BODHISATTVA WARRIORS
by Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

Many great Buddhist masters have prophesied that centuries from now, when the forces of aggression amass on earth and no reason can turn them back, the kingdom of Shambhala will open its gates and its enlightened warriors will come forth into battle. Whoever they encounter will be given a choice--turn away from non virtue to virtue or, by direct, wrathful intervention, be liberated into a pure land beyond suffering.

A Buddhist story tells of a ferry captain whose boat was carrying 500 bodhisattvas in the guise of merchants. A robber on board planned to kill everyone and pirate the ship's cargo.

The captain, a bodhisattva himself, saw the man's murderous intention and realized this crime would result in eons of torment for the murderer. In his compassion, the captain was willing to take hellish torment upon himself by killing the man to prevent karmic suffering that would be infinity greater than the suffering of the murdered victims. The captain's compassion was impartial; his motivation was utterly selfless.

Now, as I write this, the Middle East is inflamed with war. Watching the television news, I pray that this war will prevent greater wars, greater suffering, and that those opposed to war develop the skills to bring about authentic peace. We cannot fully discern the motivation of any participants involved in the conflict, but it is unlikely that many have the ability to bring about ultimate liberation for friends and enemies alike, or that they will be able to sustain the bodhisattva's impartial compassion as they engage in conflict.

What we can know is our own minds. We can adhere to Buddhist ideals in our activities, whether we are combatants, protestors, decision-makers or concerned witnesses. We can pray that whatever virtue there is in the situation prevails, that genuine peace be established. The Buddha has taught that throughout countless lifetimes all beings have been our parents and have shown us great kindness. Now they have fallen under the sway of the mind's poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, and they suffer terribly. Could we exclude any from our compassion any more than the sun could exclude any from the warmth and radiance of its rays.

As we aspire to peace, now and in the future cycles of our existence, we cannot deny the possibility that each of us may be confronted with the need for wrathful intervention in order to prevent greater harm. May the spiritual mining we undertake now allow us to enter such situations free from the delusions of the mind's poisons. May we act with spontaneous compassion to bring ultimate liberation to all alike, both victims and aggressors.