

gifts, we would not be able to develop generosity, and we would not be able to evolve wealth and substance. We become ethical only by thinking of others, and thinking how our acts affect them, and imagining how they are, and developing empathy and sensitivity, and therefore, through ethics, we develop the human life-form. And without patience, which is the root, the true source of beauty, we couldn't develop beauty. Being beautiful or handsome comes from being patient in many, many lives, and you could never be patient if there weren't others who make you irritated, who injure you and harm you. Therefore, people who bug you are also like wish-granting gems.

We couldn't have creativity and effort and enterprise if there weren't others to spur us on to do these wonderful things, like become buddhas for their sake. We couldn't have meditation and concentration, even, because we wouldn't have others to distract us, and from whom we wanted to move away to develop concentration. Finally, we couldn't have wisdom or selflessness without others, because no one would be there to teach us of selflessness, those like Nagarjuna and Buddha, and others who had realized the great teaching of selflessness.

And, so, the ninth step is the stage in which we reflect on the advantages of our thinking only of the happiness of others. Only when we focus on the happiness of others, and accomplish the happiness of others, do we really feel happy. When we are lifted out of ourselves, and exalted in some way in our orientation toward others, then we're really happy. Whenever we are preoccupied, we are really unhappy. As soon as I think, "How happy am I?" I feel unhappy, because it's never enough. And when I'm thinking only, "How happy are they? Oh, it's great, they're a little happy," I ignore my unhappiness, I forget about my little aches and wounds and pains, and I feel perfectly happy, directly or indirectly. So, that's the ninth stage, which the *Mentor Devotion* describes in these words, worth reflecting on, over and over:

*As I see that cherishing my mothers makes the blissful mind,*

*And opens the door for developing infinite abilities,*

*Though all beings should rise up as bitter enemies—*

*Bless me to hold them dearer than my life!*

*In short, the fool works only in self-interest,*

*The Buddha works only to realize others' aims;*

*As I keep in mind these costs and benefits—*

*Bless me to equally exchange self and other!*

*Self-cherishing is the door of all frustration,*

*Other-cherishing, the ground of all excellence—*

*Bless me to put into essential practice*

*The yoga of exchange of self and other!*

And, now we come to the tenth step, which I call “messianic resolution,” or high resolve, overflowing mind, overflowing inspiration. In this stage, we basically cultivate the messiah complex, or the “messiess” complex, the feminine, and realize that we can’t bear for these mothers to suffer. I am preoccupied only with their happiness. I must accomplish their happiness. How can I accomplish their happiness?

The buddhas who are already buddhas, and have already accomplished buddhahood, should supposedly be accomplishing these beings’ happiness. Maybe on some level that will come to pass. Who am I to say? But it looks to me as if these beings are still not happy, and therefore, I can’t just rest content thinking, “Well, there are some other buddhas out there who will take care of it.” I myself must help them become happy. I myself must help them become free of suffering. It is my job to make them free of suffering and help them achieve happiness. It is my job to do it. I will be the one to save them. I vow to be the one to save them. I will not rest in all my future lives until I save them.

Here you have to have the sense of the infinite future, so you'll have time to do this. You have to cultivate a sense of time past the next big crunch, the next big bang, and feel as if your spirit and the energies will go on, and in some sense you will be you. Because if you think of death as an automatic obliteration, death as a self-centered, negative Nirvana, you can't develop this messianic resolution. You would think that the messianic vow to save all beings from suffering is insane because you wouldn't have time. But if you see yourself as intertwined with all beings in the matter of the universe, or in the Buddhist sense as intertwined with the lives of the living individual beings, the souls of the beings intertwined, going on infinitely into the future, then you'll see we will be interacting with each other again and again. We'll be in each other's faces again and again. Sooner or later, I will be there in such a way, and I will interact with you in such a way, and I will love you in such a way, and I will be compassionate with you in such a way that I will enable you to achieve happiness and the cause of happiness. I will become a buddha who will be able to help you do that. I have infinite time. We're going to be locked together in this infinite universe, me with all my infinite mother beings, you with all yours, and therefore, I may as well optimize our infinite interconnectedness. Why not? If you're going to be infinitely there with people, you can't get away from them, why not be there with them in the best possible way, where you and they are totally focused on each other's happiness, rather than totally in conflict with each other? And therefore, you optimize that situation. You become a buddha, they become buddhas.

There are three ways of becoming a buddha. It is said that we can become a buddha like a shepherd, like a pilot of a ferry, or like a king or a queen. The buddha-shepherd is the one who herds the flock into the pasture, then comes in last and closes the gate. In this attitude, you make the vow that you will not become free of suffering in enlightenment until you've helped all beings become free. When you are the second, the buddha-ferryman, you'll all arrive at the other shore of freedom from suffering together with all beings, although you're piloting the ship. As the third one, the buddha king or queen, you actually will be crowned, you will take the responsibility of ruling and serving; you will first become a buddha, and then as a buddha, you will establish everyone else in buddhahood. Of these three analogies, it is said that, emotionally, the bodhisattva prefers the first, where he or she goes last into permanent bliss, into exquisite, constantly transforming, but eternal bliss.

Second best is to be the ferry pilot, and third best is to be the king or queen; practically, the last option is the most effective.

Finally, the eleventh step on the road to compassion is the recognition that it takes a buddha to help other beings become free and enlightened. Without being fully free and enlightened myself, how could I possibly help others become fully free and enlightened effectively through the last stages of the process, at least? I may help them, inspire them, share with them some inspiration. But to really help them accomplish it, I'd have to be a buddha myself. Therefore, the eleventh step is, I will become a buddha for the sake of all living beings, out of my preoccupation with their happiness, because being a buddha is the only way effectively to assure the accomplishment of their happiness.

Western psychology considers the tenth step, the step of messianic resolution, to be a form of dementia, because we in the West believe in a limited length of life of the individual, and the obliteration of the individual at death. When you meditate on the messianic resolution, the magnificent intention to save all beings, you *should* feel an intensity like that of a mad person, that of a person who can't bear the conventional wisdom, "Well, *later* they'll get enlightened. Well, *sometime* there'll be Shambhala; it will come in the future. Heaven or New Jerusalem will come later."

No. The messianic resolution is like an apocalyptic madness where *now* we have to achieve buddhahood to be able to help all beings become free of suffering and the cause of suffering *now*. I can't bear my mothers dwelling in this suffering. I can't bear my mothers having fallen into the hells of hunger and thirst. I can't bear them having fallen into the animal realm of one eating another. I can't bear them having fallen into the human realms of mutual conflict, mutual exploitation, mutual destruction. I can't bear them wasting their time idling in the heavenly realms of self-indulgence and idle pursuits of ultimately unsatisfactory pleasures. I must help them become buddhas now, become free of suffering, so that they may have the cause of freedom from suffering now.

That intense madness, that high intention, gets channeled into the vow to become a buddha for the sake of others. It comes by remembering that many beings, in fact, infinite numbers of beings, already are buddhas and have

already felt this kind of messianic intolerance of the suffering of others, and have gone to that intensity, and that determinedness, and have become buddhas for the sake of all beings, and are doing maximum efforts for their sake. And so it's not that they're still in an infinite frame of reference. There's always more to be added to maximum. There's no finite maximum. So I will add mine to that. And I will bring those beings to whom I have karmic connection to happiness, and I will accelerate their progress to enlightenment by becoming a buddha myself.

When we reflect this way, the buddhas and the bodhisattvas and the prophets and the gods and the goddesses and the angels and Jesus and Mary and Muhammad and Lao-tzu and Confucious, and Krishna, and Sita and Raga, and Uma and Shiva, and Rama, and Plato and Socrates, Pythagoras, Newton, Descartes, Galileo—all of them shine happily in the refuge tree, glistening and glowing. Because we have had even the simulation, even the imagination of this magnificent new outlook on life, this new will, this new spirit, they radiate more diamond, ruby, sapphire, topaz, emerald, jewel light rays to us. We fill up and glow with this light energy that radiates from us to all the beings around us in a burst of fabulous connection and dedication and gratitude and encouragement.

It is said that there are twenty-two similes of this moment in our evolutionary life, this moment of conceiving the spirit of enlightenment. This moment is like the earth, because it sustains the growth of the crop of enlightened evolutionary qualities. It is like pure gold, incorruptible. It is like a waxing moon, because it causes your positive qualities always to increase. It is like a great fire, because it consumes all obstructions to happiness. It is like an inexhaustible treasure, when expressed as transcendent generosity. It is like a jewel mine, when expressed as transcendent justness. It is like the ocean, when expressed as transcendent patience. It is like a thunderbolt, when expressed as transcendent creativity. It is like a mountain, when expressed as transcendent contemplation. It is like a supreme physician, when expressed as transcendent wisdom. It is like a good friend, a wish-granting gem, a shining sun, celestial music, a good king, a treasury, a highway, a divine genius, a shout of joy, a river, a rain cloud, a bridge, pure butter, a great tree, the elixir of immortality. Actually, twenty-two may not be enough—there are limitless ways we can contemplate our determination to practice compassion and save

all beings.

You may have already achieved this spiritual conception in previous lives, when you conceived the spirit of enlightenment, gave birth to the spirit of enlightenment, which this eleven-step process is designed to help you do. The eleventh step will infallibly enable you to conceive this spirit, if you do each step carefully and thoroughly. It is a moment in your evolution that is like a birth—a second birth in Buddhism. You are born again in the family of the buddhas as a child, or a daughter, or a son of the buddhas. I like to say it's like suddenly having your heart turned inside out. You're wearing your heart on your sleeve, as we say in English—but it's sort of an inside-out heart on your sleeve. Normally, the heart is closed in on itself. My heart beats for my own self, my own blood, oxygen, life, pleasure, profit, and fame. Habitual self-preoccupation drives my life and seems to drive the lives of all beings. Our culture even says that's natural, and theories of biology say that it's inevitable and no one cannot be like that, there is no such state beyond that. But buddha-biology, buddha-evolution, the Buddhist science of biology, claims that is completely false.

In buddha-biology, the human being is the being whose heart is naturally inside-outside because of her or his empathy. We bear our young within our bodies, and we realize that the boundary of self and other is permeable. Our speech enables us to inhabit each other's minds. We can think in each other's minds by talking to each other. We can embrace the minds of others in our mind by listening to what they say, by communicating. Our communication is a way of entering each other's minds. Our strength as humans, our social strength, in fact, is that we can live in others, and through others. We daily overcome the boundaries between self and other.

Opportunity comes from our natural empathy. When we conceive the will to enlightenment and activate the spirit of enlightenment, that is when we fulfill our humanness to its ultimate extent. Because then we actually acknowledge that we live empathetically. And we live cherishing the happiness of others, whether they're our family, our community, our nation, our race, our species, all living beings, all sensitive beings on all planets. This outlook changes completely all of our future lives. Our vast, infinite future instantly and infinitely changes when we adopt this orientation.

Suddenly, we *are* all the beings, at least in spirit. We imitate the actual awareness of a perfect buddha in which she or he feels herself or himself at the same time to be all the other beings. We feel every bit as much as they do within their own skins. In fact, buddhas get so much into this cloudlike multiple embodiment possibility that they can be many beings simultaneously and still feel themselves as the other beings that are not they. Even though all other beings are buddhas, a buddha honors their sense of alienation. The Buddha doesn't force them and say, "You gotta be me!" They are they. But they will be really happy only when they also feel they are all other beings, when they also become buddhas.

So, the spirit of enlightenment is not just some sentimental wish: "Oh, I want to save all beings." If you actually believe that it's impossible, you cannot do it. No one can take a bodhisattva vow authentically without the infinite sense of the infinite continuity of life, an infinite connectedness of life. Because you can't mean that you're going to save all beings if you have only a short time until your death, a death that is the absolute end of you. You can't mean it. You can say it in a Zen center. You can say it in a Dharma center. You can say it in church. But you can't mean it as a matter of fact, because you don't believe it's possible.

This turning inside out of the heart is called at this stage a "spirit of enlightenment," because it isn't enlightenment, it's a vow. It's a matter of will and spirit. It's not yet a matter of full awareness, of full realization, but it is *a* realization. Even now, we can have that new spirit if we think it's possible, if we have the sense of the continuity of life, and the vastness of it, and if we can suspend disbelief that it is possible. And then we have that inspiration, actually. We have the spirit of enlightenment as an inspiration.

The functioning or venturing spirit of enlightenment is engaged when we actually take the bodhisattva vow. Once we have that, even when we're not thinking that way, we are getting the benefit as if we think in that way. We make a vow. We actually, take the vow: "I *will* become a Buddha for the sake of all beings, to establish them in happiness, and to provide them with the causes of happiness." And we can do that in a formal ceremony, so that it becomes a real promise and a vow.

But we shouldn't do that, of course, until we're sure we can keep the

vow. And that's where we will begin in the next chapter. We will look at that issue of taking that vow, of really embarking on the whole new infinity of life: life as a bodhisattva, life within the buddha family, life as a child, as a son or daughter of the Buddha, of all the buddhas—which is our new clan, our new family, our new race, the buddha race, you can say. We join other buddhas in this second birth through conceiving the spirit of enlightenment, combining the exchange of self and other teaching with the sevenfold mother recognition teaching and implementing it and practicing it, and then, finally, performing it as we have done together in this chapter.

Remember that you could spend a month, a year, a lifetime on each one of these eleven steps, although bodhisattvas would be unhappy to waste much time. We've done them all in a single chapter so that you can begin the process or refresh your commitment to the process.

Now that we have gone through the eleven steps on the path to compassion, the beings in the wish-granting gem tree refuge field are so overjoyed they can't stand it anymore, and they melt totally into light. The whole refuge field just becomes a splash of light, of diamond, emerald, ruby, sapphire, topaz light that flows down from the refuge tree. And the refuge tree itself melts into light, and the lake at the top of the world melts into light. And the island and the bluff and all of it dissolves into us, and we become one with the refuge field, with all the mentor beings, enlightened beings. And we feel really terrific and buoyant and illuminated and insightful and inspired and enthusiastic, and we dedicate all of that benefit and merit from contemplating this to all living beings. We right away invest the merit and the virtue of it with them. We give it away to them. We give this happiness to them, and we melt into light, and as light we merge, one by one, individually in every way with all of these beings, and become indivisible from all of the living beings, friends, enemies, and unknown beings.

And at a certain moment, the beings all wonder, "Where on earth did they all go?" And then we arrive again from our meditative retreat space back in our ordinary self, our ordinary body-mind complex, and our ordinary environment, having concluded the third chapter of Tibet's wish-granting jewel tree retreat.