

## 2017\_03\_05\_1\_Shamatha\_LMC.mp4

*contemplating impermanence, unbounded view without beginning or end*

[00:11:12] I don't know about you, but for me, it seems odd... that after three or four decades of practice, I have not attained enlightenment. ... This is a serious disappointment. [some chuckling] I would like to invite all of you to join me in that disappointment [laughter] as we do another day of meditation... hundreds of times in the past. ... So I think that if you're not disappointed, then you either are already enlightened or you are not paying attention.

[00:12:52] Why is it that we... think, in the first place, that we might attain enlightenment in this life? ... Perhaps one issue is that we're not *clear*... about a few simple things. ... This human body of ours is impermanent. We all know that conceptually. But we complain when it hurts. Rejoice when it feels good. And again, complain when it doesn't. Since the *essence* of what we call buddhanature... is something we are each endowed with... it cannot, in one very important respect... this body cannot... *be* the vehicle of enlightenment. The nature... of our being is the awakened mind itself. In order to not... stoop to the level of referring to this awakened nature as permanent, instead we call it unborn and undying.

[00:15:39] Unborn and undying does not seem to *fit* a description of our bodies. ... These bodies are completely impermanent. Each of us *was* born. And each of us will die. The problem here is not so much our inability to conceptually grasp these issues. The problem is more in the nature of our *experience* of ourselves as permanent. ... It is almost the case, unless we train ourselves otherwise, that we... *assume* a level of permanence. Thus, the contemplation of impermanence is not comfortable. ... Not being comfortable contemplating our mortality... we are disinclined to engage in that meditation on impermanence. Given... even the proposition that we attain enlightenment in this body... we cannot say that the enlightenment itself is *in* this body. ... So one formula, kind of a Dharmic proposition, if you will... is to abandon hope of enlightenment. Which actually shouldn't be that difficult, since we don't know what it is anyway.

[00:18:45] In essence, the point of this short teaching on impermanence... on the high probability of each of us passing away at some point... it's just that we can create a context for our own practice, our own Dharma practice, our own meditation... that does not *rely* upon... our assumption of immortality. ... And it's helpful to embrace... that this body will die... at some unpredictable point. ... Embracing that and meditating on that, contemplating that... it's possible to actually arrive at a place of joy.

[00:20:41] Add into the formula that... impermanence and change... are like rivers of experience. ... We cannot see where they begin. If indeed, they had a beginning. And we cannot see the end, if indeed, there is an end. So the most helpful view, from the perspective of Dharma practice, is to hold the view that there *is* no beginning... nor is there an end. The flow of experience... our experience, the river of experience... has no beginning and no end. Does not begin at the birth of this body, nor does it end at the death of this body. So to view your *own* experience through the eyes of... this continuum of experience... is the *best basis* for accomplishing the Dharma. And it helps us to give up the idea... that our effort at practice, our effort at study and understanding the Dharma... will lead to enlightenment in this body. ... So I know you will have many questions about this in the afternoon, after lunch. But for now, hold the view... that your experience is unbounded... without beginning or end.

[00:23:59] So what's helpful then is to begin this morning with the usual recitation of refuge and bodhicitta. Both of which, are again, very important elements in the study and practice of meditation in this tradition. We each need to discover, not just believe and not just engage without... any sense of why we're doing it, we each need to discover... our own continuum of change. Continuously changing. Our experiences continually flowing. We cannot find the beginning and we cannot find the end. So that leaves us with our *ordinary* refuge in this body. Refuge in this life. Refuge in all of our ordinary relationships and affairs. In our economic status. In the status of our personal, physical health and so on. We could make a long list. We put those things aside for this morning and instead think of the teachings of the Buddha. ...

[00:26:07] We turn our minds in that direction to rely upon those teachings, to rely upon the practice of those teachings, to hold them as the lens through which we observe our own experience. And also... just as an adjunct... for ourselves and for others, we give rise to this aspiration that through this practice... we will mature... grow up in the Dharma. And gradually have, and develop the ability, to benefit others. ... So we'll begin now with the recitation of refuge and bodhicitta together three times.

**sangha** [00:27:32] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:29:22] Now, my suggestion is take this first session of the morning and contemplate this permanence, impermanence, change. ... You cannot actually contemplate very well the essence of impermanence and change when you are focusing on impermanence as a conceptual idea. It's far more effective... if you can rest your awareness in the actual experience of impermanence... change. ... And that can occur... effectively, by resting your awareness on your breath.

[00:30:51] And resting your awareness on your breath in this case... is to rest your awareness on the experience of the movement, the coming and going of your breath. ... Not only is any particular *state* of breathing impermanent, but the breath itself is continually arising and falling... like waves on the ocean. No essence. No existence. Just the continuous flow of the river of breathing. ... So when we say, put your awareness on the breath... one way to do that is to put your awareness on the change. The coming and going. Even when you forget to breathe... the breath still happens. And yet, no two breaths alike. No moments... ever duplicated.

[00:32:33] *period of meditation*

**sangha** [00:48:11] *dedicating the merit*