During this past week, I have been reminded in my own practice of the necessity of taking care of our bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is a Sanskrit word that means “the mind of awakening” or “the heartmind of awakening.” It is the energy, the resolve, and the motive force of the bodhisattva, one who lives with the intention of easing the suffering of all beings, including oneself—the mind of lovingkindness and compassion.

It is incompatible with a heartmind motivated by lust for power, wealth, control, and other intoxicants.

Bodhicitta is the force that brought us to and sustains us in our practice of metta. It is our constant companion–our North Star, if you will.

We must care for it. We do so when we come to weekly metta practice or recite the sutra or recite a meaningful phrase from it during our day. We take care of our bodhicitta when we take care of our own woundedness and suffering; when we release ourselves from the prisons of self-recrimination and criticism. We take care of our bodhicitta when we pause and take a breath before speaking or acting with ill will toward ourselves or others. We take care of our bodhicitta when we turn away from toxic conversations and situations. We take care of our bodhicitta when we let it be the guiding intention of our life.

We are vulnerable to neglecting this powerful force in times of chaos and uncertainty, when it is easy to turn in on ourselves in the search for security. We are living in such a time. And so today I’d like us to offer Shantideva’s Dedication Prayer. Shantideva was an 8th century Indian scholar Shantideva who literally wrote the book on bodhicitta, titled *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. It’s a guide to cultivating the mind of awakening, and to generating lovingkindness, compassion, generosity, and patience. In the introduction to the book, Shantideva wrote, “I have no thought that my words might be of benefit to others. I wrote them only to habituate my mind. My faith will thus be strengthened for a little while, that I might grow accustomed to this virtuous way.”

I find comfort and inspiration in this gentle acknowledgement that strengthening our resolve “for a little while” is all that is required of us. The path of the bodhisattva is made up of tens of thousands of these little whiles throughout our life when we remember our intention.

**Shantideva’s Dedication Prayer**

May all beings everywhere plagued by sufferings of body and mind,

Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy by virtue of my intentions.

May no living creature suffer,

Commit evil or ever fall ill.

May no one be afraid or belittled, with a mind weighed down by depression.

May the blind see forms and deaf hear sounds.

May those whose bodies are worn with toil be restored on finding repose.

May the naked find clothing.

The hungry find food.

May the thirsty find water and delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth, those weak with sorrow find joy;

May the hopeless find hope, constant happiness and prosperity.

May there be timely rains and bountiful harvests;

May all the medicines be effective and wholesome prayers bear fruit.

May all who are sick and ill

Quickly be freed from their ailments.

Whatever diseases there are in the world, may they never occur again.

May the frightened cease to be afraid

And those bound be freed;

May the powerless find power

And the people think of benefiting each other.

For as long as space remains,

For as long as sentient beings remain,

Until then may i too remain

To dispel the miseries of the world.