

THE INTIMATE MIND



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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce Tempa Dukte Lama's book, *The Intimate Mind*. In 1983, when he was a little boy of six, Tempa Dukte was presented to the monastery by his parents. He grew up with me and brought happiness to our community with his art and creativity. After eight years of schooling here, he continued his education at St. Luke's Missionary School and had further education at Punjab University Chandigarh, India. Now Tempa Dukte presides over Olmo Ling, a Bön teaching center in the American city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Millions of people have spent millions of hours in study, practice, and meditation in order to cultivate the ultimate state of awakening that has no words to describe it. While much has been written about how to reach this place of primordial purity, it is only in our mastery of aspiration and intent that we are able to stay on the path toward the realization of our true nature. Dominating this sense of purpose must be the indispensable quality of compassion, which makes full use of good hearts and kind intentions. After all, the very purpose of one's activity is to become someone who can enable others to become Buddhas themselves. One has to find the capacity and energy in one's self to do this. One must have the firm intention to understand, purify, and perfect oneself so that one can aid all other beings to become Buddhas.

Through his own skillful means, Tempa Dukte has given us *The Intimate Mind* as a guide to help those on the path of awakening to understand that intimacy means allowing for the possi-

bility to become one with the object we engage with, and that in that oneness there are no possibilities for distraction, attachment, chaos, fear, or judgment. That is where compassion resides, and it is only through compassion that liberation for oneself and others becomes possible. Tempa uses the term “Intimate Mind” to describe this relationship and to help us understand how to follow the path of a compassionate being. May we all attain liberation into our true nature!

*Menri Trizin 33rd
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Dolanji, India
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*Through the unsurpassed potential of all wisdom beings
and the blessings of all great teachers
may we not cling to the objects of sensual distraction
so that we can enjoy the treasury of contentment.
By not grasping the illusory appearances of phenomena as real
may we realize their lack of inherent nature.
By not giving rise to desire-attachment
may all beings realize the treasury of innate wisdom.
Clearing the obstruction of delusive conditioning
may we gain trust of confidence in the nature of our own mind.
Not letting concepts and mere words carry us away
may we experience the true meaning of reality.
Not remaining bound by relative appearances
may we enable the causes of our suffering
to self-liberate into their true nature.
Having met with the path of skillful means and recognized its preciousness
may we gain the wisdom of cognition.
Within the spontaneous manifestation of clarity
as the unification of awareness and emptiness
may we recognize our true nature.
By dissolving all causes and conditioning of affliction
may we abide within the true nature of our mind.
May we generate true love and compassion
so that all beings can benefit.
By clearing all obscurations of body, speech, and mind
may all beings be free from suffering and attain liberation.
May all my above aspirational wishes
come true in the form of great prayers and dedication.*

PART I

THE THOUGHT THAT TURNS THE MIND
TOWARD ITS ESSENCE

*May all sentient beings water
the causal seeds of happiness.*

*May all sentient beings clear
the causal seeds of suffering.*

*May all sentient beings be free from the duality
of both happiness and suffering.*

*May all sentient beings
always be in touch
with the Intimate Mind of immeasurable equanimity.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Intimate Mind is the mind in its natural state. It is pure, clear, and stable. Primordial. It is free from the grasp of delusive ignorance. It has the strength to distinguish between the wholesome and unwholesome nature of our conditioning and our habits. The Intimate Mind is our capacity to perceive things as they are.

When we perceive an object, we sometimes reveal our own fear, anger, hatred, jealousy, or envy. We may believe that the object itself is the cause of our feelings, the cause of our misery or unhappiness. But the same objects that we regard as the cause of our misery, can, in a different moment, serve as the cause of our happiness, joy, and inspiration.

If this is the case, how can the Intimate Mind help us see clearly? The Intimate Mind is the capacity of our mind to be equanimous—calm and poised. That capacity can keep us strong, stable, and clear so that we can provide space to ourselves, to

others, or to objects that we are encountering, so that they can manifest according to their own nature. The intimate nature of our mind makes us stable so that we are not easily carried away by external objects. The Intimate Mind does not allow the mind to overwhelm the object with our conditioning (whether that projection is expressed as a projection, as speculation, or as judgment). The Intimate Mind allows us to approach whatever we encounter with positive thoughts. It is the capacity of the mind that always enables us to reach out to others and to reach inward to ourselves with genuine feelings of love, compassion, and care.

We call this the Intimate Mind because we are, without fear, being intimate with our feelings, with the state of our being, with the functioning of our stream of consciousness, and with the object of our mind. When we are intimate, we can become one with the object that we are intimate with, leaving no space for chaos, no space for distraction, no space for the unnecessary arousal of judgment, fear, or any of the emotions that cause suffering and separation. The Intimate Mind is an expression of what we become as we travel the path of compassionate beings.

How do we cultivate the heart and mind of a compassionate being? And how do we follow this path of practice in the journey of living life? We are all very fortunate to already have this heart, this mind, and the possibility of their union. We plant the causal seed of awakening when we unify our heart and mind—wisdom and compassion—through the medium of wholesome intention. Sometimes our heart is open, but our mind is not ready to accept it or may even turn away from it. At other times our mind tries to understand but our heart is not ready to accept. When heart and mind disagree, we feel emotional stress and pain. If we bring heart and mind together, we end the unnecessary stress that we experience in our lives because of their separation.

The unification of wisdom and compassion is the potential to awaken that is inherent in all of us. By nature, we all have the potential to awaken and we all can become compassionate beings. This inherent potential is called the Buddhahood of base. Under the strong influence of ignorance and afflictive conditioning such as attachment, greed, hatred, anger, judgment, and fear, we distance ourselves from this potential. The way through which we reconnect with our innate potential and actualize the causal seed of awakening is called the Buddhahood of path. The initiative force for this path is our development of a wholesome thought or intention. This wholesome intention binds our heart and mind together in the nature of oneness and begins to unfold the nurturing qualities of the Intimate Mind. With the gift of a unified heart and mind, everything is possible. The realization that we attain through following this path is the Buddhahood of fruit. When we attain the Buddhahood of fruit, we actualize our true nature of intrinsic purity. To become a Buddha, we eliminate all conditioning that afflicts our stream of consciousness. The mind of a Buddha is purified of all negative emotions and free from the obscuration of intellect.

We need all three, the Buddhahood of base, path, and fruit, in order to actualize and attain the fruit. Without the base, there can be no path. Without the path and the base, there can be no fruit. By learning about and practicing the Buddhahood of path and coming to experience the Buddhahood of fruit, we expand and strengthen our motivation and make it more unconditional. This is because our practice gives us insight into the elements in our mind that obstruct our potential and the elements that strengthen it. The path of a compassionate being is, in essence, about this motivation.

I wrote this book because this practice helped me. It is my

hope that this book will offer you a view from which to see your situation and life. If you look into what is making you unhappy and what is making you happy, if you can recognize the causes and conditions of your situation and your state of being, you will be able to move further along the path of the compassionate being.

CHAPTER 2

THE WAY OF THE INTIMATE MIND

*When the wonders of the mind
abide in the open heart,
the Intimate Mind shines forth.*

This is the essence of awakening: our mind and heart are one. Their oneness is the unification of wisdom and compassion. This unification makes us what we truly are. The mind that is not separate from the heart is the Intimate Mind. The very basic teachings of Bön and Buddhism allow us to feel our true nature by unifying our heart and mind. These teachings offer a simple and powerful practice of basic humanness: compassion, love, joy, and equanimity. These four qualities are interdependent. They can only be complete when all four are present as one. They need each other.

The intention to help others develops the openness of our heart and our capacity to see we are not separate from others.

Compassion is the main medium, the seed that gives birth to the new plant that is love. When you are in a state of love, your mental, emotional, and physical experience is one of eternal joy. Your whole being feels relaxed, at ease and filled with joy. We may wish we could stay in this state forever. Yet, this is not what happens. Under the influence of ignorance, the mind tries to hold on to the experience of a blissful state of our being. This creates suffering. The nature of the Intimate Mind, on the other hand, allows us to let things be as they are. It increases our capacity of wisdom to understand the nature of impermanence, that things and feelings do not stay the same forever. To me, it is not important whether a joyful state of our being stays for long or short periods of time. What is important is to become familiar with the process that generates the eternal joy within us and the process of its dissolution. This familiarity is awareness. Awareness is important on the path of compassionate beings; it enables us to let go.

QUALITIES OF THE INTIMATE MIND

The four essential qualities of compassion, love, joy, and equanimity are the basic inherent qualities of the awakened mind. If one of them is missing, we are not fully realized. To be completely awake, we have to surpass our obscurations. We have to go beyond the obscurations of affliction and intellect. We experience the obscuration of affliction when the five afflictive emotions of ignorance, greed, aversion, pride, and jealousy are present in us; this prevents us from getting in touch with our true nature of selflessness. When we develop the four essential qualities of our heart and mind, we overcome the great delusion of affliction. We experience the obscuration of intellect when we become attached

to different kinds of views and judgments; this prevents us from realizing omniscience. When we have transformed both kinds of obscurations, we attain omniscience.

How do we bring compassion, love, joy, and equanimity into our actions? How do we cultivate them in the heart of our life, our body, speech, and mind? A wholesome attitude is the basic and most simple skillful means to stabilize our mind and perspective so we can reconnect with these qualities. When we stabilize our mind, it brings our body and speech into a state of harmony. Yet our body and mind have their own potential to change our attitude. Having a wholesome attitude is not enough, because sometimes there is a tendency of the mind to take us to an extreme. When anything falls into an extreme, it changes its nature. For example, we often try to prove that we are something we are not. This is the saddest thing we do to ourselves. We do this because our mind is asking it of us. We may be shy, but we try to be outgoing. We are getting old, but we try to be young. We like someone, but act as if we don't like him or her. We are in love, but resist it. In this constant process of pretense, we develop the conditioning of self-judgment. In the long run, we become addicted to self-judgment, which creates fear in our life.

We may shift from a wholesome attitude to an expectation without noticing. We may have a good motivation, but begin to grasp onto it and act out of that grasping. The moment we set up our motivation we have a tendency to become attached to a particular result. Our intention to be compassionate is there together with attachment. When we cling to a result, the energy is directed more strongly toward our expectation than toward the motivation itself. This begins to act as an obstacle for the motivation to manifest into action. This is where we need equanimity. When we have equanimity, we exhaust the conditioning that makes us cling

to preferences. Then our motivation for love, compassion, and joy is not contaminated by expectations and attachment.

I have friends who are vegetarians. They don't like the idea of eating meat because one has to kill animals to get meat. I like that wholesome thought and the practice of not killing animals. However, vegetarianism can come from very different sources. It may be our compassion and our ability to see ourselves as not separate from all other beings that makes us feel we could not eat meat. Then, our compassion and our recognition of what compassion means can lead us to the nature of our mind. On the other hand, the idea of not eating meat may be attached to egotistic pride or fear. In that case, our attachment does not allow us to give space to compassion, love, and equanimity. Instead, we blame others and develop a feeling of hatred. In this process of judging and hating others we put ourselves into a state of misery. That is suffering. Any idea, concept, or attitude we hold onto without compassion, love, equanimity, and skillful knowledge is our ego of delusion. This ego destroys the essence of our wholesome attitude.

How do we feel when we see someone eating meat or buying meat at the market? What are the states of our mind, body, and emotions? Some of us distance ourselves from that situation or person; we might get angry with the person or become depressed. Sometimes we are hard on ourselves because of our subtle attachment to pride or ego without awareness. We may think we are better or that we are religious, environmentalist, vegetarian, or peace activists. We project our expectations onto others, thinking they should be acting according to what we think. What will happen if they don't? If we do not react under the influence of afflictions and feel compassion toward the other, then our response is an act of awakening. But if the other's action hurts our feelings, makes us depressed, or ties us up with chaotic emotions, this is

not a wholesome practice. In this case we are inviting suffering into our life through our attachment to our ideas.

The same thing can occur with our attitude toward spiritual practice. Usually our mind is preoccupied with the experiences of daily life and we identify with them. We go on retreat to make it possible for our mind to be clear and free for the practice. But the kind of identification we usually have with the experiences of our daily lives can also be directed toward the practice. Our personal idea of practice can take us to an extreme that creates a resistance to anything other than the idea and concept of practice that we perceive. This is because we tend to become attached to our experiences. For this reason, when we have an experience of a blissful state, non-separateness, or the natural state of the mind, it is important that we do not hold on to it or judge ourselves for not being in that state any more. We tend to hold on to that state and want to remain in it. Because we are unable to do so, we condemn ourselves and experience disappointment, frustration, or even hatred toward ourselves. In this way, our experience of having had a glimpse of a profound and very beautiful state of mind can lead to the creation of more suffering.

This does not mean we should forget a deep experience we may have had. But we may create suffering for ourselves if we hold on to our experience in such a way that an expectation based on desire-attachment arises. We should try to recognize the value of such glimpses for our life and practice without letting this give rise to a wish to be somewhere other than where we are at this very moment. If we are unable to do this, we may have created duality out of a non-dual state. What we should do instead is use that particular experience to support our motivation for awakening so we do not judge our own experience or make it into a means for the creation of suffering. We bring all our experi-

ences into the path of practice by appreciating them with neither attachment nor resistance. Then we can cultivate the mind and heart that allows us to simply be.

When we hold onto our motivation and expectations, we fall into extremes. For instance, we may fall into the extreme of thinking we are not good enough and become unwilling to receive anything from others. If we give, we have to receive too. We need to be forgiving and accepting with ourselves and with others. Self-compassion can help us avoid falling into the extreme of excluding ourselves from our compassion. The practice of receiving is self-compassion. Receiving does not mean we have to take something. It means we are able to live with the situation around us and make space in our hearts and minds for it. Sometimes our pride acts as a wall and does not allow us to experience the great gift of receiving. In particular, when we are in a difficult situation, we need to have compassion toward ourselves and remain strong so that our innate potential for healing can reveal itself.

Some years ago I was in a retreat where we did mountain walking. One day I was walking with a 72-year-old friend of mine along a winding creek. It was very beautiful, but to stay on the trail we had to cross the creek quite often. Once when we were crossing the creek, I asked my friend if she needed help. She stayed quiet and turned her face away from me. Unfortunately, she slipped and fell. We were both quiet and did not say anything, since it was a silent walking retreat. Later she fell down a second time. I was worried about her and so I extended my hand to help her get up. But she did not take my hand and said, “Tempa, as I was growing up I used to learn Aikido. So I know how to fall.” I was happy to hear that because after her first fall I was preoccupied by my judgment about her age. At the same time I wanted to be helpful. When she fell down for the third time, I

simply grabbed her and pulled her up. She looked at me and said, “Thank you, Tempa.”

After our hike, during the meditation session at the temple I looked deeply into the nature of the incident. What stayed alive with me was the art of receiving. This gift can destroy the wall of pride and the fear that makes us weak.

THE INTERDEPENDENT NATURE OF ALL BEINGS

In order to actualize the way of a compassionate being and to cultivate the Intimate Mind we have to realize the great gift of inter-being, the interdependent nature of everything. Every sentient being comes to this earth through the womb and care of a great mother of love and compassion. Beyond the mother who gave birth to us, we can see many other elements of our life as our mother. The sun, the five elements, and the food that we eat, all give rise to our life and we depend on them, too. Recognizing this truth is very important for every step of the practice of a compassionate being. It can help us to see that at some point all beings have been our great mother of love and compassion. Then we can recognize all beings as a loving parent. Each being has been patient and compassionate with us and has given us this precious life. In remembering the kindness of each being toward us we develop a wish to serve and help all beings without excluding anyone. If we have the strong wish to help others, even if we are unable to do so, we will at least not harm others and ourselves, and we will not produce and foster a mind of ill intention toward others or the mind of weakness in ourselves. Our wish to help others has the power to free us from our afflictive habits that lead to harming others intentionally or unintentionally.

For some of us this simple method of practice might not

mean anything. Some of us may have no idea what a compassionate mother really means. We may have been a victim of misfortune and experienced a difficult childhood, difficult parents, a difficult marriage, or difficult children. For some of us, rather than nurturing our natural capacity to love and be open, our relationships may be a threat instead. Some of us may never have received loving care and compassion from anyone and never had an experience of compassion and love. In this case, the practice of generating the compassionate heart through the recognition of all beings as the loving mother of compassion might not appear possible. For the Intimate Mind, however, anything is possible.

We all want to be free from suffering and to be happy. In order to be happy, we have to recognize the causes of our distress. When we have recognized the causes, we work to let them go. Unless we let go of them we won't experience the true nature of eternal joy. It is often a difficult practice to let go of a situation that has brought us immense pain and suffering. Yet, we make our suffering even stronger by constantly visiting our memories and letting the pain and suffering we create control our life. Holding onto a situation, experience, or memory won't help us in freeing ourselves from suffering. Rather, it can become stronger and produce afflictive emotions such as hatred, anger, and depression in us. In this condition we lose our strength of confidence and become the victim of pain and suffering. By living with the disturbing nature of our past we destroy the miracle of each moment. This places us into a disturbed state of mind, and thus suffering continues.

It is important to realize that we are no longer living in the past but in the present moment. This is one way of cultivating a thought that will eventually turn us toward the development of skillful means we can use to free ourselves from the exhausting past experiences that constantly interrupt our peace of mind.

When we have had bad experiences with someone, it becomes difficult for us to connect with him or her again. However, the practice of a compassionate being is not about connecting with that person or that situation, but about connecting with ourselves, with our true state of love and compassion. When we can connect with ourselves with love and compassion, we will be able to see and feel our state of being with clarity. Often under the influence of past disturbances we cannot truly feel and acknowledge our potential gift within. Then, healing does not happen. Connecting with ourselves means recognizing the seeds of our suffering and working toward transformation.

How do we initiate this practice? Forgiveness and acceptance rooted in compassion and love are key for developing a new connection with others and with ourselves. We can open ourselves to forgiveness by contemplating the imperfect nature of all beings. We are all imperfect. We make mistakes under certain circumstances due to our lack of knowledge and understanding. The demanding nature of life and misfortune may force us to act in ways that are not in harmony with our wishes. We can contemplate that those who were not good to us might have been going through a bad time and this has caused them to act in an abusive manner toward us. They are also suffering and have become the victim of misfortune. With this thought we generate compassion for all beings who were, and maybe still are, lacking in skill and in the wisdom of compassion. If we can do this, it is one of the best gifts we can give to ourselves. This practice will reduce the emotional stress and suffering we may experience due to others' actions. It will deepen our own understanding of how painful it can be when we hurt someone's feelings or try to destroy their way of life. This realization is the essence of the practice of a compassionate being.

LOVE AND OPENNESS

When we have unconditional love, we wish that all beings may attain happiness. Because of our conditioning, the love we feel tends to include only the specific people who are close to us, specific objects, and specific preferences. That is conditional love. The conditions are the relationships we have with others. If we become aware of this and recognize the restrictions we impose on our love due to our conditioning, we can develop a quality of mind that has the natural capacity of equanimity, of seeing all beings with the same eyes. Then our very feeling of love for someone does not become a seed for desire-attachment that is directed toward a particular person, being, or phenomenon. Rather, it becomes genuinely inclusive. In order to do this we have to be stable and strongly motivated. We have to be stable so that fear does not carry us away, and we have to be strongly motivated so that we can love ourselves and drop our fear and self-judgment. If we judge ourselves, we are not open and cannot really love others.

We tend to suppress our confidence. We think we are not good enough, or that we should not attempt something because we believe we cannot do it well enough or do not have enough knowledge. If we feel this way, we need the motivation and strength to be honest and real with respect to our situation and to external conditions. This will enable us to bring ourselves out of the constriction of self-judgment. Then we can see that we are not separate from others and drop our fear, self-judgment, and the projected judgment of others. This will allow us to feel compassion and love for ourselves.

Usually we live within this constriction of self-judgment because our perception of others and ourselves involves comparison. For instance, when we meet a wonderful practitioner and see

his or her qualities of heart and mind, this can touch and move us deeply. But our appreciation of this person's qualities of heart and mind can also become a causal seed for self-judgment. When this happens, we begin to feel guilty; we feel we are not good enough and lose contact with the Intimate Mind. This may develop an exhausting feeling of jealousy that takes us further away from our own inherent quality of equanimity and our compassionate heart. This is why we need strength, mental stability, and a wholesome motivation. These qualities enable us to feel, experience, and see the realm outside of our judgment. Having freed ourselves from judgment, we can move forward in the direction that will eliminate the dividing line that separates the two realms. We will be able to see with equanimity and openness.

The capacity for our heart to be open is essential to our ability to love and to feel compassion. Openness is the act of providing space for others and ourselves to be who we really are. When we are open, we live with the experience of each moment. Sometimes our conditioning and fear do not allow our openness to fully manifest. We close our heart because of ignorance. Yet, suffering is more likely when our heart is not open. With a closed heart we cannot reach the essence and the gifts of other beings and be of mutual benefit to each other. When we are closed, we cannot recognize and feel the openness of others. This turns the other into an object of fear and that causes us suffering. When we are not open, we experience doubt. In the presence of doubt we begin to judge everything. This leads to mistrust, wrong views, separation, and fear, which isolate us from others and from life. Living with this isolation can be suffocating.

Openness can also produce fear and suffering. If we are open but not emotionally stable, there is a tendency to get distracted by external objects or by the behavior of others. If we are open but

emotionally insecure, our openness can take us to a vulnerable place. We can be easily hurt by our own openness because we tend to get absorbed by the overwhelming suffering of situations that we encounter. Our witnessing of the pain and suffering of others stirs up our own emotional conditioning. We may carry this with us for a long time. Unable to recognize what is happening in us, we enter into a state of depression instead of giving rise to compassion and being able to make a positive difference.

Another obstacle to openness arises from having too many expectations. If our openness is carried away by our expectations, there is grasping or subtle desire-attachment. If our openness is due to expectations, these expectations will become a hindrance and prevent our openness from manifesting its true nature. Our attachment to our expectations will cause suffering rather than help us actualize the true nature of openness.

When our openness is mixed with expectations or with emotional instability, it is no longer true openness. These corrupted forms of openness are not helpful for others or ourselves in the process of the transformation of suffering. In the teachings of Yungdrung Bön, the word *Yungdrung* is a union of the two words *yung* and *drung*. *Yung* means the absolute unborn truth, and *drung* denotes the unaffected, self-arising nature of phenomena. The unification of these two qualities is the true nature of all phenomena. As for our own mind and body, when we are less affected by distraction, there is less diversion from the true nature of our mind. Our practice is to develop a quality of strength that supports us to stay unaffected. Staying unaffected can be misleading here. The Intimate Mind is beyond the duality of affected and unaffected. We do our best not to be affected by negativity and by anything that is obscured by delusion. At the same time we have the ability to stay open to the nurturing qualities that we

need to awaken. When we surpass the conditioning of duality, we embody the spirit of Yungdrung Bön. If we can cultivate a quality of openness based on stability, strength, and clarity, we are in a position to move beyond being affected by the pain and suffering of ourselves and others. The stability and strength of our openness will allow us to move on, and it will direct us toward the transformation of the suffering we see.

CULTIVATING COMPASSION

*Clearing the conditioning
that separates us
from the rest of the world
is true compassion.
It is the wish
that all beings may be free from suffering.*

The openness and compassion that are at the heart of the aspiration of the Intimate Mind include all beings—not just one or two beings, and not just the people who are close to us. With the Intimate Mind we turn toward all beings, including those we perceive as our enemies. Can we have a heart and mind that reflect the all-pervasive nature of the vast blue sky, a heart and mind that are able to reach and include every sentient being on this earth, in particular those who are obscured by afflictions and imprisoned by the resulting suffering?

From the perspective of the Intimate Mind, every sentient being is included in our path of practice. Otherwise, we will obscure the aspiration of attaining our true awakened nature. If we feel compassion for someone and want to benefit him or her, but at the same time we don't want to benefit someone else, there is a distinction and therefore duality. When there is duality, it narrows the space available for our openness, compassion, and un-

conditional love. We may wish to help our relatives, family, and friends. Our love and care for them keeps our relationship with them healthy and strong, and it can give us a lot of strength. But our life is not just about our relatives. We encounter many people besides our family and our loved ones. Due to the interdependent nature of all beings, if our compassion and loving care only extend to certain people and not to others, we are sowing a seed and creating conditioning that ultimately leads us to suffering rather than to the realization of our true nature.

When we aspire to embrace all beings in our compassion, we open the door of the miracle of each moment regardless of whether we are experiencing distress or joy. A simple, powerful practice for generating the aspiration of a compassionate being is to bring everything into the field of our awareness. We do not limit this to living beings, but include also the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space that have been nurturing our life force. The masculine lunar energy and feminine solar energy have made evolution possible. Remembering these great energy sources and their gifts of love, care, compassion, and vital life force energy helps us to gain understanding into the interdependent nature of all phenomena and to make our aspiration more all-encompassing.

Remembering the gifts of other beings and of the great sources of life to us, we can ask in what way we could make better use of the gifts we have received. We can ask what gift we could offer in return for their immense kindness. This can inspire us to give rise to the aspiration to refrain from anything that is initiated or carried out under the obscuration of ignorance, greed, envy, desire-attachment, anger, or fear.

Another practice for generating the mind and heart of a compassionate being is to bring someone who is going through a difficult time, a situation of destruction, war, or killing into our mind

and heart. We look deeply into the nature of their pain and suffering and generate the deep feeling of non-separateness, so that our heart and mind can open. Letting your heart and mind break open through touching the pain and suffering of another is an aspect of compassion. However, if we let the pain we witness affect us, we will become the victim of the situation and a victim of our own fear. We need wisdom to know if we are ready to take on another's pain. Compassion needs to be accompanied by strength and wisdom so that we are able to bear the suffering we witness and to have the understanding needed to help others.

Sometimes, a feeling of compassion can imply duality. For instance, we have compassion for the squirrel that is being chased by the dog. Based on our conditioning, our feelings of love and care for the squirrel make us feel hatred for the dog on a subconscious level. That is ignorance. We have to be able to witness what the hatred we feel for the dog does to our heart and mind. This is why, when we bring a situation of suffering into our mind and heart, it is important that we bring our awareness to the suffering of all those involved without distinction, and to the ignorance that is causing their actions. Seeing the ignorance that is affecting all beings and causing pain to themselves and others, our wish is that they may be free from ignorance.

As we open our heart to all beings, the natural unconditional love and compassion of our innate nature can emerge from the treasure box hidden within us. In the beginning we do this exercise with someone we feel close to, someone we love or feel connected to. Later when we feel more comfortable and more at ease with this practice, we extend it to all beings throughout space and time. This can be a powerful practice that we should not underestimate. Even if we do it for just two minutes every day, the miracle of continuous practice imprints the qualities of this

practice of compassion into our hearts and minds. A bird flying in and out of a cave has left a mark of its wing on the stone. Even a small drop of water, if dripping continuously, can make a hole in a rock. We, too, can make out of our practice whatever we want, if our motivation, the seed for this path, is strong.

It is important that our motivation is born from the wish to help all beings, including ourselves. Sometimes in search of others' well-being we forget ourselves. We become hard on ourselves, and we become overly sensitive. We put ourselves into a vulnerable state of both mind and emotion. We need to first make ourselves strong and stable mentally, emotionally, and physically. In order to do so, we have to accept our suffering, no matter what we are going through at that moment, with great compassion and self-care. Otherwise, the overwhelming intensity of suffering in the world might burn us. If one does not know how to swim, but jumps into the river, one will be carried away with the river's flow.