

## 2017\_04\_02\_am1\_Shamatha\_LMC.mp4

*taking refuge and giving rise to bodhicitta in detail*

[00:05:33] Our first practice in the mornings is the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer... and a few comments first about that. In this world, in our lives, it is common for us to... make decisions and allow our reactive patterns to 'run us' to some extent. And by virtue of those things, we can see easily, if we look, we end up causing ourselves... difficulties and sometimes quite profound suffering for ourselves and others. So the first thing we do then is refuge. Which is not something which should be *foreign* to us, since we all go for refuge every day, every hour. If you look carefully, every minute, every second, we are going for refuge in something. Perhaps this morning, driving here, you were looking for a refuge in an empty parking space. Not finding one, you became irritated. That irritation is a sign that the refuge is what we call a 'false refuge'. You can always tell whether or not a refuge is possibly genuine or not, based upon the short and long-term outcomes of turning our minds to something other than our usual habitual patterns.

[00:08:35] So the first thing is to turn our minds from all of our usual things while we're sitting here. We have a parking place. And refuge is generally taken to be a three-part affair. In other words, we go for refuge to the Buddha. And then we go for refuge to the Dharma or the body of teachings, spoken or written or realized. And then we go for refuge to the sangha, the community of practitioners, especially those... who have attained significant, if not *great* realization.

[00:09:57] Following turning our minds away from all of our worldly things to refuge in these three jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and sangha... we then give rise to what is variously called the enlightened attitude, or bodhicitta, which literally means the mind of awakening. And the enlightened attitude is the aspiration that we, or I, if you wish to use that... I wish to attain complete awakening in order that I might free all beings from the *causes* of suffering... and place them in a state of complete realization.

[00:11:35] So this morning, I thought that we could engage ourselves more thoroughly in this bodhicitta. And in order to do that more thoroughly, we might also put aside some potential, even probable, misunderstandings. And this could be helpful. The practice of bodhicitta, the wish to benefit all sentient beings, is really the bedrock of mahayana Buddhism. It is the very basis upon which all of the practices, the teachings, the advice... it is the basis upon which all these things rest. So therefore, obviously, we should know what it is. Be familiar with it. And know how to engage... in the practice of bodhicitta or how to give rise to this enlightened attitude.

[00:13:37] One of the most common errors that we make in the practice of bodhicitta... is that we hold an assumption, often... that we are *fixing* ourselves. ... And that we are invoking... the power of our relationship with great teachers, great meditation practices and so on. That we are invoking these things, like we might invoke, or request, a physician to heal us. ... And while there is nothing really terribly mistaken about that, it is a little bit off.

[00:15:47] It is more appropriate in our tradition to start with the assumption that we are each, every one of us, humans, animals, living things in general... more appropriate to start with the assumption that *every* being is fully endowed with an awakened mind. ... And the issue isn't whether or not they have an awakened mind. The issue is whether or not they recognize it. One

might think recognition should be simple. Something so important that I already have, how could I miss it? And yet that is fundamentally the problem that we attempt to approach and work with in our meditation practice. There really isn't anything that's broken.

[00:18:31] So as we begin this morning, first of all, hold this assumption that there is not a single being... anywhere to the very limits of space itself, not a single being, no matter how good, no matter how poor their karma is... no matter what good or very negative things they have done, this inherent nature we are all endowed with. Primordially pure. And yet so difficult to recognize.

[00:19:39] So our first step holding this view of this inherent awakened nature... our first step then is to just... hold that view... while we turn our minds from all of our ordinary refuges. Most of which we would come at some point to call *false* refuges. So we turn our mind to refuge in the Buddha, which is *precisely* the same as going for a refuge to that awakened nature. We turn our minds to refuge in the Dharma, the teachings that describe the means, the methods by which we can recognize that true nature. And we turn our minds to refuge in all of the great beings that we are fortunate enough to know in this lifetime. Great beings who are currently living. And those who have lived, but are by virtue of what they left behind, a continuing inspiration. So we'll begin by reciting this Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer together three times.

**sangha** [00:21:34] reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer

[00:23:29] We are all fully aware, I'm sure, that everything we do... with our minds, quietly... with our speech, which is driven by our minds... and our bodies, also driven by our minds... we are all clear, I think we should be, that all of our activities of body, speech and mind... all together are a great force. If we give rise, regularly, to compassion and loving kindness, we are deeply affected by that. Anyone who has tried that, even for a short time, will witness in their own mindstream, a sense of joy and contentment. And if we fill our minds... with anger and hatred... we will gradually also see... that it feels *natural*... to be filled with anger and hatred. And the result of that is that we *will*... act in accordance with those feelings.

[00:25:52] So then the obvious truth is that the path that we are connected to and relating with... has to do with engaging... in certain attitudes, which will inexorably change in a positive way, our experience of ourselves. ... Loving kindness for ourselves. Compassion for our own suffering. Joy for the goodness we witness in ourselves. And joy for the goodness we witness in others. And gradually, a somewhat organic sense, a natural sense of equanimity will rise. And we will become capable of freeing ourselves from all of the suffering we experience and the causes.

[00:27:29] So as we engage in the practice... we need to pay attention. Remain mindful of what we're doing. Mindful of the changes that occur in our stream of being... in the very moments that we recite the Refuge Prayer and the Bodhicitta Prayer. Witnessing directly the experience of those attitudes and the transformation they endow us with... is very important. Merely reciting, not paying attention, not seeing what we're doing and why we're doing it... greatly reduces the benefit... the outcome that is meant to occur. ... It's helpful when we turn our minds to refuge in the three jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha... as we intend to rely upon these three jewels as we go for refuge in each one, in order.

While we are silent, it's helpful to look and see... what experience... is generated by the aspiration to turn one's mind away from all worldly things to the Dharma. [00:29:59] By the aspiration to come to realize the causes of suffering and the causes of happiness in our own mindstream. To see the changes in our own mindstream... just to witness the connection...

between the aspiration and the fruit... is a great purifier. And purification is the basis. ... The basis of accomplishing the practice. ... So having turned the mind to refuge in the three jewels, having raised the aspiration for bodhicitta, the aspiration to attain enlightenment on behalf of all others, then we come to the practice of calm abiding.

[00:31:57] When we come to the calm abiding... we need to do at least two things. One is place our mind with intention upon some object. The object can be an external object. Something in front of you, like the back of the person in front of you. An empty cushion on the floor. A stick or a stone that you put on the table in front of you. You can also, if your ability is enough, you can place your awareness upon the flow of your experiences. In order to do that, you must relax. ... In order to relax, you must be still. ... If you place your awareness on the stream of your experience... without judgment... without effort... almost like a disinterested observer... then your calm abiding will bear sweet fruit.

[00:34:48] So now we'll take a little bit and just as best as you can, rest your awareness in that way. Relaxed. Undistracted, if possible. But when distracted, then return as soon as you recognize that you're distracted.

[00:35:09] *period of meditation*  
**sangha** [00:46:54] *dedicating the merit*