

## **Diversity and the Warrior's Heart**

### **A Contemplation for Cultivating Gentleness, Fearlessness, and Intelligence**

#### **1. Gentleness:**

Contemplating basic goodness, your own and others', bring to mind someone who is not from your "group"; this can be defined in many ways---racial, sexual, economic, political, religious, personal---someone whom you are vaguely or strongly uncomfortable around, who brings up negative feelings in you, or whom you disagree with. Letting go of the "rightness" or "wrongness" of them or your feelings about them or their opinions, recognize your own basic goodness, and theirs, and sit with this recognition for a few moments.

#### **2. Fearlessness:**

Practicing fearlessness is being willing to be with what comes up in our experience, no matter what that is. Be awake to what is happening as you hold this person in your mind. Notice the thoughts and feelings that arise, and your feelings about the thoughts and feelings. If you find that you want to escape or shut down, notice that too. Observe these patterns with gentle curiosity. Contemplate whether some of these patterns can be seen as an expression of cocoon.

#### **3. Intelligence:**

Still holding the person in your mind, contemplate whether there is a possibility of encountering him or her freshly, without worry or struggle. Notice whether there is a difference between viewing the person from the cocoon and viewing the person from the perspective of basic goodness. If fear or revulsion arises, remember that we do not step out of the cocoon once and for all, that we are on a path of continued opening.

#### **4. Postmeditation:**

In any encounter with people, whether face to face, in the media, or any other context, we can flash on the basic goodness of ourselves and others. We can be willing to be fully present to ourselves and them. Just as we practice on the cushion noticing thoughts and gently returning to the breath, we can observe our experience in the moment with curiosity, not judgment, and we can learn to relate to the world and everyone we meet with more openness, clarity, and genuineness.

*---By Linda G. Francis (Baltimore)*