

# A Meditation on Interconnectedness

One of the strangest and most disturbing aspects of the coronavirus crisis is the enforced isolation - ranging from isolation of one country from another, down to the isolation of family members from each other. This seems to make the current situation even more difficult and traumatic than that experienced during wars, when normal interactions between people - visiting bars and restaurants, participating in and watching sports, visiting theatres and museums, and attending places of worship for spiritual and emotional support - remain largely possible.

The scientific view is that all matter originates from a single cataclysmic event which brought the universe into existence. So from that point of view, whatever their physical isolation from each other, all humans remain connected with each other and with all other living or inanimate entities, by this common ancestry.

At the deepest level of many religions, one finds the doctrine that divinity is a compassionate consciousness which pervades and underlies everything. One meaning of the "namaste" gesture, use of which is being encouraged as a replacement for the handshake, is: "the divinity within me salutes the divinity within you".

It occurred to me that the current isolation might offer an opportunity to affirm this unity and interconnectedness and perhaps transcend the isolation itself. I would like to offer the following meditation - I suggest that the best time to do it would be midday.

1. Find somewhere where you can be reasonably undisturbed for about half an hour. If appropriate to do so, turn off mobile phones. The room doesn't have to be dark, but make sure the light levels are low enough not to be intrusive. Also make sure that the room is reasonably warm.
2. Find a comfortable position, either sitting on a chair, or lying on a bed or mat on your back. Experiment to find the position of your hands and arms which feels best: if sitting, try having your hands in your lap with one hand cupped in the other, or with the fingers interlaced; if lying down, try laying your arms by your sides.
3. Relax. There are various ways of assisting this - one of the most common is to use your internal attention to work through your body section by section, looking for tension. If you find it, increase the tension slightly and then let it go. If at the end of the process, you still

feel some tension, just be with it: meditation in itself often aids relaxation.

4. Close your eyes
5. Bring your attention to your breathing. Station your awareness at your nose or mouth, and watch the way the breath passes, in, and then out. Don't follow it down into your chest, or attempt to change your breathing in any way - just watch the breath as it passes.
6. You may find that your breathing changes of its own accord - it may get slower or shallower. If so, this is fine - just keep calmly watching the breath.
7. You may find that your attention drifts away from your breathing and thoughts start passing through your mind. If this happens, eventually you will become aware of the fact that you are thinking, and recall that your intention was to meditate. At this point, just gently return your attention to your breathing.
8. After doing this for some minutes, and when you feel the time is right, bring your attention to the centre of your chest (in many religions, this is seen as the "spiritual heart" and the seat of compassion and unconditional love). Imagine a warmth, or even a soft glowing light - maybe light blue or golden yellow - at this spot.
9. Bring to mind someone to whom you feel close. Visualise them as clearly as you can, looking happy and well. Now visualise a connection between the centre of your chest and that of the image of the person to whom you feel close. If earlier you visualised a glowing light over the centre of your chest, imagine it extending and touching a similar glow at the person's own chest; if not, maybe just experience a shared warmth and feeling of companionship. Allow this connection to be whatever it seems to want to be.
10. One by one, bring to mind other people to whom you feel close - family members, friends, neighbours, even people whom you have seen on the media - and visualise a connection between you and them. Also notice that they themselves are connected to others in the same way. If you have pets, feel free to include them. If you feel able to do so, try including people with whom you have unresolved differences, and allow compassion and forgiveness to flow between you.
11. Imagine that you begin to rise above your house and neighbourhood, and as you do so, keep the consciousness of the connections between yourself and everyone in the area. Continue rising upwards, and as your viewpoint expands, see the network of connections expand with it. Eventually see the entire earth, surrounded by a vast web of connections between all living creatures and the earth itself.

Experience and acknowledge your own part in this all-encompassing interconnection.

12. When it feels right to do so, allow your attention to return to your body, and become aware of your surroundings again. Give yourself a few minutes to return to normal waking consciousness - look about you, take some deep breaths, stretch, and rub your legs and scalp. When you feel fully ready, get up and carry on with whatever's next on the agenda.

## Notes

### Dealing with interruptions

If during the meditation you get disturbed by something - maybe a phone call or a domestic problem - come out of the meditation as gently as possible, and deal with the issue. When you're sure the problem has been resolved, and when you feel comfortable to do so, carry on with the meditation. If you do the meditation regularly, dealing with interruptions will become easier to manage: some very experienced meditators report that their entire life has become a meditation.

### Visualisation practice

It's quite common for people to find it difficult to get a clear mental image of another person - even if it's someone to whom they feel extremely close. However, visualisation improves with practice. Here are two exercises which might help (others will be found on various websites).

1. Close your eyes, and bring to mind a simple shape - maybe a triangle. When you have a clear image of it, start to manipulate it mentally - turn it upside down; turn it edge on; change the shape and the colour, etc. When you feel ready, move onto other more complex shapes, and solids like cubes, then try real objects that you might find around the home.
2. If you have a photograph of a person whom you would like to include in your meditation, try looking at it for a while, then close your eyes and try to remember the image in the photo, as accurately as possible. Open your eyes and check your recall, then try again.

### People who are unwell

When you bring someone to mind during the meditation, if you know that they are ill, then as well as visualising them looking happy and healthy, you may

also like to imagine them surrounded by light - either blue or golden, whichever feels best.

If you have recently lost someone close, whether as a result of coronavirus or from some other cause, you may like to consider including them in the above. The denial of the opportunity to say goodbye, or to attend funerals, is one of the most heartrending aspects of the current crisis: this exercise may possibly help with the grieving and healing process.