



Opening the Heart of the Cosmos

SEVENTEEN

Trust and Faith

In Chapter Twenty-Two, "Entrusting" the Buddha puts out his hand which is like heavenly silk and simultaneously strokes the heads of all the countless great bodhisattvas who have gathered to hear him teach the Lotus Sutra. He says to them, "For incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of asamkhyeya kalpas I practiced and cultivated the Dharma of anuttara samyak sambodhi, so hard to obtain. Now I entrust it to all of you. You must single-mindedly propagate this Dharma broadly, causing others to benefit from it." Entrusting means to commend, to leave an inheritance, to delegate to someone the responsibility of taking care of, preserving, protecting, and continuing something of great value. Here we see the Buddha conferring on all the bodhisattvas, the responsibility of preserving and teaching the wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Blossom to all living beings in the innumerable world-spheres throughout time and space.

The Buddha then gives thanks to all his emanation bodies, who have gathered from infinite numberless worlds to open the door of the jeweled stupa of Prabhutaratna. He thanks them for responding to his call and appearing in the skies above Mount Gridhrakuta, combining their spiritual strength so that the door of the stupa could be opened and the fourfold assembly on the ground below would be able to look into the ultimate dimension. This was an act of great compassion toward the assembly of shravakas, because of course the Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not need to open the stupa of Prabhutaratna in order to see the ultimate dimension. But because the Sangha wanted to see the ultimate Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, their teacher in the historical dimension, calls all his manifestation bodies back to help him open the door to the ultimate dimension.

When all these emanation bodies came together it was a very joyful time. They drank tea together, ate biscuits, and had a dharma discussion. Then the Buddha entrusts the wonderful Dharma to the great bodhisattvas and asks them to return to all their world-spheres to continue the work of leading all beings to liberation. In this way, the sutra says, they can repay the great kindness and compassion the Buddhas have shown by teaching the wonderful Lotus Dharma. This is the true meaning of entrusting. "This teaching is the highest of all teachings. I am now handing it on to you so that you may receive it and teach it widely to benefit all living beings."

We should not think that it is only the Buddha who has so many manifestation bodies. If we look deeply we will also see that we have many emanation bodies as well. In the 1960s, I wrote a book called *The Miracle of Mindfulness* to help people learn the practice of mindfulness. In writing the book I drew upon the Satipatthana Sutta. But it is a simple book, very practical and easy to understand. I wrote it in the form of a letter to the workers of the School of Youth for Social Service, a community of young people we had established in Vietnam to help rebuild communities that were destroyed by the war. The book was intended to help our students practice mindfulness as they went about the difficult and sometimes dangerous work of relieving the suffering of the Vietnamese people. I saw that the practice of mindfulness would be very useful in this kind of situation. If our students were able to maintain mindfulness, to breathe and

smile and keep a fresh outlook when bringing relief to others, their practice of mindfulness would at the same time nourish their hearts of loving-kindness and compassion so that they could continue to do such difficult work. If they worked under too much stress and difficulty all the time and were not able to maintain mindfulness, if they became angry or resentful, or began to feel sorry for themselves, they would not be able to achieve anything in their work. So I wrote *The Miracle of Mindfulness* to help these students.

At the time I wrote that small book, I could not have imagined the effect it would have in the world. It has been translated into twenty-five languages, reprinted many times, distributed in countries throughout the world, and I still receive letters from people who have experienced tremendous transformations in their lives and work from reading this simple book and learning the practice of mindfulness. This shows that we are not able to measure or anticipate the full effect over time of the work we do. Our works, our actions, our very way of being are our emanation bodies that travel through the world widely and continue to have an effect on others for a long time.

Every one of us has many emanation bodies in all parts of the world but the result of these emanation bodies is not something we can easily measure. If we, like Buddha Shakyamuni, were to realize the miracle of gathering together all our manifestation bodies in an instant in one place, we would feel such great happiness, joy of a kind that we rarely experience. So we need to remember that our studies and practice are not only for our individual benefit but also benefit our family, community, nation, and the entire Earth. Our mistakes cause others to suffer, and our success in the practice can benefit many others. This is why it is so important to practice the art of mindfulness, so that our emanation bodies offer only love and compassion and bring benefit, not harm, to others.

The Buddha shows great faith in us by entrusting the wonderful Dharma to us. We can repay this trust and faith by becoming the arms and hands of the Buddha and continuing the Tathagata's great work of leading all beings to the shore of liberation.