
One cultivates the remembering of one's own good
conduct.³

³ AN VI 10 Mahānāma Sutta

Boundless Love

Let it Shine

Instructions

1. Environment:

As much as it is possible, try finding a place that is calm, away from too many distractions and sounds. An environment in which you feel safe and comfortable. A location that will hold and support you in the process of generating Love within.

2. Posture:

Choose a posture that feels comfortable to you. A posture in which you feel at ease. This will greatly help bringing up the feeling of Loving Kindness. Having an upright spine is highly recommended and will help over time. Sitting in a chair might be easier for a lot of people.

3. Relaxing into presence:

Relax! Let go of the thoughts in your mind. Whether they are about the past or the plans you are making for after the retreat, whatever it is.

Relax into the presence of your own body. Let go of any tension you might have picked up during the day, relax. Take a deep breath. Slow down. Notice and enjoy the relief that comes from letting go (Viveka).

4. Smiling:

Smile! Be grateful for having this wonderful time for yourself. Smiling will help you relax. And relaxing will help you smile. 😊

Smiling is like bananas for the monkey mind. The more you smile, the more the monkey mind will calm down and listen. Why? Because monkey mind likes bananas. It likes to be happy. Like this, we slowly tame the wild monkey mind. When the monkey mind sees that there are lots of bananas all the time in this practice, it will start getting itself together and stay for longer periods of time.

There is no love without happiness.

This is a happy meditation.

This is a feel-good meditation.

This is a smiling meditation.

5. Love:

After you have settled down for some time, bring up the feeling of Love in your heart. The feeling of Love is a very tangible feeling within the body.

It is this warm, radiant, perhaps tingly feeling inside your chest. Same feeling that perhaps makes your cheeks turn red and your palms sweat. Same feeling that you have when

you hold a puppy or a kitten. Or when you are with a young child or someone you really love and respect.⁴

Let this beautiful feeling fill your entire body, from head to toe. Enjoy!

6. Share the Love:

After a few moments, you might notice that this feeling of Love doesn't do very well when it is restricted only to the body. You might notice that your mind wants to expand and the feeling wants to become freer.

Practice your generosity!

Let the feeling grow!

Let the feeling flow!

Let it flow out,

Everywhere in front of you,

In all of space,

To all living beings,

Everywhere behind you

In all of space,

To all living beings,

⁴ This can be a friend.

Everywhere to your left
In all of space,
To all living beings,

Everywhere to your right
In all of space,
To all living beings,

Above and below,
Across,
Beyond,
Everywhere.

Without boundaries,
Without limits,
Completely open and expanded.

Smile!

Without hostility,
without resentment,
without dislike,
without judgements,
without opinions,
without preferences,
without a condition.

Love.
Only love.
Boundless,

Unconditioned,
Immeasurable.

Don't force it.
Simply allow it to glow of its own.

It is the nature of the feeling of Love to shine outwardly. Just like the sun. The sun isn't thinking about shining its light in the universe, it is not trying or forcing. It simply is.

Simply learn to kindle the fire of Boundless Love inside your heart and allow it to be free and to shine out.⁵

This might take a little while.
But after some practice, it becomes natural.
The heart will remember how to do it.

⁵ This is the first part of a process called Wise Practice or Right Effort. This is about bringing up and cultivating wholesome states of mind. The next step is to prevent and abandon unwholesome states of mind (distractions).

Fully Open

One of the key aspects of this meditation is that it should be fully open, boundless, in all directions, to all beings. This is one of the most important features of the practice. Here's a Sutta where the Buddha explains a little bit more on the topic of Boundless Samādhi:

The Analogy of the Cloth

MN 7 Vattha Sutta

“One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Love;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.

Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.

One meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.”

Samadhi Sutta

AN V 27 Immeasurable Samādhi

"Monks, being wise and continuously present,
develop meditation that is immeasurable.
Doing so, five different understandings will arise.

What Five?

One understands:

- (1) This present Samādhi is blissful
and results in future happiness."
- (2) This Samādhi is wise and beyond material.
- (3) This samādhi is not practiced by the unvirtuous.
- (4) This Samādhi is peaceful, sublime,
obtained through calming down,
attained by mental unity,
not by forcefully holding back
and pushing away.
- (5) I am aware while entering it
and aware while emerging from it."

Mettabhavana Sutta

Iti 1.27 The Development of Boundless Love

“For one who develops [the feeling] of Love,
With boundless presence;
The fetters wear away,
Seen is the ending of acquisitions.⁶

Having an unspoiled mind towards one being,
Lovingly, there is goodness therein.
But having a compassionate mind towards all beings,
The wise generates an abundance of merit.”

⁶ Accumulated unwholesome action of body, speech or mind.

Troubleshooting Love

Bringing up the Feeling

What helps you feel happy?
When do you usually experience Love?

Using Sentences

Some people find it easier to use sentences like:

‘I love you,’⁷
‘May I be happy,’⁸
‘May I be peaceful and calm,’
‘May all living beings be happy...’
Find the sentence that works for you.

Good Actions

Remembering previous good actions we have done can help tremendously. Perhaps you can remember a time when you helped someone in need or gave some of your time for a good cause. Helping others makes us feel happy, naturally. Try digging around in your old virtuous memories.

⁷ Said to all of life.

⁸ Feeling loving-compassion for your own self can be effective.

A Person You Love

Calling to mind a person that you love and respect can be very helpful. A person for who you easily feel love, gratitude, appreciation and respect. A person whose presence uplifts your mind and brings out your innermost best qualities. It can be a friend, a teacher, a colleague, a family member. It can be anyone. Simply make sure that the feeling of love remains on the side of open mental upliftment (giving), not physical attraction (taking).

Young Animals

A lot of people easily understand the feeling of Love when they remember holding a baby animal. A kitten, a puppy, a baby goat... It's hard not to feel Love if you are watching baby animals.

Gratitude

Remember all the things you can be grateful for. The food that gave you life today, the house that is sheltering you every day, the clothes you wear which protect your body from the weather, having access to health care and medicine. This very unique and rare opportunity to encounter the Buddha's Teaching in one's life. Your friends and family who support you. The more we cultivate gratitude, the more we align with Dhamma, Truth, and the easier it is to bring up Love. See section on Gratitude Meditation.

Good Memory

Some people find it easier to recall a good memory. Perhaps a trip with people you really liked, somewhere that was meaningful to you?

Nature

Some people resonate a lot with nature. Maybe remembering a special place you have been. Whether the forest or the ocean, the mountains or the prairies. Somewhere you felt Love for all of life? Can you remember? The earth you walk on is the earth in your skin and bones, the sky above you is the air in your lungs, the water in the clouds and in the ocean is where your blood comes from, and the heat of the sun is the thing that makes all of life possible on this earth.

Buddha

For some people, remembering the Buddha is very powerful. Those who know the remarkable qualities of the Buddha, his virtue, wisdom and compassion for all living beings can find here a very uplifting tool.

Laugh

Smile and laugh for taking yourself so seriously! Relax, lighten up your mind, do something (wholesome) that makes you laugh.

Trying too Hard

The feeling of Love cannot be forced, it can only be felt, genuinely. Forcing the feeling of Love is like trying to pry open a beautiful lotus, we just make a mess. Love needs the water of your caring attention and good intention. And it needs constant perseverance, not force. Like a garden, we provide all the conditions for the plants to grow but we cannot pull the plants out of their seeds and make them grow. They have to grow on their own, we can help and nudge things along. Likewise, pushing the feeling will not work. Relaxing into the feeling of Love will help it bloom.

Perseverance

At the beginning, the feeling of Love might dissipate often, the mind might wander a lot. Do not loose heart! Continue letting go and relaxing and continually bring up the feeling of Love. Sooner or later, it will begin to stick. Have faith, this works!

Asking for Help

Ask a teacher or an advanced meditator on this path. This can help a lot. Seek out advice. Often, simply talking about a few things will help give strength and faith in the practice and will open up blockages.

You are Loved

Remember that wherever you are on your path, you are loved. Some people in this world devote their entire lives to the practice of unconditional Love. You can rest assured that these people love you and will love you, for all that you are and all that you are not. May this also be an uplifting recollection for your heart.

Distractions

The Art of Letting Go

Instructions

As you kindle the light of Boundless Love, the mind will become distracted. It will take off on some wanderings and solo journeys to some other pleasant attractive memories and landscapes as it pleases. It will start thinking about this and that.

A monkey, jumping from one branch to another. The subject or reason why the mind becomes distracted is not important. It is only a distraction.

When the feeling of Boundless Love fades away and the mind becomes distracted, a wise meditator applies what is called 'the Four Steps of Wise Practice.'⁹ Wise Practice is the first step of the training in meditation (Samādhi). This is how it works, how to practice:

⁹ Sammā-Vāyāma: Commonly translated as Right Effort.

The Four Steps of Wise Practice

1. **Be aware** when a distraction arises ¹⁰
2. **Let go** the distraction and relax the tension ¹¹
3. **Bring up** the feeling of Love (Smile 😊) ¹²
4. **Maintain** the feeling of Love (Enjoy!)

These are the four steps of Wise Practice (Right Effort) and their direct application in meditation in both body and mind.

Practicing in this way,
the mind begins to untangle,
it begins gathering itself.

It slowly becomes clear & collected,
Open & bright
...Free...

¹⁰ Distractions come with tension, in the body and in the mind, more specifically around the head.

¹¹ Releasing and relaxing the tension caused by the distraction, not holding on to them, not feeding them our attention. This is also the third Awakened Understanding (Noble truth) of the release from tension. In pāli, this is Passambhāyam; to actively let go, to relax. Cāga: to give it up, Paṭinissaga: to break free from it, Mutti: to release, and Anālaya: to unlatch.

¹² Bring up the feeling of Love! Smiling will help a lot.

The 6 Rs

A Mnemonic Aid for Meditation

1. Recognize:

Recognize when the mind has become distracted, when it is no longer developing Loving Kindness, and has started to flow outside, to other thoughts. This is also recognizing tension, it is part of discernment (*Pañña*). Mind is no longer with the love, and there is inevitably tension that comes with the distraction. This is also part of the first step of wise practice (Right Effort).

2. Release:

Release the distraction. Release is at the mental level. We stop feeding it our attention. Attention is the food for the mind and thoughts, without attention, a thought loses all its power. We withdraw our attention from the ‘storyline’ which our mind has started to invent or remember. We let it be there on its own.

3. Relax:

Relax the tension that arose because of the distraction, calming it down, opening it up, relaxing it, unclenching the tightness and settling down. Like loosening and opening up a tightly clenched fist. Feel the relief! This is the most

important step of the whole process. Make sure to practice it! It is also the support of awakening of calm or tranquility. Releasing and relaxing constitute the letting go or part of wise practice (Right effort).

4. Re-Smile:

Bring up another smile! A smile in your heart, a smile in your eyes, and a light smile on your lips. A Buddha smile. ☺ This is the support of awakening of joy. This will keep your mind clear and sharp. It will make the meditation far better and more efficient. Remember to smile and have fun! Keep the meditation light and remember not to take the mind too seriously. We are now on the development side of wise practice.

5. Return:

Return or re-generate this wholesome mental state that you are currently developing, given by the teacher. This is usually Loving Kindness at first, with the spiritual friend, then any of the brahmavihāras or the four resting places of awareness for those more advanced on the path. This is also part of the development step of wise practice.

6. Repeat:

Repeat this process, only when needed. Only when the mind gets distracted. When the mind becomes completely taken away from the subject it is cultivating, and is fully lost in other thoughts, then repeat these steps! If the mind is still with the love and it starts thinking, continue with the love, keep the love going for as long as you can and do not fuss over tiny distractions. Train to make your mind beautiful and spacious. This is the maintaining part of wise practice.

Voices in the Head

If you hear a voice in your mind saying: "Smiling is ridiculous, smiling is stupid..." Don't listen! That is just the mind trying to trick you! This voice doesn't actually want you to be happy! Laugh! Your mind is ridiculous!

When someone reminds you to smile as you are meditating and you hear a voice that says: "Yeah, but I'm totally faking it." Don't listen! It doesn't matter if you are faking it or not. Slowly, it will get to you. Slowly, you will trick your mind to be happy and you will understand the true power of smiling. 😊

When you are sitting for a while with the feeling of Love and at some point, the mind gets bored you hear a voice say: "Aww what now? What's this stuff all about? When do we stop?" Don't pay attention! Relax! You were happy and smiling just a minute ago and now the mind is bored. Is that happiness? Is this kind of mind for your own happiness? No. Just relax, and laugh at your mind!

Part 2

Taking it Further

Stages of Meditation

A Roadmap of the Mind

The First Four Jhanas

The feeling of Love will change throughout the meditation. At the beginning, there might be a lot of hindrances in the mind, a lot of distractions and the feeling might not be very clear or steady.

The feeling might leave for a while, then after letting of a that distraction, it might come back again. It may be strong or it may be subtle, it may seem to be “mixed” with other kinds of feelings and thoughts. The more we practice like described above, the more the feeling of Love will become established, steady and pure.

This will happen over the course of a few days.

Here is a road map to the meditation through its four main stages. Each of these stages happen slowly, gradually. At some point, those factors will slowly arise and become stronger, and at other times, they will be weakened by distractions. What matters is that a meditator keeps practicing and inevitably, these stages will be experienced.

But first, before entering the first stage of meditation, while one is still swimming in the sea of distractions, the

mind will slowly acquire steadiness and relief by constantly releasing and relaxing the tension and coming back to the feeling of Love. This is how the meditation begins.

Samadhi Born of Happiness

[Aware of Boundless Love]

Feeling that distractions have faded away, relief arises;
From that relief, joy arises in the mind;
With a joyful mind, the body becomes calm;
With a calm body, one experiences happiness;
And with a happy mind comes Mental Collectedness.¹³



¹³ This is called Dhamma Samādhi. “Natural Collectedness” of the mind. This sequence is perhaps one of the most important teachings of the Buddha on the nature of the mind and meditation.

Meditation: Aware of Body

With Boundless Love

First stage

(First Jhāna)

Letting go of all desires outside,¹⁴
And letting go of unwholesome mental states,
Still attended by thinking and imagining,
With blissful happiness born of letting go.
One experiences the first level of meditation.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Boundless Love, and body.
2. **Letting go:** Distractions have subsided. Awareness is suffused only with Love, no sensory engagement.
3. **Feeling of Love:** Radiance in the heart and body.¹⁵
4. **Bliss:** It arises from letting go of everything else and diving into the Love, into the meditation.
5. **Thoughts and imagination:** They are present and fully wholesome at this point.¹⁶

¹⁴ All those things we want to experience out in the world.

¹⁵ It should be radiated to all directions in all of space but if a meditator is experiencing problems reaching that level, one can simply feel the Love inside one's heart and within one's body. Radiating to all directions should always be the preferred mode of practice unless there are significant problems.

¹⁶ Like repeating a helpful sentence that brings up the feeling or imagining a puppy or a child. Whether it is a person or an animal or a place in nature doesn't really matter. Mainly, thoughts are fully wholesome at this point.

Second Stage

(Second Jhāna)

With the calming of thinking and reflection,

With inner tranquilization,

One's mind becoming unified,

Without thinking and reflection,

With the blissful happiness born of mental collectedness,

One experiences the second level of meditation.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Boundless Love, and body.
2. **Mental unity:** The mind becomes clear and collected.
3. **Feeling of Love:** Becomes steadier because there are no thoughts or imagination. This means: more space for Love.
4. **Bliss:** Arises from mental unity and the deepening feeling of Love.¹⁷
5. **Thoughts and imagination:** They fade away.¹⁸

¹⁷ The blissful happiness of mental collectedness. The first taste of the happiness of mental development. (Samādhijam Pītisukham)

¹⁸ They are now too coarse for the mind. The mind naturally wants more peace, quieter.

Third Stage

(Third Jhāna)

With the calming of [coarser] joy,¹⁹
One abides in mental steadiness,
Present and fully aware,
Experiencing happiness within his body,
A state which the awakened ones describe as:
"Steady presence of mind: This is a pleasant abiding."²⁰
One experiences the third level of meditation.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Boundless Love, and body.
2. **Excited Joy:** Calms down.
3. **Steadiness of mind:** Becomes manifest.
4. **Feeling of Love:** Becomes steadier because excited joy calms down.
5. **Bliss:** Within the whole body, from the cultivation of Love and the steady presence of mind.²¹

¹⁹ Pīti: Excited joy at this point becomes too coarse of a feeling for the mind, it is naturally calming down. The feeling of Love here softens as it becomes more stable and sustained.

²⁰ This novel calm steadiness of mind, cultivated in this natural way, by letting go of tension and developing meditative bliss is far better than the previous kinds of joy, which were coarser. At this point, one is clearly aware of body and steady happiness.

²¹ The happiness experienced from steady presence of mind is even better than the previous kinds of happiness. The meditator is now having a taste of the happiness of the Awakened people.

Fourth Stage

(Fourth Jhāna)

Unattached to pleasant experiences,²²
Unstirred by unpleasant ones,
As mental excitement and heaviness settle,
One's mind is balanced,
Purified by unmoving presence,
One experiences the fourth level of meditation.²³

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Boundless Love, and body.
2. **Steadiness of mind:** Becomes established. Unflagging mind.
3. **Feeling of Love:** Very fine, steady, pure, open and bright. Purified by unmoving presence. This is the limit of the practice of Boundless Love. The further stages are too subtle for this feeling now.
4. **Bliss:** Unwavering.

²² The mind is not swayed by all kinds of judgements. They fall away as the mind becomes very steady and composed, which feel too coarse for this brilliant state of mind.

²³ The Buddha called the fourth jhāna “the Beautiful”. He also said that this was the limit of Mettā-Bhāvanā, Boundless Love.

Meditation: Aware of Only Mind

Deeper Meditation

Plane of Endless Space

Having entirely gone beyond all perception of body,
With the awareness of sensory contact fading away,
 Turning away from the awareness plurality,
 Knowing: 'There is Endless Space'
One experiences the plane of endless space.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Calms down. Changes to either Radiant Compassion, Radiant Joy or Mind as Mind.
2. **Feeling of Love:** The feeling of "Raw Love" is too coarse for the mind now. It has to fade and change. (see #1).
3. **Awareness of Body:** Fades away. "Raw Awareness of the Body" becomes too coarse for the mind.
4. **Awareness of mind:** Very strong collectedness of mind. Mind opens up as a feeling of seeing endless space, all around. Diving into mind.
5. **Bliss:** With the fading away of gross body awareness, the mind experiences deeper, more steady bliss.

Plane of Endless Consciousness

Having gone entirely beyond the plane of endless space,
Knowing: 'There is Endless Consciousness'²⁴
One experiences the plane of Endless Consciousness.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Calms down. Changes to either Radiant Joy or Radiant Calm or Mind as Mind.
2. **Awareness of Mind:** No more attention to space. Now, Involuntary mental processes²⁵ are seen as "endless". The mind is constantly happening... on its own. No "doer".
3. **Bliss:** With the calming down of the coarser awareness of endless space, the mind experiences the bliss of release to an even deeper degree.

²⁴ 'Anantaṁ viññāṇan'ti

²⁵ Dhammas or Mental Saṅkhāras.

Plane of Bare Awareness

Having entirely gone beyond the plane of endless consciousness,
Aware of nothing [in particular],
One experiences the plane of Bare Awareness.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Calms down. Changes to Radiant Calm or Mind as Mind.
2. **Awareness of Mind:** Attention to involuntary mental processes calms and fades. Very clear awareness arises. Awareness of nothing in particular, that is why it is so clear. Just Awareness...
3. **Bliss:** With the calming down of the coarser awareness of endless mind, the mind experiences the bliss of release to an even deeper degree.

The Limit of Awareness

Having gone beyond the plane of Bare Awareness,
One experiences the plane between awareness and its
limit.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Calms down. Changes to only mind as mind.
2. **Awareness of Mind:** Awareness becomes very clear and polished; it starts to disappear. Like glass that is extremely polished, it is impossible to identify the glass anymore.
3. **Bliss:** With the calming down of awareness itself, the mind experiences the bliss of release to a profound level.

Release from Experiential Awareness

Going entirely beyond the plane
between awareness and its limit,

A meditator experiences the release from experiential
awareness.

1. **Vehicle of Awareness:** Completely disappears.
2. **Awareness of Mind:** Completely released. This is where concepts and feelings fade away completely. No more awareness. Complete stopping. It is impossible to know this state when entered upon. It is only when coming out that one can reflect and understand what happened.
3. **Bliss:** Nibbāna. The supreme Bliss. Though, since there is no awareness to witness this state, it is only understood once the mind starts again and comes out of the experience of complete Release. Profound bliss.

Discernment

Understanding the Mind

Wholesome Mental Development

Often, the mind will wander. This is a big part of meditation. To learn to meditate is to learn how the mind works. To understand how distractions work and to let them go.

The reality is that, these movements of the mind are happening on their own. “You” are not doing it. If you were in control of these distractions, you could simply say: “Let my mind be undistracted.”

But that doesn’t work!

Distractions are embedded in our minds; they reveal to us the conditioned behavior of our minds. Meditation is about recognizing this and calming the mind, gladdening the mind, soothing the mind.

It is about letting go of unconscious distractions of the mind and cultivate heightened mental states that are imbued with awareness. The Buddha called this: the training in the ‘Higher Mind’ (*Adhicitta*) by way of wholesome mental development (*Bhāvanā*).

First Comes Discernment²⁶

That is, to understand:

1. “There is tension” [when it arises].²⁷
2. Distractions are causing tension.²⁸
3. Relaxing the tension is the end of distractions.
4. The Eight-Spoked path is the way to end distractions.²⁹

²⁶ Ariya sacca: The Four Awakened Understandings.

²⁷ This is the ability to recognize distractions when they arise.

²⁸ In the body and in the mind, but mostly, inside the head, around the brain, every time there is active thinking, the brain contracts slightly, this causes tension.

²⁹ This is how one trains in discernment.

Second Comes the Practice³⁰

That is, to practice:³¹

1. To be aware of mind, noticing distractions.
2. To let go of the distraction, relax the tension.³²
3. To bring up the feeling of Love again. (Smile ☺)
4. To stay with the feeling of Love!³³

³⁰ Sammā Vāyāma: The Four steps of Wise Practice

³¹ This is meditation. This is the action. This is what we do in meditation. This is the “verb” of the path. These four steps are essential. They are the heart of the practice. This needs to be understood, practiced and repeated!

³² Distractions come with tension in the mind and in the body. As we let go of tension, we let go of distractions.

³³ Until the mind becomes distracted again.

Third Comes Awareness³⁴

Understanding and practicing in this way,
A meditator starts seeing reality as it really is.

That is, to be aware of:

1. Body as body.³⁵
2. Experience as experience.³⁶
3. Mind as mind.³⁷
4. Mental activity as mental activity.³⁸

³⁴ Satipaṭṭhāna: The Four Resting Places of Awareness.

³⁵ Not judging, not criticizing, not categorizing, without opinions, concepts, ideas, just “this is body.” Letting go of any tension.

³⁶ For our direct purpose here, this is: “Boundless Love as Boundless Love.” Not judging, not criticizing, not categorizing, without opinions, concepts, ideas or conditions. Just Love. The more we practice and abandon the impurities of the mind, the more space there will be for this Loving-Awareness to become established and take root. Letting go of anything that pulls us away from this feeling.

³⁷ Whatever state the mind is in, that is the state of the mind right now. A mind imbued with Boundless Love as a mind imbued with Boundless Love. A distracted mind as a distracted mind. Mental clarity will arise with practice.

³⁸ In practical terms, this is: “Distractions as distractions.” Distractions are conditioned habits of the mind. We are not “knowingly” making these happen, they are happening on their own. As we begin to see this with increasing clarity, we do not

The Mental Revolution

This wise awareness that is cultivated through Wise Practice gives us greater mental clarity and therefore, a better capacity of discernment. This enable us to “see things as they truly are,” as the Buddha himself would often say. To see subtler movements of the mind, subtler layers of tension.

Discernment, practice, and awareness work together. These states turn together, creating the wheel of Bhāvanā, mental development.

This is the “Mental Revolution.”

This manifests as tangible personality development. Becoming happier, better, and wiser people.

The more we abandon unwholesome, reactive states of mind like anger, dislike, jealousy, pride, arrogance, which are blind, unconscious reactions; the more space there is to cultivate wholesome, responsive states of mind like Love, Compassion, Joy, sympathy, and Calm which are imbued with conscious awareness and care.

become involved with them, we do not take them personal anymore and simply relax and let go.

Five Hindrances

There are five hindrances to mental harmony.

They are:

1. Outward Desires
2. Dislike
3. Agitation and Worry
4. Laziness and Dullness
5. Doubt [about the Teaching]

Every time the mind becomes distracted, it flows out towards any of these five. These are not mindful states, therein lies the problem! We are not very aware of this until we take some time to slow down and look at the mind in its natural state. The hindrances are like a thick fog or a dark mass of clouds overcasting the mind.

They are built-up accumulation of progressively conditioned reactions and habit patterns of the mind. But by slowing down the mind, and relaxing and releasing the built-up tension, the mind becomes clearer and its ability to witness itself arises and manifests in what we call the seven supports of awakening.

Seven Supports of Awakening

There are seven supports of awakening that dissipate the cloud of hindrances and promote mental harmony.

They are:

1. Awareness
2. Discernment
3. Inspiration
4. Joy
5. Calm
6. Mental Collectedness
7. Steadiness of Mind

In the Words of the Buddha³⁹

[At the time when one lives]

Void of longing, impatience and arrogance,
Fully conscious and continually present,

[Meditating,]

With a heart filled with Love;

Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third and a fourth.

³⁹ SN IV 42.8 Saṅkhadhamma Sutta – The Conch Blower

Above, below, and everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.

[Meditating] with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.

1. Awareness⁴⁰

At that time,
One is not carried away [by distractions]
and there comes to be awareness.

At that time,
The support of awakening of awareness
Becomes manifest,
It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

2. Discernment

Meditating with this awareness,
One seeks [wholesome states],
Discards [unwholesome ones],
And completely understands

⁴⁰ MN 118 Ānāpānasati Sutta - The Breath as a Reminder

One's mental states that arise using discernment.⁴¹

At that time,
The support of awakening of discernment
Becomes manifest,
It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

3. Inspiration

Whenever there is
Seeking [wholesome states],
Discarding [unwholesome ones],
And complete understanding
Of one's mental states that arise using discernment,
Continually, enthusiastically;⁴²

At that time,
The support of awakening of inspiration
Becomes manifest,

⁴¹ Understanding mental states using the four awakened understandings:

1. Understanding when tension arises
2. Understanding its source (Distractions)
3. Understanding the release from it. (Letting go, relaxing)
4. Understanding the way to release (Smile! 😊 Radiate Love)

⁴² The effort of letting go:

1. Releasing and relaxing the tension.
2. Bringing up the feeling of Love.

It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

4. Joy

With this inspired practice; spiritual joy arises.⁴³

At that time,
The support of awakening of joy
Becomes manifest,
It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

5. Calm

With this spiritual joy,
The body calms down,
And the mind calms down.⁴⁴

At that time,
The support of awakening of calm

⁴³ This is the calm joy that arises from continually relaxing tension. This is also where the feeling of Love comes in and strengthens the whole chain! This is also smiling. 😊 Joy is also a shortcut. By smiling and bringing up mental joy, one automatically practices the three first supports. No need to fuss, take the easy path!

⁴⁴ It is the nature of a joyful, blissful mind to become tranquil. The previous factors dissolve the hindrances and mental agitation. The result is tranquility.

Becomes manifest,
It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

6. Collectedness

With this calmness of body,
The happy mind becomes unified.⁴⁵

At that time,
The support of awakening of mental collectedness
Becomes manifest,
It is being developed,
And it gradually matures by development.

7. Mental Steadiness

With this calm collected mind,
One steadily attends with discernment.⁴⁶

At that time,
The support of awakening of mental steadiness
Becomes manifest,

⁴⁵ It is the nature of a blissful and tranquil mind to become collected. Mental harmony (Samādhi), the mind becomes composed and coherent.

⁴⁶ It is the nature of a blissful, tranquil, and collected mind to become very steady and aware. Strong calm and balance of awareness.

It is being developed,
It gradually matures by development.

Back to Awareness

The seven supports of awakening tie in a loop here. Steadiness of mind literally means increased awareness.

Personal Development

The Path to Awakening that the Buddha taught is not only a path of sitting meditation. This is an “all-the-time practice”. While sitting, while walking, while standing, while laying down. While eating, while talking, while keeping silent, while moving about in all activities of our daily life.

This is the support of awakening of “Effort”. Not to “force” but to persevere. Continually calling up will for cultivating Liberation of the mind. Continually observing how mind gets distracted and moves about and to notice how this is causing tension, not only in our own bodies but also in our lives.

To let it go and enjoy the bliss of a tension-free mind. To become freer and happier people. To become kind and patient and compassionate companions for those around us.

Walking Meditation

Integrating Samādhi

Instructions

Walking meditation is essential. First for plain health reasons, by helping digestion and energy levels, but also, the mental collectedness gained when practicing walking meditation lasts for a long time. It will help meditators carry their meditation into daily life.

Here is how to practice:

1. Find a place that is somewhat straight and flat to walk on. Ideally, at least 30 steps long before you have to turn around and walk the other way.
2. Continue practicing, just like when you are sitting. (This is not a “nature walk”, it is still part of the meditation. Think of it as if you were sitting in meditation, the only difference is that you are now walking. 😊)
3. Keep the feeling of Love going while relaxing any tension that arises.
4. Keep your eyes lowered, looking in front of you, in the direction in which you are walking.

5. Pay careful attention not to cling to any sensory distraction, keep releasing and relaxing the distractions.
6. Welcome and accept everything that comes your way with Love and Compassion.
7. Keep smiling! 😊

In the Buddha's Words

AN V 29 Walking Meditation

"*M*onks,

There are five benefits of walking [meditation].

What five?

- (1) One can patiently bear up with long travels,
- (2) One can patiently strive [in meditation],
- (3) One is healthy,
- (4) What one has eaten and consumed is properly digested,
- (5) The samādhi attained while walking stands for a long time.

These are the five benefits of walking meditation monks.

Forgiveness

Cleaning the Closet

The Purpose of Forgiveness

There might be a time when the feeling of Love becomes difficult or troubled. Perhaps, someone you have a hard time with comes up in your meditation or maybe it is a past event of your life that was traumatic or very intense emotionally. This is normal.

This in fact, is one of the beauties and power of this special meditation on Boundless Love that the Buddha taught. Because in this kind of meditation, we cannot lie. We have to be truthful, otherwise, this meditation cannot take place. And when we are truthful, we cannot hide things. We will notice that the things we have been concealing because they 'hurt', will naturally surface. They have to, that is why the Buddha called this 'Mettā cetovimutti,' the Release of the heart through Love.

The amount of forgiveness work that each individual will have to do depends on the number of things that have been kept hidden, pushed away and repressed within. Hurtful feelings do not 'vanish' as we repress them. They simply pile up, like a hard crust which slowly crystalizes around the heart. We simply learn to avoid them. They are like burning coals, locked away in a dark chamber of the heart and they continually influence distort our perception

of reality. Why? Because they are still burning us from within, and since we find no calm and peace within, we latch outwardly at all kinds of things in which we believe will soothe the pain, but in the long run, fail to do so.

The secret lies in truth. The secret lies in facing the hurt and understanding how to let it go. Because the reality is: when we are happy and at peace inside, we need nothing.

That is when forgiveness practice comes in.

When we fail to forgive, this is called holding a grudge. The reality is that, by holding on to anger, we are hurting ourselves in the first place. Nobody who is angry can claim to be happy. Why? Because these are two states which are opposite each other. It is very important to understand that, by not forgiving, we are in fact causing ourselves a lot of pain. Like clasping tightly to a burning, live coal in hand. Anger is hurtful, for us in the first place.

Seeing this and understanding it, this is called wisdom. With the help of wisdom, we wisely let go of hurt and open up to greater happiness.

There are many ways of using forgiveness in our practice:

Forgiving Others

If someone has hurt you in the past:

1. **Discernment:**

Practice remembering that all living beings want to be happy. Those who hurt others, in fact, are the ones who are hurting the most. Someone who inflicts pain to another person has to experience a lot of pain within oneself in the first place. That is simply nature.

2. **Give your forgiveness** using a sentence:⁴⁷

“I forgive you”

“I forgive you for hurting me”

“I forgive you for not understanding”

“I forgive you for...”

“I forgive you for not loving me.”⁴⁸

3. **Stay with the feeling** of forgiveness or compassion when it arises within. Send that person your

⁴⁷ This is to “bring up” or generate the feeling.

⁴⁸ If the feeling is not there at the beginning, do not fuss over it too much and keep repeating the sentence.

forgiveness. This can be a difficult process here. This is always better done with a teacher who can guide you and listen to you. If tears come up, don't repress them, don't push them away. Allow them to come up, this is an important part of the process. This practice is to allow, to forgive, to let go. Therefore, if tears come up, we simply allow them to and hard feelings will slowly dissolve with the water of compassion and wisdom.

4. Let go and release any tension.

5. Practice continually.

In everything that you do. Repeat the words and give your forgiveness as much as possible. Alternating between sitting and walking is often useful while practicing this meditation.

Forgiving Yourself

If you have hurt someone in the past:

1. Discernment:

Remember that we all make mistakes. The Buddha said that if it was impossible to change, he wouldn't have taught the Dhamma, since it would have been useless. But it is possible to change and this path is

about personality development, changing and becoming better human beings.

2. **Ask for forgiveness** using a sentence:⁴⁹

“I am sorry”

“Please forgive me”

“Forgive me for hurting you”

“Forgive me for not understanding.”

“Please forgive me for not giving you love.”

“Please forgive me for...”

3. **Stay with the feeling** of forgiveness or compassion when it arises within. Send that person your humility and desire for forgiveness, this is another aspect of Love. This can be a difficult process again here. If tears come up, similarly, allow them to come up. This practice is to align with the Dhamma, align with the truth.

Sometimes we have moved away from the truth and it can be difficult to acknowledge how far we have moved away. But however difficult it is to see our own mistakes and the hurt we have caused others; this work needs to be done for any serious progress on the path to take place. The Buddha’s path is not a path that can be merely “faked.” Therefore, if tears come up, we simply allow them

⁴⁹ This is also to “bring up” or generate the feeling.

to. Forgiving ourselves is a truly powerful tool for change. Again, coarse feelings will slowly dissolve with the water of compassion and wisdom.

4. Let go and release any tension.

5. Practice continually.

All the time, whatever you are doing. Continue asking for forgiveness and cultivating humility and compassion for yourself. Continue repeating the sentences and stay with the “feeling sorry.” Alternating between sitting and walking is often useful while practicing this meditation.

Forgiving Life

If the situation is big and overwhelming,
it is a very powerful tool to forgive life:

1. **Discernment:**

Some hurt is deep and broad. Some hurt does not go away simply by practicing forgiveness for one person. Some hurt has been piled on and repressed for so long. Some hurt feels too overwhelming to be attributed to just one thing. Then forgiving life “to be so hard” will assist meditators on their path to true and profound forgiveness.

2. **Give your forgiveness.** To all of life saying:

“I forgive you”

“I forgive you for being so hard...”

3. **Ask for forgiveness.** To all of life, saying:⁵⁰

“Please forgive me”

“Please forgive me if I have done any wrong”

“Please forgive me for any hurt I have done”

⁵⁰ Step two and step three are two different ways of working with this broad forgiveness.

4. **Stay with the feeling.**
5. **Let go and release any tension.**
6. **Practice continually.**

Asking Forgiveness to Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha

Some may be interested in asking forgiveness to the triple gem. This is a wonderful and powerful way of cleansing ones heart. Monks do practice asking for forgiveness, quite often. This is a special way of staying humble and true. Here is a traditional formula:

Khamāpana Yācanā Asking for Forgiveness

[Buddha]

Kāyena vācā-cittena
By way of body, speech or mind,
Pamādena mayā kataṁ,
For any harm I have committed through carelessness,
Accayam̄ khama me Bhante
Please forgive me, Bhante,
Bhūri-pañña Tathāgata.
Realised One, Of great wisdom.

[Dhamma]

Kāyena vācā-cittena

By way of body, speech or mind,

Pamādena mayā kataṁ,

For any harm I have committed through carelessness,

Accayam khamma me Dhamma

Please forgive me, O Dhamma,

Sandīṭṭhika, akālika.

Which is directly visible and immediate.

[Sangha]

Kāyena vācā-cittena

By way of body, speech or mind,

Pamādena mayā kataṁ,

For any harm I have committed through carelessness,

Accayam khamma me Saṅgha

Please forgive me, O Saṅgha,

Puññakkhetta anuttara.

Unsurpassed field of merit.

-Majjhima Nikaya, 2:248 Samagama Sutta

Concluding Forgiveness

Forgive or ask for forgiveness until you feel like you have emptied your load, until you feel like you have nothing more to forgive. That is the meaning of forgiveness: Knowing that there is nothing to forgive anymore.

At that time, one can resume Boundless Love with a lighter heart. Forgiveness meditation is not so different than the development of Boundless Love. It simply works on more sensitive and coarse levels. It will facilitate the melting away of any accumulated tension towards people or situations we haven't 'dealt with' in a wholesome way in our lives.

Remember that these instructions are simply written in a book for general practice. There is more to know and more ways of practicing. Books cannot replace human presence. Please come talk to me if you are having very difficult experiences.

Forgiveness and Sāriputta

The elder monk and chief disciple of the Buddha, Venerable Sāriputta, was known to be the second to the Buddha himself in wisdom. Bhante Sāriputta was also known for his profound humility and kindness — a very wise and respected teacher. And even though he was one of the leading Arahants⁵¹ disciples of the Buddha, known for his impeccable virtuous behavior, he was also known for asking forgiveness.

At the time when he foresaw his entering into parinibbāna,⁵² after giving one last memorable teaching to the monks and paying his last homage to the Buddha, he asked for his forgiveness, for anything he had done wrong. The Buddha replied: 'I forgive you Sāriputta but there is not even a single word you have pronounced whereby I could correct you.'

And likewise, when sitting in his mother's house, just before going into final seclusion, he addressed his numerous students, asking them for forgiveness for anything wrong he could have done. His students replied that there was nothing to forgive, and instead, they asked

⁵¹ Fully awakened with many of the higher knowledges.

⁵² Arahants are said to enter "final nibbana" at the end of their lives, not to "die."

him forgiveness for anything wrong they could have committed.

If Sāriputta, the right hand of the Buddha, fully awakened with all the higher knowledges asked for forgiveness to the Buddha and to his disciples, how much more should we take-on this very wise attitude?

Forgiveness is part of the way of life of monks and the awakened people, not only a mere practice.

Gratitude

A Gateway to Happiness

Gratitude

Sometimes, we take things for granted. And when we take things for granted, we become neglectful. Being neglectful, we create a lot of problems for ourselves. We often find ourselves escalating the mountain of endless 'needs' in order to be happy. But this is only a mistaken perspective on life. Some people in this world have nothing, and are simply happy and grateful to breathe. Developing meditation on gratitude will help building a new wholesome perspective on our life and accumulate some Joy, one of the most important supporting conditions for awakening.

1. Discernment:

Practice understanding that gratefulness is happiness and to not be grateful is causing us to be unhappy. The more we find reasons to be grateful, the more we become happy.

2. Bring up the feeling Gratitude:

The feeling of gratitude is joyful but humble. It is acknowledging, receptive and accepting. This can be done by smiling and repeating a sentence like:

'Thank you'

Simple! But how effective! The power of these two words are life changing.

3. **Stay with the feeling** of grateful acknowledging for as long as possible. Repeat the 'thank you' sentence over and over. You can even add to it and say something like:
'Thank you for this life'
'Thank you for this practice'
'Thank you for the food today'
'Thank you for having a place to sleep today'
4. **Let go and release any tension.**

Anything that comes and pulls you out of this process, simply let go. If any tears come up, whether from joy or from sadness, do not repress them. That is normal. As one breaks through the built-up 'armoring' around the heart, it is possible that some heavy emotions need to be released. That is very good! Allow the process to happen on its own. Allow whatever heaviness to be released. The heart will feel relieved and uplifted afterwards.

But also, do not try to force tears to come up. Everyone is different. This is not sadness meditation. The important part is that you do not repress your feelings as they come up but learn how to deal with them lovingly, with wisdom.

5. Practice continually.

In everything that you do. Repeat the words and practice being grateful as much as possible.

Personal Practice

The Foundation for a Happy Life

A Way of Life

This is an all-the-time practice. The Buddha did not merely teach some kind of meditation practice, he taught a way of life. A way of living which is based upon generosity, virtue, Love, Compassion, forgiveness, patience, acceptance, respect, gratitude and discernment. And that this is what is called “meditation” here.

Establishing a routine will help find balance and strength, both mentally and physically. A routine that seems to be acknowledged by many experienced meditators is one hour of meditation in the morning, right after waking up, and one hour of meditation in the evening, just before bed.

Though, some people might quickly realize, especially coming out of a retreat, that this kind of meditation schedule does not allow for some deeper states to be experienced. That is true. Some meditators might prefer to have a 2-hour sit, once a day. This also depends on everyone's schedule and advancement in the meditation. Keeping some time, morning and evening for cultivating mental calm and harmony (meditation) will bring much goodness in a meditator's life.

In this way, meditators will keep the wheel of Dhamma turning and steadily drink from the nectar of Dhamma throughout their lives.

Uposatha

The uposatha is a day dedicated to the practice in the Buddha's Teaching. Historically, since people used the lunar calendar at the time of the Buddha, these were determined by the four phases of the moon during its cycle. Every New Moon, waxing half-moon, Full moon and waning half-moon. Nowadays, it could be translated as simply, a day of practice and retreat per week.

For those who see the value of their own practice, for themselves and the world, this is a wonderful opportunity to fill up in the Dhamma and go a little deeper in the practice every week.

Usually, for the lay practitioners, this "observance day of the Buddhists" begins by taking the refuges and the eight virtues for that day which helps renewing their strength and determination in cultivating a wholesome mind and a wholesome life. Then meditation practice and perhaps, if there is this possibility, visiting monks, practicing generosity, and listening to the Dhamma.

This kind of weekly practice is highly beneficial for oneself and the world.

Dhamma or Religion

One of the most common and widespread misunderstanding is that “Buddhism” is a religion.⁵³ In many regards, Buddhism cannot be called a religion. First, one needs to understand that the Buddha did not teach “Buddhism,” he taught Dhamma, Universal Truth, the “Way Things Work.” Most importantly, he revealed “the Way Mind Works,” and the path to happiness. “Buddhism” is a made-up English word, of a later origin, which does not exist in Pāli, the language of the Buddha.

Buddhism is in fact much closer to what is nowadays called science⁵⁴ and the word Dhamma could very well be translated as ‘science.’ But the science of matter cannot really be compared to the Buddha’s Teaching on mental

⁵³ **Religion:** From Old French, or from Latin religio(n-) ‘obligation, bond, reverence’, perhaps based on Latin religare ‘to bind.’ Merriam-webster: b(1): the service and worship of God or the supernatural. Oxford Languages: the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.

⁵⁴ **Science:** Middle English (denoting knowledge): from Old French, from Latin scientia, from scire ‘know’. Merriam-webster: 1: the state of knowing: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding.

science, the science of happiness. The word science does not measure with the word Dhamma, mostly because of its lack of ethical standards, Love, compassion, joy, mental clarity and therefore true discernment, wisdom and the direct experience of all these.

The Buddha taught a path of mental development, which involves no dogma, no blind belief and is entirely experienceable by the wise. Some parts of it may be hard to understand by someone new to this path, like quantum mechanics can be hard to understand by one who is not very familiar with it.

And like most things, understanding comes with practice, and similarly, a person can only expect to understand Dhamma to any depth if there is real practicing of the Dhamma via the trainings of virtue, meditation and discernment. Although, this path of Truth and wisdom is for everyone, irrespective of age, religion, nationality or social status.

Suttas on Mettā

Studying Happiness

The Conch Blower

SN IV 42.8 Saṅkhadhamma Sutta

Then, a virtuous seeker,
Void of longing,
Void of impatience,
Void of arrogance,
Fully conscious and continually present,

Meditates,
With a heart filled with Love;

Suffusing one direction,
a second,
a third,
and a fourth.

Above, below
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe.

One meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.

[Simile of the Conch Blower]

Imagine a mighty conch blower
Who could effortlessly,
Let his sound be known
To the four directions.

In the same way,
When the release of mind
By Boundless Love
is developed and cultivated,

If any selfish⁵⁵ mental state
Was previously acquired
None can settle there,
None can stay.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Pamāṇakataṇi kammaṇi. Limited Kamma here means any mental states included in selfishness, impatience and negligence (Lobha, dosa, moha). The mind is “limited”, or constricted by the hindrances. To speak properly, it is when hindrances reign over the mind that it is “concentrated”, shrunk down and shriveled up, full of tension. Cultivating Boundless Love will break it open and liberate it.

⁵⁶ This is the magnificence of the practice of Boundless Love. There can only be Love. If a distraction comes in, the love fades away. It is then easier to discern if the mind slips into unwholesome states because of the powerful nature of Boundless Love.

Benefits of Boundless Love

AN XI 16 Mettā Sutta

"*W*hen the liberation of the mind

through Loving-Kindness is
practiced,
developed,
cultivated,
used as vehicle,
made as foundation,
consolidated,
accumulated
and thoroughly undertaken,

Eleven benefits are to be expected.

What Eleven?

- (1) One sleeps happily,
- (2) One wakes happily,
- (3) No nightmares assail one,
- (4) One is beloved by all humans,
- (5) One is beloved by all non-humans,
- (6) The Devas protect one,

- (7) Fire or poison or knife cannot come to one,
- (8) One's mind quickly enters into Samādhi,
- (9) One's features are bright,
- (10) One dies without going astray,
- (11) And if one has not gone beyond (Nibbāna),
- (12) One goes to the Brahmic plane.

When the liberation of the mind
through Boundless Love is

practiced,
developed,
cultivated,
used as a vehicle,
made as foundation,
consolidated,
Accumulated and thoroughly undertaken,

These eleven benefits are to be expected.

Finger Snap Love

AN I 53-54-55 Accharāsaṅghāta Sutta Series

53

“If even for the time of a finger snap,
A monk practices with a mind of Love,

I say that he is one who lives practicing jhāna
One who practices the teacher’s teaching,
One who applies his instructions,
And he eats the country’s alms undeluded.

What to say then of one who would cultivate it.”

54

“If even for the time of a finger snap,
A monk develops to have a mind of Love,

I say that he is one who lives practicing jhāna,
One who practices the teacher’s teaching,
One who applies his instructions,
And he eats the country’s alms undeluded.

What to say then of one who would cultivate it.”

"If even for the time of a finger snap,
A monk attends with a mind of Love,

I say that he is one who lives practicing jhāna
One who practices the teacher's teaching,
One who applies his instructions,
And he eats the country's alms undeluded."

What to say then of one who would cultivate it."

Puññanumodana-Pattidana

Rejoicing and Sharing of Merits

Dukkha-ppattā ca, niddukkhā

May suffering ones, be suffering free.

Bhaya-ppattā ca, nibbhayā

And the fear-struck, fearless be.

Soka-ppattā ca, nissokā

May the grieving, shed all grief.

Hontu sabbe pi, pāṇino.

And may all beings find relief.

Idam no puññam, sabbe sattā anumodantu

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired

sabba sampatti siddhiyā.

For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

Ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhummāṭṭhā

May beings inhabiting space and earth

Devā nāgā mahiddhikā

Devas and nāgas of mighty power

Puññam tam anumoditvā.

Share this merit of ours.

Ciram rakkhantu Buddhassa sāsanam.
May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu!

Respects

I pay my deepest respects and gratitude, with folded hands at the feet of my teacher, the Awakened One, the unsurpassable Teacher of people who seek happiness, the Buddha. All credit for any of this work goes to him and my meditation teacher, Bhante Vimalaramasi, who taught me how to understand the Buddha. I have simply explained their teaching in common words so that it could be beneficial to all living beings.

My heartfelt respects and gratitude to my dear friend, Bhante Buddhadatta at Mahabodhi Society for his wise and beautiful friendship and mettā. Such kindness and friendship worthy of the Ariyas. These respects are extended to Badabhante Buddharakkhita and all of the venerable monks at the Mahabodhi Society.

My deepest respects and gratitude to all of my teachers, from the beginning of my path until now. Homage to the entire bhikkhu saṅgha, and to the four pillars of the sāsanā; Monks, nuns, male lay practitioners and female lay practitioners.

To my very devoted kappiyas who are actively working at making this world a better place. To all generous and wise donors and supporters. To my family and wise friends on the path.

Notes

One meditates,
With a heart filled with Love;

Suffusing one direction,
A second, a third and a fourth.

Above, below and everywhere across.
To all living beings in this boundless universe.

One meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.

-SN IV 42.8 Sankhadhama Sutta