



Bodhisattva Leadership

The archetype and image of the bodhisattva has been at the center of my spiritual practice for the past three decades. Given the state of our planet and the painful paucity of real leadership, I feel a pressing need to speak about "bodhisattva leadership" as a way to address the critical issues of our time: climate change, gross economic disparity, entrenched systems of racism and oppression.

Bodhisattva is an ancient Buddhist word bursting with richness and meaning. Bodhi means: awake, awakened, awakening, enlightened, or (my current favorite), simply, wise. Sattva means being, as in a human being. This refers to our human sentience ("the ability to perceive or feel.") It's the unique sensitivity and aliveness that comes with being born into a human body with its delicate sensory doors and windows, and our astonishing capacity to be aware.

So a bodhisattva is a wise, feeling being.

At the heart of being a bodhisattva is a fundamental shift in perspective from imagining that the pursuit of personal goals and pleasures will bring lasting happiness, to understanding that our happiness and freedom is intricately intertwined with all beings. It's waking up to the truth that we really are a "single garment of destiny" (as Dr. King so beautifully put it), and that the threads of this garment are stronger and more powerful than diamonds or steel.

I call this fabric love.

Central to being a bodhisattva is the radical reorientation from living by karma (our habitual, reactive impulses) to living by vow (our clear, heartfelt aspiration and intentions.) It's about switching our internal narrative from "what should I do?" to "what do I care most about?" It's about quieting the anxious, frenetic mind of perpetual planning, worrying, scheming and anticipating long enough that we can open ourselves to listen to the language of the heart.

And then following that.

In my experience working with dozens of leaders over the past decade, this is what the best of the best leaders do. They listen deeply and wholeheartedly-to themselves and to others. They are clear about what's most important. And they have the courage, commitment, and compassion to initiate what they care about, and to stick with it long enough to see it take root and bloom.

When I left the Zen monastery almost thirty years ago, I made a commitment to myself to bring the heart of the bodhisattva vision

"We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be."

~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

and vow with me back into the world. Decades later, I am still at it; trying to give voice to something I care deeply about; expressing my heartfelt aspiration and invitation to join hands and join hearts as we walk together through our wide, aching world.

With love and appreciation,
Pam

Please join me for a series of workshops, retreats and classes on bodhisattva leadership this year:

Saturday May 14, 2016

One-day retreat, "Being Bodhisattvas: Waking Up in the World," at Against the Stream in San Francisco.

[Click here for more information.](#)

June 6-9, 2016

4-day overnight workshop, "Big Mind, Kind Mind, Joyful Mind: Cultivating Bodhisattva Leadership" at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.

[Click here for more information.](#)

September 20-November 29, 2016

Six Tuesday evenings, Experienced Students Seminar, "Being Bodhisattvas" Practicing with the Paramitas" at San Francisco Insight.

[Email Renee](#) for more information.

November 5-6, 2016

Speaking at the Mindful Leadership Summit in Washington, DC.

[Click here for more information.](#)

Other Upcoming Events:

June 5, 2016

The Human Journey: a one-day workshop at Commonweal for addressing Grief & Loss, with Maura Singer Williams.

[Click here for more information.](#)

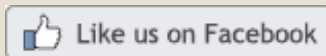
August 10-14, 2016

Insight Meditation Retreat: a four-night retreat with

Andrea Fella at the Insight Retreat Center near Santa Cruz.

[Click here for more information.](#)

*Click here to view
[Pamela's 2016 Teaching Schedule](#)*



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awakening **Wisdom** in leadership and life.