

Thich Nhat Hanh – Plum Village Summer Retreat Notes (July 2009)

Summer Retreat Notes

July 8th – Thay Dharma Talk

Dharma festival of joy. Faith in the dharma never leaves me all the time eat, sleep wherever there is dharma there is the Buddha. Who is the Buddha? It's you when you are full of love, understanding and peace. Sometimes you are the Buddha sometimes you are a part time Buddha. Whether you choose to be a full time or part time Buddha the choice is yours. The path of the Buddha is the path of peace, understanding and love. When you look for the Buddha look to yourself. You must be a human being in order to be a Buddha. The path of the Buddha is to live happily, and peacefully. If you are on the path of the Buddha you don't need to worry, you know what to do and what not to do. Without a path you have confusion. Recognize the path clearly and walk on the path with joy. There is no reason to be fearful or confused. It is the path leading to peace, joy, happiness no matter what tradition. We share the dharma through our daily way of life. Whatever happens you cannot say it is good or bad it depends on how you handle what happens. Accept everything and have peace within oneself. Be calm and peaceful. Plum Village is a product of the Vietnam war. Nothing is good or bad but you have to handle things skillfully. Mindfulness transforms suffering and confusion. Offering to the root teacher (Buddha) look deeply, mindfulness, concentration and insight. Buddhist contribution to global spiritual ethic. Practice of Buddhism share with other traditions in the world...

July 9th – Thay Dharma Talk

Listening to the sound of the bell brings a lot of joy and peace. Deep listening with heart, mind, and all cells in our body. Listen so the sound of the bell penetrates through our cells. It brings joy, peace and relaxation. I want children to be able to invite the bell to sound. The bell is a friend and we invite it so we can breathe and talk to the bell. Bell can you ring so I can practice listening deeply. Before we invite the bell we say. "Body, Speech and Mind is in perfect oneness (all 3 in harmony). I send my heart along with the sound of this bell (sound of the bell is sacred—my mind and heart in it) May the hearts awaken from forgetfulness (we live in dispersion, be really there and live deeply in every moment of our daily life, people live in forgetfulness, they talk of the future, past and are not there to live deeply. Forgetfulness is the absence of mindfulness. In Chinese the present moment and mind are the characters that make up mindfulness. When we bring the mind back to the present moment. When you are lost you are not really there. When you practice mindful breathing you bring your mind back to the body. "And transcend the path of anxiety and sorrow." Wake the bell and invite it. When you hear the bell, "Listen, listen (not with ears but with mind and body and cells, peace penetrates you deeply) this wonderful sound brings me back to my true home" (home is the present moment). When we speak of the path it is the path leading to happiness and peace when we practice right thinking we see that that way of thinking is dualistic. The path is happiness itself. When you breathe in you ask what is the goal and purpose of this breathe. A deep breathe brings relaxation and peace to the body and mind but if we look deeply we must see the

relaxation in the breath itself, the in breath has to be peace and relaxation itself. If you are suffering with that in breath that is not what you need. Every step you take should bring your happiness. There is a way of walking and stepping, each step should bring us happiness and pleasure. There is no way to happiness, happiness is the way. The path we are speaking of is happiness itself. 5 trainings reflect the Buddha's teaching of the 4 noble truths and 8 fold path. The 1st is about protecting life. Life is precious. Quantum physics particles have intelligence, they are alive, protect the lives of animals, plants and minerals we are also animals, plants and minerals, protect those we protect ourselves. 2nd training is about true happiness. The 3rd is about true love. The 4th is about harmony, mutual understanding, perfect communication, deep listening, loving speech brings harmony and mutual understanding. 5th is about transformation, nourishment and family. Regarding true happiness the Buddha said it is possible to live happily now. Happiness is possible in the present moment. Practice consists of completely placing ourselves in the present moment to look deeply and we will always see that there are conditions of happiness already, what are we waiting for to be happy to celebrate? True happiness comes from inside, from within. Depends on your way of looking at things and responding and that way can bring either happiness or suffering, happiness is above all a state of mind. it does not come from outside.

True Love: appropriate attentions, compassion (helping others transform their suffering. We have to understand our own suffering), joy, equanimity (there is no boundary between the one who loves and the one who is loved, happiness is not a personal matter, total inclusion). Sexual desire is something different from love.

True Love is loving kindness, joy, inclusiveness, nondiscrimination, compassion

8 Fold Path – look deeply...why are there so many broken families...this is the path of ending broken families. 5 trainings are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on right understanding, true love leading to happiness, peace and transformation. Cultivate the right view, path of the Bodhisattva is not getting lost in the future or the past.

Q and A with Thay – July 12th

How is it that you can see the good when everyone sees the bad?

You have to look deeply, you need time to look deeply, even bad things can produce good things.

Happiness has something to do with suffering. Suffering can instruct us. If you have not suffered you do not have the capacity to be happy (hungry and joy of eating example). In Plum Village we talk of the goodness of suffering and try to understand it. Suffering can bring good things like understanding and compassion. When you understand suffering you can then understand the other person.

Love is impossible without understanding. Take care of producing the lotus but not too much mud or it will drown.

Detached in true love... True love is a beautiful expression. The teachings of the Buddha are very clear, you have to cultivate true love through maïtri (loving kindness) which is your capacity to bring happiness (not the willingness but capacity) to him. Are you capable of bringing happiness? In order to offer happiness you have to understand that person. Maïtri is for you too. In true love you have to make yourself happy. If you know how to make yourself happy it is very easy to make others happy. Compassion (transforming the suffering of others but you first have to understand their suffering in order to transform it), Joy (bring joy to yourself and the other person, this can be done at every moment. Equanimity (no separation from his suffering and your suffering—happiness is no longer an individual matter, non discrimination,)

Planning for the future... you can plan for your future when you are established in the present moment. You should not lose yourself in worries or fears of the future. But the Buddha does not say you should not plan but you should always be anchored in the present moment. The idea is that you should not lose yourself in the anxiety of the future and carried away. Being established in the present moment is important. You can bring the past to the present and look deeply at it to learn. You should study the past but you should not get lost in regret. Planning for the future can be done in the present moment. The present moment encompasses both the past and the future. You take care of the past and the present is you know how to be established in the present moment.

Is violence ever permissible... Violence means anger and fear and that you are not intelligent enough to solve the problem and you risk making the situation worse. When you have anger you will perform actions that bring more suffering and you cannot act skillfully. Transform fear and anger and you can have the energy of compassion and understanding. If you have a lot of fear and anger in you you can do more damage than good. The solution is not violence it is compassion and intelligence.

To do and to be... Suppose you look at a pine tree and ask why it is there. It's presence is very important. We learn from the tree to be and to be is only to do. I should be solid, loving, refreshing like a tree. Whatever you choose behave like a tree always solid and peaceful and enjoy deeply what you do it does not matter what you do. You enjoy it so much like a tree.

Engaged Buddhism... has to do with your daily life, brushing your teeth, doing your dishes, interacting with your friends. The kind of Buddhism people often think of as engaged is socially engaged but you know anything you do correctly will profit society like the pine tree gives us hope if you have peace and happiness it will affect the world in a positive way.

We have to see that we are the continuation of our parents. It is possible to have the same kind of tendency, that habit energy is in us and if it is not positive we have to transform it. Mindfulness is the beginning. Awareness leads to concentration and enables you to

look deeply to find a solution. Habit energy from your parents is stronger than you but when you are awake, when you are mindful then you recognize that habit energy.

July 13th Dharma Talk

I'm here for you. That's a practice. When we love someone you have to be there. If you are always absent then how can you love?

- I am here for you is a real mantra but for it to be a mantra you need concentration. You have to be there concentrated. What you say when you are really there can be a mantra and will bring a miracle. You need to breathe for at least five seconds.

- Darling, you are there and I'm so happy is the second mantra. When Descartes said "I think therefore I am" I don't know if he knew that while he was thinking he was his thinking. Mr. Descartes you are but you are what? To be is to be something. This is a question of semantics—to be. But it is clear that when you are thinking you are your thinking. In Buddhism we are made up of skandas, aggregates (like an orange that has 5 sections) and each section represents a part of a person. 1. Form (body), billions of cells, river flowing, life and death is happening all the time in ourselves. To meditate is to realize that. 2. Feelings, we like pleasant feelings and we can get attached to them. 30% of feelings are unpleasant. Neutral feelings are feelings of contentment and they can transform into pleasant feelings with mindfulness. The skillful practitioner can transform neutral feelings into pleasant feelings with mindfulness. 3. Perceptions – we perceive things, trees surrounding us are objects of our perception there are correct perceptions and wrong perceptions, wrong perceptions bring suffering. 4. Mental formations, citta samskara. In Buddhism there are 51 mental formations, jealousy, fear, anxiety, love, understanding. We meditate to recognize the mental formations. "hello my little fear! I know you." 5. Consciousness – mind consciousness, vijñāna. We can imagine consciousness as earth, soil, like a garden there are seeds in the depths of the earth of our consciousness and these seeds are mental formations, bija. In Buddhism consciousness can be seen as having two levels, upper is the mind or mind consciousness and the lower part is our store consciousness. All 51 mental formations are buried in the depths of the store consciousness. We need to practice selective watering and water only the good seeds. We need intelligence, it's an art. Vitaraka Vicara – thoughts as a mental formation. There is productive thinking and unproductive thinking. Unproductive thinking causes confusion. We need to know how to handle our thinking when we think too much and we have to stop in order to really live. Looking at the morning sunrise we have to just be there we don't have to think about it. Descartes – you think so that's all you are, your thought. In ourselves there are wonders represented by these 5 skandas and we can touch them in a direct way in walking meditation. We don't think when we do walking meditation because it carries us into the past and future. The pure land of the Buddha is a reality. Deeply in touch with trees and in touch with the kingdom of god.

- The kingdom of god is you, it is you, it's here in the present moment it is now or never, it can heal you. Nourish you, breathing and walking in mindfulness you are in touch with god. Thinking isn't everything you aren't there and it carries you into the past

and future. We need to know how to handle our thinking. We have to train ourselves to think in a positive way.

- You have freedom. Free will exists when we bring our attention to our breath back to our body and are not carried away by circumstances we are ourselves.

- In Buddhism we have Nirvana not god. So what is Nirvana? It is not something you seek, it is inhabiting you and a practitioner can touch Nirvana. It is available in the present moment. I am going to help us see this. Look at a wave. There's a beginning and end, a rise and a fall. When we qualify it (big, beautiful etc.) the wave suffers. The wave then wants to be more beautiful, it no longer enjoys its rise and fall and it suffers. Is there a way out. The wave can look at herself and it can get in touch with herself, it can discover that she is water. The wave can live her life as a wave. Water is free of all those notions. Water is nirvana. The wave is water in the present moment. H₂O manifests in many forms. Water is always there. A cloud can become snow. Meditate, look deeply. Death doesn't exist only continuation in other forms. Transmigration. Nirvana is the no birth, no death, inherent in every cloud, we are unborn, undying. We only suffer because like the wave we don't know we are water.

- You don't look for Nirvana. Nirvana is your nature. Meditation is recognizing that and transforming all fear and all suffering. A practitioner recognizes skandas and produces mindfulness and brings relief. The greatest relief is only when you touch your true nature of no birth and no death and no fear. No fear, no death, no birth is the foundation of all true happiness. Look at this tea in the glass. See its true nature in the past was a cloud. When you drink tea you recognize that you are drinking a cloud. Death and birth don't exist, death like birth is a notion. These are perceptions. Science can go with the dharma. Nirvana is the extinction of all ideas—god has to be nirvana. You have a wrong perception that your birth began at conception, conception is a moment of continuation, there is no nonbeing or being, these are notions. Nirvana is the silencing of all notions so reality can manifest in all its truth.

- The knowable is the object of our perception. I perceive this blue sky—realm of the knowable. Knower and the known manifests at the same time. Without the known the knower can't exist. To perceive is to always perceive something. Cognitive science says that consciousness exists inside and the world exists outside but in Buddhism that is wrong perception the known and the knower manifest at the same time.

- Your Buddha nature is your capacity to touch no birth, no death and meditate on this which will bring you joy, freedom and fearlessness. Meditation brings a lot of happiness.

Trainings are not “Thou Shalt Nots” but rather it is expanding your heart and living more compassionately.

July 15th

Imagine we are in a garden and every flower in the garden is a human being. A garden of humanity. When I look at a little boy or a little girl he/she is a flower in the garden of humanity. We are all flowers in the garden of humanity. As flowers we should be free, lovely and beautiful. Meditation can help us be flowers in this garden. To practice meditation is to preserve our beauty and freshness. As a flower we can make the world beautiful.

Pebble meditation...have children elected to be bell masters. Breathe in to calm yourself and breathe out to smile. The 1st pebble is a flower (you do each one three times). Breathing in I see myself as a flower. Breathing out I feel fresh. The human being is beautiful and when you do this you restore your floweriness, freshness. The 2nd pebble is a mountain. You keep your pebble in your left hand and the bell master invites the bell. If you are not solid like a mountain you cannot be happy. You need solidity and stability. You need to learn how to sit like a mountain. Breathing in I see myself as a mountain. Breathing out I feel solid. Sitting on a lotus you feel light and fresh! Breathing in I see myself as a lotus. Breathing out I feel light.

Daily practice is to bring the mind back to the body. When the mind is not there with the body we are caught in our thinking, the body is there but the mind is elsewhere. Many ways to bring the mind and body as one. Practice mindful breathing and mindful walking. Body and mind may go in different directions but between the two there is something, our breath. Breathe in and out and naturally they will come together when we pay attention to our breath the mind goes back to the body. We breathe all day long but we don't breathe mindfully so we are not concentrated. When you do walking meditation you can take two steps as you breathe in and 3 steps as you breathe out. Fully concentrated on your breath your body and mind are united. We enjoy our steps and instead of counting. Mindfulness energy brings the mind back to the body so you are fully present in the here and now and you know what is going on in the here and now—I am breathing. I am touching planet earth with my feet. We have to treasure every moment. Sati – pali, smṛti – Sanskrit

People drink their tea but get lost in their fear, their worries. They don't drink tea they drink their worries. Everyone of us can drink our tea mindfully. The energy of mindfulness is connected to the energy of concentration. Smṛti, Samādhi and prajña are the 3 trainings. Concentration, insight and understanding. This insight is our inner grace. You suffer because you don't understand. Salvation, liberation, emancipation come from deep understanding. We can realize what the Buddha realized. Buddha nature everyone has the capacity to practice mindfulness, concentration and get insight you need which frees you from fear, jealousy and anger. Freedom is also happiness. A good practitioner knows how to bring each moment joy at any time to him/herself and to others.

In Buddhist tradition happiness must be understood in the context of suffering. A good practitioner knows how to bring relief to their suffering and the suffering of others. The Buddha teaches us 16 exercises of mindful breathing.

1. identify the in/out breath

2. follow the in/out breath all the way through with concentration, the more concentrated you are the more you enjoy
3. aware of your body
4. releasing tension in your body
5. bringing feelings of joy
6. bringing feelings of happiness (calmer than joy, joy has a bit of excitement and you need to make the distinction between the two. Letting go brings joy and happiness. Letting go of what? Letting go of what you happiness should be. Your idea of happiness is the very obstacle keeping you from being happy. You need to have courage to let go.)

Mindfulness is a source of happiness that you can generate at any moment. The Buddha was very concrete there are ways of practice that can bring joy, happiness and relief of suffering.

July 16th

Pebble meditation continued... 1st flower = freshness and beauty, 2nd mountain = solid, stability. We are only happy when we have a flower and mountain in us. If you are not fresh you have hardly anything to offer another person. You have to practice for your freshness for it to be big enough to offer. "Mother, I offer you my freshness and my beauty." Solidity of a mountain occurs when you are not crying or worrying. "Mom, I'm solid." This is another gift. 3rd pebble still water = calm, reflecting things as they are. We can look at the water and see the reflection of the blue sky. Take picture of the mountain in a lake. When we are calm we are at peace with ourselves and with other people. Breathing in still water I reflect things just as they are, there is no distortion. Imagine still water in you, tranquility. When we are calm we are happy. 4th pebble space = freedom. No happiness without freedom. What is freedom? Freedom is space and if you love someone you have to offer them space and freedom. Space is something very precious, arranging flowers in such a way just the right amount of space is left in between each one, this has to be done for the flowers to radiate and express their beauty, we need space to shine. Be careful not to impose your way and your ideas. 1. Freshness for our well being and as a gift 2. Solidity are you dependable, reliable? Solid enough? If you are then you have something to offer. We cannot count on someone who is always changing their mind, they are not reliable. 3. Still water, do you have peace in your heart? You have to know how to bring calm to your body, feelings and emotions. 4. Space + freedom, darling I have a lot to offer, I have space.

Mindfulness as a source of happiness. It's an energy that can be generated at any moment at any place. That energy can bring us in touch with the wonders of life. A good practitioner is one who knows how to bring a feeling of joy and happiness thanks to their insight, the fruit of their practice. The 1st exercise is to identify in and out breath, 2nd is to follow the in and out breath from start to end. The 4th is relaxing, releasing and letting go of tensions in the body. The 5th is bringing feelings of joy. 6th is bringing feelings of happiness. We have to train ourselves to bring feelings of joy and happiness at any time for ourselves and for others. 7th recognizing a painful feeling. Usually we want to escape

suffering. The Buddha recommended we be there for our suffering. I'm not trying to run away or cover up suffering. On the contrary I want to be with it. the unpleasant feeling is there is me, it is the object of our recognition, subject is recognizing what? When suffering manifests we have to be there for it that's why we have to breathe in mindfulness and recognize suffering. In Buddhism we speak of mind consciousness which is the upper layer and the store consciousness which is the lower layer. All our seeds—joy, pain, freedom, love, despair and hatred are all in this store house. Emotions are already there in the form of seeds (you or someone else has watered it) when anger is in the store consciousness it manifests at the mind level and when it is watered and becomes a mental formation and then we suffer. That painful feeling is inhabiting us and we suffer. In the store there is a seed of mindfulness and we have to invite that seed to manifest. Mindfulness seed I need you, I need you to manifest and take care of this mental formation. In the mind we have 2 zones of energy and we have to use the energy of mindfulness to take care of our anger, suffering and negative emotions.

Mindfulness first recognizes suffering with a completely nonviolent attitude, we don't grasp on to it, fight it. this is called the practice of bearing recognition and it is the object of the 7th exercise. You shouldn't suppress you body. You have to take it in your arms with tenderness. This is nonduality. Buddhist meditation you are your suffering and you are your mindfulness taking care of your suffering. So there is a nonduality. Buddhist meditation is characterized by nonviolence, you are also your suffering and you embrace it with tenderness. The 8th exercise is bringing relief, soothing just as in the physical realm but to feelings. You embrace the feeling with tenderness and nonviolence and bring relief. As a practitioner we have to be capable of doing this. If you aren't solid enough in your practice then you need to ask the sangha to help you embrace and it and heal. Together you breath and combined energy of mindfulness you can recognize and embrace it. every practitioner needs a sangha. Let the pain come and as a practitioner you know exactly what to do. After having done that for a time it comes down to its original place as a seed. Hello my little suffering! I know you, I know how to take care of you. From suffering we become more understanding and compassionate. 9 months in a womb is the most pleasant time, no worries, no fears. The temperature is perfect, it is a very soft environment, cushion of liquid. In Vietnamese it is referred to as the palace, the womb. Our original fear and desire is to survive. The baby once it exits the womb is entirely dependant on someone else to survive. It has to learn how to control the situation. The baby feels powerless. I need someone to ensure my survival! I'm helpless and powerless! Left by myself I will die! The primal feelings of a child are up until now your fear as well. This is because you feel this original desire which is motivated by the original fear. You look for a partner that is the continuation of that desire, to have someone with you to ensure your survival, this desire is also the dear. There is a feeling of well being between two lovers. They feel calm, good and unafraid. You may think this pleasant feeling you have is from your partner but it is not because the baby in you said, "mommy, daddy is here." The continuation of that primal fear and primal desire. Two years later the presence of that same person is a nuisance and you know feelings of peace is not the other person. If you are afraid of what other think about you, you are afraid if others think negatively you will be left all alone and in danger. You want to be accepted by others. We have to look deeply to see and identify the original fear and desire. Every desire and

fear are only the continuation of the original. Download your adult wisdom to the little child in your store consciousness. Train to establish oneself in the present moment to leave the film of the past behind and walk together with love in the kingdom of the present moment. Say goodbye to the past and live deeply in the present moment and you have freedom. Talk to the child in you and transmit your wisdom. bring yourself relief and freedom.

July 19th

Q and A with Thay (Children's Questions)

How did you become a monk? When Thay was very young, 7 or 8 I saw a picture of the Buddha, he was sitting on the grass very peacefully and beautifully and I was very impressed and I wanted to be like that. Later I learned about a hermit and our school organized for us to visit the mountain where the hermit lived. My classmates did not know walking meditation and I ran up the mountain and finished all of my water. When I got to the hermitage the hermit was not there but there was a well and when I drank the water from there it tasted so good and I felt very peaceful. I had no desire left. I thought that maybe the hermit had become the well. I fell into a deep sleep and when I woke I didn't know where I was at first. I left the mountain with regret but was very silent and didn't share my experience with the other boys and from that moment on I knew I wanted to be a monk. I had tasted the most delicious water in the world and then I nourished the idea of becoming a monk and became one at age 16. But you should only be a monk if it is your deepest desire.

Abusive father...only when looking deeply can you forgive him. Breathe in and recognize your habit energy. Hello habit energy, I know you are there. I will not let you take over. Simple Recognition and then use the energy of mindfulness to smile at the habit energy and it will lose its strength.

Love is the willingness, desire and capacity to make someone happy.

When fighting remember that the other boy is not the enemy the real enemy is the anger within in.

How would you describe god? Your question implies we can describe god with our ideas and words. But the other question is can we describe god with our ideas? It is hard to describe something even when it is something very simple. How do you describe the taste of a mango to someone who has never eaten a mango? It is quite impossible. Neti Neti (not this not that) This does not mean that God or mango does not exist. The best thing you can do is offer someone a mango and have them taste it for themselves. Touch god in the here and now. Walking meditation your mind comes back to your body so the mind and body are one. We don't talk about god enjoy the kingdom. Don't describe it, be with "god" 24/7.

Health care providers need to nourish themselves every day. When dealing with cancer patients you can tell them that there are other people out there without cancer that suffer more. Everyone will die one day, live deeply in the present moment.

Family where suicide occurs...for that person that killed themselves there is no more joy to be alive, to end the life is the only way to stop suffering and that person didn't have the chance to meet the dharma. One of the things you can do to the family that has lost someone to suicide is to bring the dharma to them but the dharma without colors, without religion.

Setting up a school...this is a wonderful idea but you need to work together in harmony. Collective view, collective insight...anyone can be a dharma teacher if their aspiration is strong and they have the support of the sangha.

July 20th

We will go over the four mantras. 1. "Darling, I am here for you." To be there is a practice. We train ourselves in mindful breathing. This will bring your mind back to the body. To love you have to be there. When you are really there you can look into the eyes of the one you love and tell them you are there. Product of practice—the most precious thing is your presence. Breathe in deeply, bring attention to your breath and then you are really there and you have your true presence. My dear, I am here for you, that is my gift. To love is to be there and offer your presence. If you are not there then how can you love. 2. "Darling, I know you are there and I am so happy." The presence of the person in your life is extremely special. To be loved is to be recognized. If you love someone but you don't pay attention to them that is not love. Recognizing the presence of the person you love is something precious in your life. 3. "Darling, I know you suffer, that is why I am here for you." Love is bringing relief to the one you love. To love is to be there when the other person suffers. Imagine you suffer and suffer deeply. If the other person is aware that you suffer then they can do something. 4. "My dear I suffer. Please help me." It is difficult to say this mantra because your pride is preventing you. In true love there is no place for pride. An idea can be dangerous—wrong perceptions.

Love above all is maîtri (goodness, kindness, brotherhood, sisterhood) the capacity to bring happiness, maîtri is not just the intention to bring happiness but the capacity. Love is an art, we have to be capable of offering well being. You have to deeply understand that person in order to love him or her. Karuna, transforms suffering of your loved one but in order to do that you have to understand their suffering. We need to have deep listening in order to have maîtri and compassion. We have to equip ourselves with compassion when we listen. Listening to help the other person, you must not interrupt just listen. You should use loving speech when you are trying to express what is in your heart. Mudita is joy, true love brings us joy and joy to the other person. Upeksha, inclusiveness, non discrimination is the fruit of looking deeply with that there will be peace, happiness and cooperation.

Story about writing poetry with the right hand...perfect harmony between the right and left hands. Upeksha, true love. I love you not because you like me I love you because I love you and those elements must be cultivated.

You don't have to wait for another person, you can love without another person. Loving ourselves is the foundation for loving another, how can we care for another if we cannot care for ourselves. Understanding our suffering causes love to spring forth. Love is like light and this light comes from yourself. You have abundance within you. You understand your own suffering. You have joy and freedom and it radiates. You don't need another person to begin loving. Love radiates and shines out. Love is different from need. Needing is not living. We started out needing when we were little and we could not survive without another and had no means to defend or protect ourselves. You must recognize the need but do not call it love that need is your primal desire/fear. If you need a partner that is a continuation of that fear. True love knows no need, it only knows abundance and even if someone does not show up for you you have that joy and abundance but that primal desire/fear is inside you and you keep looking for that partner. In asia we kiss with the nose, scent is familiar. In the west you kiss with the mouth, I think this is a continuation of sucking on our mothers breast for milk, a continuation of nursing. When you are filled with love you understand upeksha. You are like sunshine, this is the love of the Buddha. Distinguish between need and love, true love can make many people happy, love like the Buddha. Imagine 2 lovers sitting near each other. You may think that is an abundance. They can breathe relaxed but the presence of the other is not what brings them joy because if you look deeply you see it is the idea of continuation. Oh that person is there, I don't need to be afraid. It is not the person, it is your idea to ensure your survival because in a year that person may cause you pain or become a nuisance. We have to look deeply and cultivate true love or we continue to suffer. Loving means having something to offer. Karuna, māitri, have you understood your own suffering and given rise to understanding. In that case your presence to the world will benefit others in many different ways. The love cultivated through looking deeply is the love of the Buddha, true love.