

## *Advancing — Breaking Down the Barriers*

You are now told that you have developed the meditation skills to a higher level. You are told this so that you have confidence in the practice and gain more enthusiasm. Previously, you weren't informed of what was happening because it would just lead to more mental wanderings. Now that you have some more equanimity and your mind has calmed, you are told where you are day by day what exact jhāna you are in, as it happens if you ask about it. You see that sutta MN 111 is real. And, like Sāriputta, you are just watching the progress step-by-step as it occurs.

### *—Meditation Instruction:*

Now, you are to change your spiritual friend. You have completed the practice to this point and have now advanced. It's time to move ahead.

Let go of the friend you have been working with and change to the people listed below. Go through each group one at a time until you see them smiling and happy.

- Pick *three more spiritual friends* (any gender, living, and not a family member), and one-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back or you feel there is a connection of loving-kindness with them.
- *Four living family members* (either male or female — gender no longer matters). One-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back.
- *Four neutral people* (either male or female). One-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back. A neutral person is a casual acquaintance that you occasionally see, like the bus driver or the cashier at the store. You don't really know them, but you say "Hello" every now and then.
- *Enemies* are last. Send mettā to any troublesome people, whoever arises. Enemies are those people we don't like. We may hold a grudge, or we know they don't care for us. It might be public figures or any person who comes to your mind when you do this. One by one, radiate mettā to people who pop into your mind until you can't think of anyone else.

If hatred, or even dislike, arises while radiating mettā to an enemy, go back to a neutral person until you can let go of the aversion and come back to that feeling of loving-kindness. Then begin again. Radiate mettā to your enemy and continue until that hostile energy is dissipated and they smile back. It doesn't have to be that deep — just have a friendly feeling for them. Or even a neutral feeling in which they don't bother you. Remember: everyone has some good qualities. You can focus on those.

You can do the process above in as little as twenty to thirty minutes. But you should spend no more than an hour on this.

If you cannot get beyond this step, then perhaps some forgiveness meditation will be suggested by the teacher. Information and directions for Forgiveness Meditation may be found on the Dhamma Sukha website and practiced from the book on this topic by Bhante Vimalaramsi. Forgiveness is a very powerful practice by itself and is highly recommended to everyone, but especially to those who cannot bring up a genuine feeling of loving-kindness for any of these groups of people.

### *Radiating to the Six Directions*

#### **—Meditation Instruction:**

You will be now instructed to radiate loving-kindness from the head — not from the "third eye" or forehead but from the area in the middle of or the top of your head. You radiate to each of the six directions — Forward, Backward, Right, Left, Above, and Below — for five minutes apiece; that is thirty minutes total.

For the rest of the sitting, you then radiate to all beings in all directions at once, to the whole universe without limitations. Sit and glow with this feeling of loving-kindness and let it warm the whole cosmos and beyond. Like a candle, let the feeling radiate to all beings. Don't push or force; just let it radiate and see it just going out by itself. Now the fun begins!

*"I was completely immersed. At one point there was no "me." All I saw was the light going in all directions. It was like a fountain going up, down, and in all directions. I was so absorbed when my timer went off I jumped. My husband said I looked like I was radiating, full of joy and peace." C.G. Missouri*

You should sit for more than one hour if you can. You are encouraged to sit even longer if you are comfortable. Don't stop when you feel good or think you have made progress. Go longer. Don't stop if you get edgy or want to quit. Try another five minutes just to see if you can do it. Many times a few more minutes will get you through that short period of restlessness.

Radiating the four *Brahmavihāras* successively, as they arise, to all directions will now be your practice into the highest states of the meditation. Please note that I am describing the technique as it is presented in the texts. I am only explaining the texts here and not creating a "new" sort of meditation. You are now practicing the Brahmavihāra practice exactly as it is described and taught by the Buddha in the texts.