

2017_07_30_am1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

1st time at Skidmore, appreciation for lineage holders, shamatha instructions

[00:02:43] So first of all, welcome to all of you. I'm used to saying, can you hear in the back? But it feels more like I should speak softly... without a big stick. [laughter] ... So on this, the last Sunday of the month, we have this morning, just our usual meditation with perhaps some brief comments regarding the meditation of calm abiding. ...

[00:04:07] First, I would like to just reiterate a few things. Following our consecration of this space with Khenpo Lodrö Donyö Rinpoche when he was here, I feel, and I think it's appropriate to mention, just the sense of gratitude for the support that we have received going all the way back into the 1990s with Bokar Rinpoche. And coming forward... past Bokar Rinpoche's passing... and then with Khenpo Lodrö Donyö Rinpoche coming as the heir of Bokar Rinpoche and providing teachings and consecrating the space. ... There is nothing more joyful than to feel a sense of genuine appreciation... from anyone who has visited something precious upon us. So that's, first of all, just to say that... if you feel joyful and appreciative, that's appropriate. [chuckling] Try to nurture it. Because it is the foundation of our path to feel appreciative to the lineage holders, the accomplished beings, those who have traversed the path more than we have, at least... to nurture a sense of appreciation for their gift... which they bestow upon us continuously.

[00:06:43] So we'll begin this morning with our usual recitation of the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer. Which in time, over the coming months and years, we will revisit the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayers... so that we can become more deeply acquainted with them for those who are not already acquainted. And of course, for those who are already acquainted, then we know more than anyone, how important it is to continuously reacquaint. ... So reciting together three times the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer. And appropriately, it's helpful... if you know the prayer, then try to keep your attention on the meaning. And if you do not yet know the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayers and what their meaning is, then you can keep your awareness on the sound of the prayer as we recite it. And that will act as a foundation for later understanding.

sangha [00:08:15] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:11:05] Perhaps appropriate this morning to... engage in the practice of calm abiding. ... And also, I feel it's appropriate to just say a couple of things about the practice... and establish a slightly larger context. In all of our practices, including the relatively... as understood, *simple* practice of calm abiding... it's helpful to hold the view and the emerging understanding ... that no matter how small or large the practice is, no matter how complicated or simple... the entire Dharma is contained in every practice. ...

[00:12:48] If you ponder that a bit this morning, you can begin to lay the foundation... for understanding how all of the practices lead to one place. ... And gradually, as we learn more and more and we see more and more, how... whether we learn and practice a simple, singular practice or engage in a variety of more complex things... all of what *needs* to be understood and realized... is contained in each of the practices... each of the meditations.

[00:14:13] So beginning with the practice of calm abiding, we... settle our minds... through the method... of placing our awareness upon... something. An object in front of you. An object you

have visualized or recall. A process within your body, such as your breathing. ... A process within your body, '*slash*' mind. Such as some experience of emotion. ... And much more. So all of these things are appropriate... as a landing place for our awareness. ... All of these things in the context of calm abiding are about... developing the skill... to rest our awareness... on some object, internal or external.

[00:16:24] Sometimes in the practice of calm abiding.... we can have a misunderstanding at the level of thinking... that even the name of the practice indicates what we *should* be experiencing. Calmness. ... It's nice to experience calmness. ... But it's also nice to have a steady awareness. ... Sometimes of *not* being calm. If you hold *that* view, then you have a little larger perspective. We are *never* without experience... in case you haven't noticed. The problem, if there is one, is not that we *experience* things, but that we engage in... in a certain sense, even go for a refuge, big mistake... in our experiences. ... Not only do we become attached to those experiences... with the pleasant ones, but with the ones which are unpleasant, then we develop a sense of aversion.

[00:18:37] So the issue here is not about calmness. The issue here is... can the mind remain still? And we remain consistently aware... of our experiences as they arise? So you can put your awareness on the cup or a piece of dust in front of you or some coin, whatever it is, and use that as the object. And at the other end of the scale, you can also... rest your awareness upon *whatever* experience arises. ...

[00:19:43] So in the beginning, it's most effective to kind of pick one of those. We do want to be in charge... rather than just to sit down and meditate. And that becomes a kind of excuse to call our usual habitual patterns as they unfold something... spiritual. When actually it's just our usual habit. So reach for something, mentally, that you can place your awareness on. ... Then with some... intention and some... force, just as much as is needed... hold your awareness there on that object for a bit. ... And then relax. And if you become distracted, then place your awareness there again. With some force, hold it... and then relax again. Continue in that way for the duration of the session.

[00:21:12] *period of meditation*

[00:31:25] Sometimes it's helpful to take a break from the meditation, which can become a bit cramped mentally... and just let go of the meditation completely. And move the body a little bit. Even to stand up if it feels appropriate and then to start fresh again.

[00:31:54] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:51:45] *dedicating the merit*