

Walking Together

Ayya Virañani

Transcription of an online Dhammatalk, January 31st 2026

Intro

First of all, thank you to everyone who greeted one another. It was really beautiful to see the greetings, and also to notice the smiles that were exchanged, even when no words were spoken. That kind of connection matters.

I understood that for some people this was the first time joining in this format, and I really appreciate that. It's always meaningful when someone enters something new for the first time.

People are connecting from many different places. Some are further north, some further south, some are here now and some are still arriving. And to celebrate this meeting, this coming together, we decided to do a short practice together, cultivating loving kindness.

Guided meditation

Get comfortable, be at ease. When you feel ready, you can close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to arrive completely. Let the body settle. Let yourself be present.

Receiving whatever sensation around the heart - not the physical heart, but the center of the chest, the place where warmth and goodwill are felt. Simply notice whatever sensation is there, without trying to change anything.

Begin by cultivating loving kindness to yourself, choosing a phrase in your own language that resonates with you, a short simple phrase of well wishing. Phrases such as:

May I be safe and protected from danger.

May I be well.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be peaceful and at ease.

Repeating them gently, again and again, allowing their meaning to sink in.

If it feels difficult to offer kindness to yourself, that's okay. You can still repeat the words. Each of us moves at our own pace, returning again and again to the intention of goodwill.

Now expanding the metta to all of us here in this zoom meditation hall, wherever we are, no matter what.

Using the same phrase as you used for yourself, in the same pace, again and again connecting with the well wishing.

May all of us here be well, happy and peaceful.

Any time the mind wanders, get lost in thinking, zooming out, feeling sleepy, simply beginning again, no problem. Opening the heart for each other, all of us gathered here to cultivate loving kindness and compassion.

From there, we allow this kindness to expand outward, to all your Dhamma companions, your teachers, people you practice with, Dhamma friends from around the world. Using the same phrase, the same heart intention.

May all my Dhamma family be well, happy and peaceful.

Resting back in the repetition of the phrase and connecting with the meaning of the phrase.

Now expand to your biological family, parents, grand parents, children, grand children, aunties, uncles, cousins, partner – not needing to connect with each individually but connecting with the group, recognizing whatever good qualities these people have and welcoming them into your heart.

May my family be well, happy and peaceful.

And now expanding the field of well wishing to human beings that you know but are not related to, friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

May all human beings we know be happy, safe and protected.

Now including people you do not know, all human beings on this planet.

May all human beings on earth be happy, safe and peaceful.

Now including all beings, expanding the scope of this well wishing to non- human beings that you know, maybe dogs and cats.

May all non-human beings be at ease, peaceful, and protected from harm.

Finally, opening to all beings everywhere without exception, radiating the kind wishes for all beings, expanding the light of metta into the vastness of the world.

May all beings without exception, on this beautiful planet, no matter who or where they are, in whatever realm or direction they are, be healthy, strong, safe and in peace, including ourselves.

Thank you for your practice.

As you open your eyes, stay in touch with the heart and see whether something has changed in how you observe all the people present on the screen compared to half an hour ago, and how you feel about all of this.

Dhammatalk

And this is my image of all the networks of loving-kindness. And also the beauty of being here together in this meeting, all together, radiating metta.

It is a choice of loving-kindness. Giving all these small drops of loving-kindness. And wherever we all are - from different places in Italy, in Holland, in Belgium, in Norway, all the way to Kathmandu - what remains is this choice of loving-kindness.

This sense of connection — these invisible networks of kindness — is something we create together. Being here together, offering even small drops of kindness, matters.

Coming together to share kindness. And this feels especially important in the current context, as the world is a mess right now. We have a choice, a possibility, in how we relate to all of this. Do we want to dwell in negativity or anger? Or do we choose to dwell in metta and act of a place of kindness and gentleness, as opposed of a place of confusion and anger?

The Buddha said very clearly: hatred is never ceased by hatred, but by love alone.

There is so much that is difficult and painful to witness. Against that background, something wonderful and remarkable is happening.

There is a group of monks walking for peace from Texas to Washington D.C. They are walking through the deep South, a place that doesn't welcome colored people.

At first, nobody knew who they were. But now, wherever they go, people stop. People gather. They are drawn in.

People are deeply touched by this pilgrimage for peace — by the way these monks carry themselves, by their presence, by their kindness. At the front of the group is a monk named Pañavara, who stops in many places to give short or long Dhammatalks, all about metta.

What they are doing touches something very deep in people, especially those who are exhausted by anger and hatred. It's incredibly moving to see. Nobody knew these monks before they started and now they are speaking to hundreds and hundreds of people wherever they arrive.

They walk extraordinary distances - sometimes up to forty kilometers a day - and still, in the evening, they have the energy to give a Dhammatalk. Night after night. They have been doing this for nearly a hundred days.

It's hard to imagine doing something like that. After walking for many kilometers, most of us just want to take a shower and rest. And yet they keep going, sustained by the love they offer and receive.

Wherever they arrive, people join them for parts of the journey. Sometimes just for a short stretch. Metta is the fuel that allows them to keep walking and giving Dhammatalks.

And all of this is happening within a much larger and more painful context. What is happening in the world right now is deeply troubling and difficult. And in the middle of that, they chose to walk for peace.

This highlights the courage it takes to cultivate metta in this world, the monks embody that, not just inwardly but visibly and physically. It's much easier to fall into reactivity, or to retreat entirely into an inner space, than to remain open and receiving whatever may arise.

This kind of practice asks a lot of us.

It raises a question: do we have that same courage? Their ability to step out, not knowing what they will meet, but meeting it with metta, whatever it is.

You might think, "There's no way I could do that." But I don't agree. Each of us can do this, in our own way.

It requires a kind of confidence - not in yourself, but in metta itself, and in the practice of it. It means trusting that wholesome actions always have beautiful consequences. Not always immediately, but over time, they do.

And we never know when that will happen. There will be difficulties along the way. And still, we continue. Step after step.

The monks themselves have experienced a lot of difficulties. There was a traffic accident. One of them was severely injured and ultimately lost a leg. And yet his response to that incredible challenge was deeply moving. In the face of that, he chose metta.

When we compare that to the difficulties we encounter in our own practice, we see that our challenges, while real, are of a different scale. And still, they ask something of us.

If he can continue, then we can continue too. Step by step.

One of the most beautiful things the monks say is that anyone cultivating peace and kindness is walking with them. And just as they are not walking alone, we don't do this alone either, but together.

We support one another simply by being present, by practicing together. Having a group like this to practice with is incredibly precious. Doing this alone would be much harder.

Each of us supports the others, regardless of where we are or who we are. Even if we speak different languages, the heart understands the language of metta and Dhamma.

The Buddha said very clearly, good friends, good companions are the whole of the spiritual life.

Walking together, lifting each other up, inspiring one another - even in small ways - matters. Even something as simple as knowing others are here, practicing too, becomes a form of support.

We are here at the beginning of the year, already a month in. And this is often the moment when it becomes harder to stay committed to what we want to choose.

So we come together to remember that choice. And that choice doesn't stay here. It ripples outward into the world.

Some of you have recently been part of a longer practice together, and you know how this changes the way you relate to others. How it changes the way you speak and act.

So let's keep going together.

Cultivating kindness instead of fear or anger.
Letting our speech and actions come from that place.

Walking together.

Cherry tree

Thanks to the generosity of Pian Dei Ciliegi, there is a wonderful place where we can practice together at any time, 24/7. It's called Cherry Tree, it's an online meditation hall.

I invite all of you. If you want some company when you practice to sit in front of your computer, who knows who will be there when you show up?"

Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu

Cherry tree:

Zoom meeting ID: 883 4340 8992

Passcode: 365862

You can follow the monks on their website:

<https://dhammacetiya.com/walk-for-peace/>

European Peacewalk to Jerusalem 2026-2027:

<https://peacewalk.info>