

2017_08_27_am1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

learning skill of being still in midst of turmoil

[00:03:40] So first, good morning to all of you. And welcome, especially to those who have not been here yet. [00:05:27] So beginning with the practice of refuge, I would like to just add some short instruction, in terms of what you might call an attitude or a position in relationship to refuge and bodhicitta. So this short liturgy is *very* short, and yet it contains, literally, the kernel of the entire Dharma. And that kernel is, mostly... not conceptual. In fact, it is only conceptual to the extent that we *need* the conceptual in order to recognize the 'word' refuge and bodhicitta. Really, all of our practice is about engaging in the experiences that arise during the practice. And *recognizing* those experiences. Experiences unrecognized... we are *really* good at. What's difficult is to recognize our experiences as they arise. And beyond recognition, nothing. Just the bare recognition. The rest is taken care of in the liturgy itself. So we'll begin this morning by turning our minds to a refuge and bodhicitta, which we can elaborate on later, if you wish. So we'll recite three times together.

sangha [00:07:43] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayers*

[00:09:28] Normally, in the practice of shamatha or calm abiding, as it's called in English, we are concerned with developing the skill... of allowing the mind to rest... free of distraction. A fair objection to that description might be... that when I relax, my mind becomes more distracted. So our practice then... has some additional components... and certain views or attitudes that we might embrace in order to engage in the practice more fruitfully.

[00:10:56] As we're sitting, it's helpful to first become aware of our bodies sitting on the cushion. If we are slightly nervous or jittery or concerned about something, also then we want to notice that concern. If our bodies are comfortable, we want to notice the comfortableness. If the mind is still, of course, we're almost sure to notice the stillness. Calm abiding is not about... pushing things aside in order to be still. It's about developing the deep skill... of being *still*... in the midst, sometimes, of turmoil.

[00:12:21] The trick, if you will, is to notice every experience that arises. ... And I would say, nothing more. The feeling... an experience. The thought... such as, why should I notice all my experiences... is an experience. In essence, we want to... allow ourselves to relax fully. And hang on to *no* experiences. Without pushing them away. Without engaging in all the changes we wish we could experience. We just notice them as they arise. Notice them as they dissolve and float away. ...

[00:13:46] So as we sit quietly, do your best to... engage in the practice in this way. You can start by noticing that you're breathing. ... It's not necessary to have any attachment or aversion to breathing, just noticing that you're breathing. And when the mind drifts somewhere else... notice that too. And bring the mind back to the breathing. So of the many calm abiding practices that we could talk about, study and engage in... this very simple and straightforward... practice of resting the mind on the breath as it comes and goes is the *foundation* of all the others.

[00:15:04] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:48:17] *dedicating the merit*