Loving the Earth: Awareness, Action and Celebration

Rob Burbea · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Rob Burbea · 53:01

I have a question to start with. Those of you who have been here all day have heard inspiring and visionary calls to action, information, and so forth. What would help you as we prepare to transition from here back out into the dance of the freeways, the blue waters of the bay, and this Easter evening? What themes, what concerns?

James asked me to come in toward the end, and I wasn't sure whether it was tired activists who are here taking a break—"I've tried too hard and I'm carrying the entire world like Sisyphus and I need to take a little rest"—or whether it's people who are aspiring activists actually saying, "Oh, I think it's about time to get my act together." Anyway, themes, topics, anything that you would like.

You can take inspiration—you can take all you want. This is actually the dump. You can leave stuff here, and what you can take is inspiration and spaciousness and what else?

Can you speak about how to work with the despair that comes up? Despair, how to work with despair. Other themes?

Joyful responsibility. Oh, my heavens. That joyful responsibility. Parenting. Reaching people. How to mindfully converse with people who may not quite have the same perspective as we do on some of these crises—what the Dalai Lama calls "his friends the enemy." It's very interesting. He doesn't say "my friends." He says "my friends the enemy that I talk to." Including each other. How do we talk to one another?

Slightly on similar lines to despair, but the anger thing. Anger, how to deal with anger. And all the issues around the animal world—all the many, many other sentient beings that are being affected by everything so deeply. The animal world and the other sentient beings. The grief around that and concern. Grief. Grief, despair, and grief. Anger and conflict about all this.

Grief and despair. Anger and conflict—with those around us, with corporations, with the systems we're embedded in. These are the waters we're swimming in.

Yet somehow I feel called to begin on a different note. I loved sitting here with Wes and Kevin, witnessing how they transform despair and concern into art and community. This creative alchemy feels essential to our time.

Wes recently interviewed Gary Snyder, one of our greatest living environmentalists—Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who was writing about "Earth household" back in the 1950s, long before environmental consciousness had taken root. Wes asked him: "Now you're in your mid-eighties, watching seas rise and species disappear, witnessing this global climate disruption you've long warned about. What advice do you have for us?"

Gary's response was stunning in its simplicity: "Don't feel guilty."

Three words that cut through everything. He continued: "If you're going to save it, save it because you love it. If you go out because you're angry, or bitter, or to fight—it's not going to help you, and it's not going to help the world. The world needs this transformation of consciousness, and it really has to come out of love. It's the only power that's going to make a difference."

Reflecting on Gary's wisdom, I see he's pointing toward something profound: what's going to serve the world is our tenderness and care. That's what it's asking for. That's what any child always asks for. This Earth is both our mother and our child.

This brings me to a poem by Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean poet who won the Nobel Prize in 1945. She was known for her exacting standards—a harsh critic of poetry. But one day a sixteen-year-old boy handed her a sheaf of his poems. After reading them, she looked up and said, "Pablo, you're a real poet. Keep writing." She had just encouraged Pablo Neruda.

Her poem speaks to this quality of heart we need:

A woman is singing in the valley. The shadow falling blots her out, but her song spreads far across the fields. Her heart is broken, like the jar she dropped this afternoon among the pebbles in the brook. And as she sings, the hidden wound sharpens on the thread of her song and becomes thin and hard, and her voice in modulations dampens with blood.

In the fields the other voices die with the dying day, and a moment ago the song of the last bird stopped. But her deathless heart, alive with grief, gathers all the silent voices into her own, sharp now yet very sweet.

Does she sing for a husband who looks at her silently in the dark? Or for a child whom her song caresses? Or does she sing for her own heart, more helpless than a babe at nightfall?

Night grows maternal before this song that goes to meet it. The stars with a sweetness that is human are beginning to come out. The sky full of stars becomes human and understands the sorrows of this world.

And her song, as pure as water filled with light, cleanses the plain and rinses the mean air of day in which men hate. And from the throat of the woman who keeps on singing, day rises nobly, evaporating toward the stars.

A song of tears and beauty, connected to the turning of the earth. Somehow we must find a way to carry

all the information—the rising CO2 levels, the corporate malfeasance, the climate disruption—in our hearts, in our bodies, in our being, and do it out of love.

What helps is realizing you're not alone. I don't mean this in the conventional activist sense of "we have a big movement," but in something far more mysterious and wonderful.

My friend Deena Metzger, poet and activist, writes: "Give me everything mangled and bruised and I will make a light of it to make you weep and we will have rain and we will begin again." Take the worst of things and transform them.

She has traveled the world sitting with shamans, healers, sages, and wise women, asking: What do we do in this difficult, perhaps dark time? Her dream was always to sit in council not only with humans but with the non-humans as well.

In Zimbabwe and Botswana, sitting with the traditional healers there, she shared this vision. "Oh yes," they said. When she expressed her longing to sit in council with elephants, they arranged for a truck to take them to a watering hole in the Okavango, near the elephant herds. They parked and sat in a circle in the truck bed, spending half an hour in prayer and peaceful meditation, envisioning their connection with all life—which is real, which we truly have.

Then a very large elephant—though they are all large, aren't they?—approached...

But this was a particularly large—they are all large, aren't they?—but this was a particularly big elephant, female, who walked down from the hills to the truck where they were seated in a circle, stuck her head in the circle, her eye four feet from Dina's, as she said, and stood there with them for twenty minutes without moving while they were all there. Then nodded and walked off.

"Okay, that was pretty wild, all right?" They sat there, made prayers, thanked the elephant, and so forth, turned the truck around, and were getting ready to go when they noticed that the elephant had gone up over the hill and now came back with fifteen or twenty other elephants. They all lined what was a sort of dry riverbed that had a two-track jeep road. They lined the road as if to acknowledge those who had come to listen and sit with them as they all exited.

She said, "I don't know exactly what it means, but I do know that it means that we're not alone, that we're not alone."

I was in Hawaii and met one of my heroes, a man named Nainoa Thompson. How many people have ever heard of Nainoa Thompson? Maybe one or two people in the room—okay, that's good, this is a treat then. I get to tell you.

The Pacific islands were populated by the Polynesians who, if you trace the DNA and so forth, whose genetic tree or stream takes them back to the islanders of the Philippines and Borneo and Southeast Asia. The Polynesians and the Hawaiians and so forth all knew that they had these great voyaging canoes in the

old days. There were still pictures and paintings of them.

And they navigated half the earth covered with water, which is the Pacific Ocean, so that when Captain Cook—who was arguably the finest navigator in the Royal Navy of England—went to the South Pacific, to the far islands, he met some of the master navigators there and said, "So tell me about what's here in the South Pacific." They cleared the sand and put 120 stones on it, which were the islands in 4,000 miles of direction from there. Then they took one of these navigators on the ship. Rain, doldrums, dark clouds—you couldn't see the sky at night, no way to know where you were. And whenever they asked, he'd say, "Oh, my island is there, and here's where we're headed."

So the Hawaiians in the '70s decided they would start the voyaging tradition again. They went to the far Marquesas and found a man named Mau, who was one of the last living navigators, who'd been trained in this lineage of shaman navigators. And Nainoa was one of the small group of people that went there to train.

The training was intense. When Mau was trained, he got seasick, so his grandfather tied his hands together with rope, threw him overboard of a little boat, and just towed him around for some weeks until he got used to being part of the ocean. Later on in his training, his testicles were tied to the bottom of the boat for twenty-four hours so that he could feel the waves. There are five levels of waves—the waves that bounce off the islands that are 500 or 1,000 miles away, the deep waves in the ocean—and get them in his body. Learn to read hundreds of stars, to watch the floating things from the seaweed and the birds, to look at the other levels of waves and so forth.

So Nainoa went and did this training. And then they took the first big voyaging canoe—two sixty-foot trees tied together and lashed together in a traditional way—and began to voyage the Pacific. With some difficulties, I won't go into all the stories, but when they finally got to Tahiti, half the population of the island came out to greet them as if they were gods, because they were showing what this beautiful culture had known: the capacity of sailing the ocean without a single instrument and knowing where you were always.

And Nainoa sits like a yogi, and now he's trained his successors, including this young Hawaiian woman. You don't sleep for the whole month or two of the voyage. You sit in a kind of yogic meditation and you always know where you are.

But they decided to do the hardest of all sails, which was to Easter Island—the Rapa Nui—which is the farthest, most remote island in all of the South Pacific. Through the doldrums, through rain, gray skies. And almost getting to that area, Nainoa fell asleep. He woke up and it was the middle of the night and he realized he'd fallen asleep and he didn't know where he was. And he didn't want to tell anyone that he didn't know where he was because they'd been out for six weeks sailing and paddling, and he didn't know where he was. So he just sat not knowing for a couple of days, letting them sail.

And then in the night he heard Mau, his teacher's voice, say, "When you don't know where you are"—it's like Wes's song—he said, "stop and do a very deep meditation and realize where you really are." And he said, "So I just let everything go and realized that I was in the center of the universe, that the boat was the center of the galaxy. We're always in the center. Where are you? Here. Now."

And he said, "All of a sudden I came at rest. I knew what my teacher meant. I was just where I was." He said, "And then if you are still lost," he said, "with your heart and your imagination, raise the islands out of the ocean."

He said, "I didn't quite know what he meant by that, but there I am sitting and realizing now it's dark and I'm in the middle of the universe, and what to do? Just be." Then there was a break in the clouds, the moon came out, and it showed on the horizon the peak of this island, which was Rapa Nui. He said, "It's as if when I was ready, the island appeared for me."

He said, "My teacher could do that at will. You know, we'd be out somewhere, and he'd say, 'All right, this is where we're going,' and things would just appear." He said, "I don't know how he did that, but I've come to trust that I'm part of something so huge, so much bigger than anything that I could possibly imagine with my little brain, that when we go out"—imagine going out for two months through the storms in a double-hulled canoe, basically, to cross the Pacific—"I've come to trust that I am part of something so wondrous and mysterious and enormous. And it's not me who's taking care of it. My job is to become in harmony with this and let my love, my voice, my connection, my vision come out of that."

One day, when I was walking through the Stanford University campus—this is from Vandana Shiva, who is another great activist. Her work a lot was to clean up the Ganges project. She worked with the Mahant of Varanasi of the Tulsi Temple to do this whole project to clean up the Ganges River.

I was walking through the Stanford University campus with a friend when I saw a crowd of people with cameras and video equipment on a little hillside. They were clustered around a pair of chimpanzees—a male running loose and a female on a chain about twenty-five feet long, a light chain. It turned out the male was from Marine World Africa, and the female was being studied for something at Stanford. And who I thought were the spectators were actually scientists and publicity people trying to get them to mate.

The male was eager—you know how they can be. He grunted and grabbed the female's chain and tugged. She whimpered and backed away. He pulled again. She pulled back. Watching the chimps' faces, I began to feel sympathy for the female.

Suddenly, the female chimp yanked her chain out of the male's grasp. And to my amazement, she walked through the crowd straight over to me, took my hand, and led me across the circle to the only other two women in the crowd, and joined hands with them. And now the four of us stood together in a circle. I remember the feeling of that rough palm against mine. The little chimp had recognized us and reached out across all the years of evolution to form her own women's support group.

We're part of something, and that something—which is life, which is huge and mysterious and beautiful—is asking of you to participate in life. And it's asking you all the time. You know, you may not always pick up the phone or answer your text or whatever it is.

This from Alison Luterman, a poet in Oakland. She describes the generosity of life. She said, "In the same way sun drapes a buttered scarf across your face, rose opens herself to your glance, and rain shares its divine melancholy, the whole world keeps whispering or shouting to you, nibbling your ear like a neglected lover."

Here we are on this amazing earth connected with the creatures and the animals and the atmosphere and the food chains and the corporations. We saw these white freshwater dolphins in the Irrawaddy River in March when we were traveling in Burma—the dolphins of the world swimming along with us. And Trudy, my partner, wanted to jump off the boat and swim along with the dolphins because she does that in other places. But I said, "The Irrawaddy is not the right place to do this right now." It was pretty, with lots of other boat traffic and things like that. But we're part of this web. Everybody knows it in some way.

And then the question is: well, what do we do? How do we take the spirit and the song and the vision and the science from this day and bring it—each in our own way—into action?

I would like to use the image of planting seeds. You don't make the fields, you don't make the rain, but you carry seeds in your heart. And the seeds are really the seeds of your best intentions and the seeds of your actions. As Henry David Thoreau said, "Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed. Convince me you have a seed there to plant and I am prepared to expect wonders."

And so it's not given to you to hold the world or change it. It's not your responsibility. That would be pretty egotistical—"Okay, I'm going to do it!" But it is given to you to plant beautiful and amazing seeds and to join with others and to water them and to amend the soil, each in your own way. And it's going to take a while. I'm sorry to say, the earth changes slowly.

My friend—our friend—James and Jane and others know this fellow named Ari Ratana, who is the best, most famous community organizer in Asia. He started the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka that eventually spread to half the villages or more in the country. When the Norwegians were brokering a peace treaty there, Ari called all his people together to Anuradhapura, the great ancient temple there, to talk about how to make peace. Six hundred and fifty thousand people came—and this is a country of only eighteen million people. A quite extraordinary being.

He stood up there and he said, "It took us five hundred years to get into this civil war, this mess. Four hundred years of British colonial oppression, five hundred years of conflict between the Muslims and the Buddhists and the Hindus, two hundred years of disparity between the rich, wet parts and the poor, dry parts of the island. So the Buddha teaches us that things arise according to causes and conditions. If we

wish this to change, we will have to change the causes and conditions. Therefore, I offer you the Sarvodaya five-hundred-year peace plan.

"Five years of ceasefire, ten years of rebuilding roads and schools, twenty-five years to learn each other's language and religion, fifty years of an economic plan to bring harmony between the rich and the poor parts of the island. And in one hundred years we'll have a council and we'll sit down and we'll say, 'Twenty percent—how are we doing? Are we on the right track?' And then we'll do it again for the next hundred and the next hundred. And maybe in—"

Five hundred years, and maybe he was half-kidding, but he said, "If we pursue it" – not maybe – "if we plant these seeds in five hundred years, we will have the island of peace that we dream of."

I got to tell this story to the Dalai Lama when I was doing some teaching as part of an event with him. Having the Dalai Lama sit there when you do teaching is actually a very cool thing. I told this story and he was grinning, because he's in the same predicament. He's got Tibet and it's fifty years of Chinese military oppression and the loss of temples and cultures and all those things. Talking about anger and suffering, he said, "They've taken our sacred texts. They've burned our temples. They've taken our ability to practice our religion and rituals. They've taken so much from us. Why should I let them take my happiness?" And then he laughed.

You understand that no one can take away your joy. No one can take that part of your heart from you.

So I got to tell this story to the Dalai Lama, and then share the passage from Thomas Merton, where he writes to an activist and says: "Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and achieve no results at all, if not at times perhaps bringing about its opposite. As you get used to this, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, and the truth of the work itself."

And so you set an intention in your heart, you align yourself with what the Earth asks of you – because you are of the Earth, you are the Earth – and you plant your seeds. For some it will be demonstrating, and for some it will be teaching kids in a preschool how to make a garden, raising conscious children, running a conscious business. For some it will be teaching not only English to immigrants, but really making immigrants understand that they too are part of the web of the world that's welcome. Or tending the animals and letting them know that you love them, that they're part of you, that we exist with the animal world. In fact, we are the animal world. It's kind of a delusion to think somehow that we're different from all this.

And so you have one foot in the trees and the soil of the earth and the other foot in eternity. Because the question is not the future of the earth or the future of humanity, but it is the presence of something greater, of eternity itself.

And that means somehow that in order to do this work – to not feel guilty, as Gary says, but to do it out of

love – requires that you carry first that you set an inner intention that's really beautiful, maybe something you can't possibly do, but you set it as the vision, your bodhisattva vow, you act on it, you plant your seeds.

And here's the secret. It's a summary of the Bhagavad Gita. The secret is to act well without attachment to the fruits of the actions, because it's not given to you to determine how it's going to come out. But what's given to you is to act beautifully and bravely and mercifully and to love. And if you do that, all kinds of things – and the elephants will be cheering you and the dolphins will be swimming with you and the chimpanzees will take your hand and say, "Come on baby, let's do more of this." The earth will be with you. Because the earth wants this as well, and you can begin to trust this.

I'm supposed to teach a meditation. Let me read you one little thing, then we'll do our meditation. It's one of my favorite poems from Diane Ackerman. When I think about people making a bodhisattva vow – you know, "sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all," and so forth – of course, it's very complicated because if you decide to save the sentient beings in your family, they don't necessarily want to be saved by you. Then you realize that saving sentient beings means something a little different than your ideas about how they're supposed to be.

This is Diane Ackerman's version of what I call her version of the Bodhisattva Vows, saying if you were to have prayer in the schools, here's maybe a morning prayer that kids could make: "In the name of daybreak and the eyelids of morning and the wayfaring moon and the night when it departs, I swear I will not dishonor my soul with hatred, but offer myself humbly as a guardian of nature, as a healer of misery, as a messenger of wonder and an architect of peace."

And so in the meditation, which we'll do now, one of the things I'll ask is if you were to make a little vow, make your own bodhisattva vow from today, what would it be? What would the seeds be? Sometimes it's just as simple: "I vow to be kind to every being I encounter." It can be that simple, but it might be something else and only you can know. It's sort of setting the compass of your heart.

So let your eyes close gently and come back just to feel your breath breathing. The wind that was carried to you, that dusted the peaks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, swept across the Pacific to your breath that you take in right now. Of course, it also was the breath of the person sitting next to you a few seconds ago. You don't even have to kiss them – they give you your breath. And it's the breath of the...

raccoons that are in the trees and the deer around us and the earthworms and the sparrows. Let your life breath breathe in and out and bring your attention gently to the area of your heart.

Feel that you've been given life. You've been given this amazing incarnation, this gift of being alive. Sometimes it feels small and you get identified with unworthiness and grief and fear and attachments. But it's also possible to feel the radiance of life given to you that breathes itself and moves. In this there's a deep peace and natural love.

Imagine as you sit now that this love, which is what was born into you—the tenderness and care that's

born into every newborn child—fills your body, all the cells of your body with life force and healing and care.

Then imagine somehow that you could expand so that your head poked up from the ceiling and your body got bigger and bigger, and you were bigger than this whole building. All the beings inside here, breathing and meditating, they were all inside you. You become this great vast being who holds Spirit Rock in your body. All their human experiences are breathing and thinking and feelings. Let yourself get bigger and bigger.

Imagine, because identity is so mysterious, that you can feel not just the room, but float up in the sky and be enormous. As if you float over the Bay Area, and all of California is now down there, part of this huge body. You're becoming bigger and bigger. In there is humanity, the human condition of joy and desire and loneliness and caring and violence and the love of parents for their children and failure and creativity—and all the animals, the bay and the ocean, all that is in you.

You're now this vast being and you get bigger and bigger, as if you're so big that the whole earth is there in front of you and you could hold it in your lap. You realize, no, it's part of you. You're as big as the solar system and you expand like the galaxies, huge. Even the little earth is just there, a blue-green ball deep within you, with all its dreams and hopes and hundreds of millions of years of life.

You rest in the vastness that is silent and peaceful and everything that exists is all within you. You are the ancient one. Everything that ever is or was or will be, all time, the dance of the universe is within you. It's silent and peaceful, no boundaries, beyond form.

Gently begin to collect yourself and gently the vastness starts to collect and get smaller. Slowly you feel the galaxies and the solar system and the earth floating within you with all the cities and forests and oceans. Now you look and see the earth and the beings on it and realize you are being given the gift of incarnation to be a little part of the whole and yet at the same time to have one foot in your human body and another in eternity itself, in the timeless.

You can do something beautiful with the life you've been given. You can tend this earth, you can care for all beings, not out of guilt, as Gary says, but out of love and compassion, out of care, for they're all part of you.

Before you come back to your small self, to the limited and beautiful and wonderful incarnation that you've been given in this body, as you look at this earth from this vast perspective, let yourself listen for your own bodhisattva vow or your own highest intention. What would it be that on this day you might say, this is the direction of my heart? What is the spirit and what are the energy and the vision that you want to carry from this day? How can you carry it beautifully in your own form—as a guardian of nature, a healer of misery, a messenger of wonder, an architect of peace?

As you envision now coming back to this body and incarnation, let the heart fill with compassion for all

the worries and struggles that you and others carry. Let there come an understanding in this tenderness, heart filled with tenderness, of how to navigate the joys and sorrows, the gain and loss, the praise and blame, the birth and death. This is human incarnation. This is this earth. How to carry yourself so beautifully and plant the best of seeds.

As you envision, feel what your body would be like to carry the spirit of awakening. Sense what the quality of your heart will be as you carry this spirit of awakening and care.

As you get ready to re-inhabit this human life with now wisdom and the vows of what you'll do, and a deep sense of tenderness, as you come back, you realize that in your lap, the bodhisattvas and Buddhas, the Kuan Yin, the goddess of infinite compassion, has left you a gift. You can picture or imagine that there's a gift in your lap, which is a clear symbol of just what you need to carry you into this work of loving and serving the earth most skillfully.

You open this gift from the goddess of compassion and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. It's the perfect thing that you need to keep this sense of peace and the beautiful seeds and the action you'll take. Let yourself unwrap it, picture it, imagine it, envision it any way you can. If it's not clear, hold it up in your hands to the sunlight. This is the gift, the clear symbol of just what you need as you leave the temple back to the marketplace.

Finally, coming back to sense yourself seated here now with this gift and with your heart's intention, let there be loving and compassionate awareness of this life you've been given. Think of the people that care about you the most, how they love you and want the best for you. You are a daughter or a son of this earth. You are wanted here.

And let the love in because compassion and love are never complete unless they include the one seated right here on your own cushion. Then the circle is complete and you become an expression of that love. Fill yourself with that love. Let it bless you. Let it touch all the cells of your body, every breath and heartbeat. Take your gift. Remember your vows or your sacred intention. Most of all, remember that you can dance.

Now we're going to create blessing cords together, sacred green cords that will carry your intention. As these cords get passed around, don't tie them on yet. Just hold them and pass them to others near you. You may have seen people wearing blessing or protection cords—red ones and golden ones throughout the world.

Throughout Buddhist Asia, all the way from what were the Buddhist countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan and India, and across Southeast Asia through China and Japan, the sacred thread is used as a symbol of our interbeing and interconnectedness. It's part of all kinds of rituals of blessing and care. Often they're colored red—I received this one from the Dalai Lama—or sometimes they're golden in color. The reason is that they're considered one thread from the robe of a monk or a nun that you wear in the

marketplace. It's basically remembering that this is your true nature. You're a monk or a nun in disguise out there in the marketplace. You have to remember that your true home is the temple and that your vows and the intention you set really speak from and to who you are in the deepest and most beautiful way.

These sacred threads carry ancient wisdom. If you go to India and meet a Brahmin priest, they'll wear a white thread around their body for their entire adult life to show that they're living within the understanding that takes every experience, every being, everything they touch as part of the divine, as part of what's holy.

When I first received these protection blessing cords with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche years ago, somebody asked, "What exactly does this protect you from?" And he said, "Why, yourself, of course."

To create these cords, we're going to put knots in them as a way for them to truly bless you. The first knot is the knot of refuge. Hold your cord and reflect on what is the deepest refuge you can take, the refuge that will carry you and support you. In the Buddhist tradition, sometimes it's refuge in the Buddha and in all awakened beings—the possibility of awakening, seeing the Buddha nature in every being. Refuge in Dharma, in what's true—speaking truth and acting from truth. Refuge in Sangha, the community of all those who are awakening together.

Your refuge could also be refuge in life itself, in Mother Earth, in Pachamama. The refuge could be in the community of all who are serving life. Think for a moment: what is the refuge I turn to for support when things are hard? When I want to sit in council with the elephants or the dolphins? When I know this is really where I go for my connection to all things?

Knowing what your refuge is and that it can support and carry you through anything, take refuge and tie a knot in your cord—a reminder that you are connected with this timeless, eternal refuge, always there for you.

The second knot is the knot of compassion. Traditionally in the creation of a protection cord or when entering a temple or monastery, you would take vows: to refrain from killing or causing harm to living beings; to refrain from stealing or taking that which doesn't belong to you; to refrain from being greedy and disrupting the wise relations of the world by taking what you shouldn't; to refrain from causing harm through speaking falsely or misusing speech; to refrain from causing harm through the misuse of intoxicants or sexuality.

But underlying all of those is simply the heart's vow to move through this world out of compassion for yourself and other beings and not to cause harm—to let your life be one that affirms life. This is the knot of compassion. Hold it up and reflect on your own deep intention not to cause harm and to meet all beings—those who are joyful and those who are suffering, those who are causing suffering and those who are liberating beings from suffering—to meet every being with a tender heart, especially yourself. To be the carrier of compassion.

When you're ready to take the intention or vow of non-harming, tie the second knot in your cord.

Now it's almost fully activated, but not quite. The third knot is the knot of the bodhisattva vow—that intention from when you were coming back to this body and this planet and this life, when you saw what you would take to set the compass of your heart. You each have envisioned something: an intention, a vow, a sacred direction, touched by what you've seen today, by what moved you, by what reminded you who you are, what inspired you.

Now, holding the cord for the third and final knot, tie into it your sacred intention so that you might not forget, but that you might carry it beautifully from this place and this day. And now it is fully activated.

If you want to wear it around your neck, you can put it around your neck. Don't tie it on yet and let the two ends hang down. If you want to wear it around your wrist, or your ankle for that matter if you're feeling particularly creative, whatever feels right. Wrap it around three times and let the two ends hang down.

Before you do anything else with it, I'm going to ask that you turn to a person sitting near you. Before you tie on their blessing cord, when you tie it, really give them a silent blessing. But they have to tell you what their vow was that they made. Because giving it words and saying it out loud brings it more alive on this earth and in your being, in your consciousness.

Then before they tie yours on, you get to tell them what your vow was, what your sacred intention was. And then you tie these together and we'll have a little celebration to end.

So turn to someone, find a partner, whoever's near you. This is not dating, remember. This is just sacred witness. And if there isn't a pair, it could be three people.

The story you're telling is of the third knot—your main intention from the day.

Thank you for listening.

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