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Divine Dwelling

Limitless kindness toward everyone, limitless compassion toward those who are suffering, limitless joy for the recovery of others, and limitless equanimity toward everyone without discrimination are four expressions of the boundless sublime states which are aroused in practice and are known as the Brahma-Vihara. When the boundless state is actualized in practice-experience, there may not necessarily be a separation of those expressions. The virtues are intertwined and integral to beingness itself in, of, and as Bodhisattva.

Because we are living in a relative world of duality, some of us might but taste on occasion the limitless state. Few are able to sustain this level of being so we define the virtues as an aid or an aim for practice so that we can have a thread to hold onto, a model for what the actualized Bodhisattva is. Imagine children holding onto a ribbon attached to a Maypole, which might represent the practice of virtues. While they hold on, the children feel connected to the Maypole and to one another. If the children let go, they may have a sense that they are disconnected, but in the limitless state, which

abides with us even when we are not conscious of it, or say, when we let go of the Maypole, the Brahma-Vihara state is always available.

The question is whether we are able to remember to dwell in the virtuous bounty of the limitless state. In this state, all expressions are limitless and are immediately the pure expression of Buddha. The expressions of kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity are completely natural and are naturally reflected in the mind and action of life of or as Bodhisattva.

Dogen Zenji in *Shobogenzo* in the chapter "Kokyo, The Eternal Mirror," speaks of the mirror as the aspect of wisdom that directs the functioning of our lives, and yet is a mirror of all of existence immediately eternal and clear. He teaches us that the eternal mirror is round and that there is nothing ordinary about it. If a child holds the mirror in front of her with both hands, she will appear in the mirror. When we turn our backs to the mirror and walk away, the mirror seems to be traveling on our backs. When we sleep, the mirror covers us "like a flowery canopy." Everything we do is in the eternal round mirror. We can see all of existence in it, all the problems of heaven and earth.

The great round mirror of the buddhas
has no flaws or blurs, within or without.

Two people are able to see the same.

Minds, and eyes, are completely alike.

Dogen Zenji tells us, "The eternal mirror has a time of being polished, a time before being polished, and a time after being polished, but it is wholly the eternal mirror. This being so, when we are polishing, we are polishing the eternal mirror in its entirety....Before being polished the eternal mirror is not dull. Even if people call it black, it can never be dull: it is the eternal mirror in its vivid state."

We can say that all practice is the act of polishing the character and opening to virtue. When we realize ourselves in practice we see that everything in life has been moving us toward this eternal moment of realization, even before we knew anything about practice. Even then, we were carrying the mirror on our back whether we were conscious of polishing ourselves or not and that activity too was eternal and clear. There is no before and after simply the mirror reflecting pure Buddha.

In the practice of Zazen, and in all of our practice-experience activities we open to the boundless state, sometimes naming particular virtues so that we can find our way toward being. We call forth the sublime state more often than we suppose. "All Buddhas in ten directions, past, present and future. All beings, Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, World Honored Ones..." To call upon Buddha, all beings, Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas in all directions is to actualize the eternal blissful

and boundless realm into experience, to make it present immediately where we are at this very moment. This is so even if we ourselves are unable to fully realize it here and now.

Sometimes, our lives are so demanding and crushed by activity that we cannot imagine how we could drop our thinking attachment to the personality, ownership of goods, importance of schedule and meetings, and urge to keep on the move. Buddha seems very far away, but it's precisely at such moments that we have the opportunity to open into and out to the authentic appearance of the eternal mirror, the limitless expressions of "divine dwelling" which manifest in all directions.

Effort and resolve are necessary to truly practice kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity as Bodhisattva. Before we can even leap to such boundless expression, we must develop the practice of remembering to practice. Stephen Batchelor says, "One of the most difficult things to remember is to remember to remember. Awareness begins with remembering what we tend to forget. Drifting through life on a cushioned surge of impulses is but one of the many strategies of forgetting." This is quite a simple and accurate observation of the dilemma of the human condition so wrought up in busyness and superficial concerns that we take the easy tendency to visible distraction and make it our whole lives.

Yet, when we remember to remember, we realize that the eternal mirror travels on our backs. We can reflect abundant virtue, not because we want to appear to be good or well thought of in the world, but because that is the natural way of the Bodhisattva. We transform ourselves so that we are not any other way but virtuous reflection. Living in this way brings about tremendous happiness and this is contagious and sublime.

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