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the intention of bodhicitta and the meanings of taking of refuge, the importance of relaxing physically and mentally, instruction for working with breath

LMC [00:02:55] So we're going to recite the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer. Before doing that, I want to say just a little bit about... the *bodhicitta* part of the prayer. ... The word bodhicitta... which is pretty much always included with refuge, that prayer, is often translated as... *awakening* mind. ... Sometimes it's called *awakened* mind. But it doesn't quite take into account... the *intention*... that is meant to be part of... the bodhicitta. Which is the *intention* to fully awaken... in order to be a genuine *benefactor*... for sentient beings, that they might also awaken. The *awaken* here, can be simply stated as, someone who is... an *awakened* person... is someone who *recognizes* the nature of their own mind. So the aspiration... embedded in the word or phrase, bodhicitta... is someone who *is* awakening. That is, they're applying... all of the *practices* that they have... working as much as they *can* in that direction of awakening. And their *aspiration* for doing that... is that this is the way in which they will be... *capable* of being genuine benefactors for all sentient beings.

[00:05:26] Since *each* one of us... is a sentient being. Defined as someone *with* a mind, who is also confused... about the nature of things and the nature of themselves. So bodhicitta is to rise from that slumber, sometimes called... that is to say, the *confusion* that goes with sleep, usually. To wake up from that, we then are *capable* of... helping others wake up, to recognize their own natural state. So refuge and bodhicitta... are both the act of *ourselves* turning for *refuge* from all of our concerns, all the wars, in general, all the confusion. Refuge in the Buddha is to go for refuge in something which is an *antidote* to all of that confusion. And the bodhicitta aspect of it is that... the wish to awaken in *order* to benefit all sentient beings. So first, we'll start with the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer, three times together.

sangha [00:07:03] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer.*

[00:08:40] As we mentioned earlier... [refuge] can be taken in at least two different ways. One, refuge... in the historical figure, even, the Buddha Shakyamuni... as a *protector*, a guardian against all the things that cause us more confusion... driving us deeper... into our conflicted emotional states, and so on. Beyond the historical figure, then we have *all* of the teachings... that came directly *from* the Buddha and also... came down to... qualified disciples who codified much of the material. And we have *access* to those teachings, which is called the body of Dharma. ... So we go for *refuge* to those teachings. Because of their... potency and their *conceptual* understanding. So for most of us in the West... the body of all the teachings is where we *start*. Because it *is* eminently... accessible... to our intellect.

[00:10:45] In addition to the Buddha as an historical figure and the Buddha as... the body of teachings, or the Dharma, as we call it... there is also the refuge in the sangha. The sangha is... the community of practitioners. ... All of us here... might be considered sangha. Our *job*... in addition to the practice of the Dharma... as members of the sangha, the ordinary sangha, that is to say, we're not *Exalted* Sangha, just ordinary sangha. In *addition* to that... we also maintain, have a *responsibility* to maintain... the sangha *itself*. Which is to say... learn how to... resolve conflict... with your Dharma brothers and sisters. ... Learn how to share ideas, opinions, experiences... without falling into... damaging disputes. That is the job of the ordinary sangha. Learn how to speak... and act kindly. Remembering the boy in the monastery and the... highly

esteemed monk who said, "But *look* at this young boy. How beautiful his Buddha nature is." In other words, as a sangha, we are *charged*... with gathering all the things together that we can... that will make it *possible* for a harmonious, honest relationship... with the entire community and beyond. So in that way, when we talk about refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha... these are the *things* that are being pointed at.

[00:14:26] This morning, we talked about the *importance* of... relaxing. Relaxing is not *only* a physical phenomena. It is also, generally speaking, a *mental* state. ... Whenever we sit down and begin to meditate, it's important to... get comfortable. If we are sitting in one of the *prescribed* positions, if we are capable of doing *that* for any duration... then we do our *best* to get comfortable in *that* situation. If we find it not *possible* to sit in the kind of constrained... positions... then it's okay. We just need to relax in *that* position. ... *Relax*... makes the big difference... between successful practice... and just exhausting work.

[00:16:21] So in the system of shamatha, we begin by... that relaxing. And when the... *relaxing* feels somewhat stabilized... we then move, carefully... by virtue of each of our individual... judgments about our own capabilities and what works for us... we begin to follow... that breath. ... Breathing primarily through the nose... and usually, the prescription is to breathe into the belly. Which, of course, does *not* mean... that we are *actually* breathing into our belly as if it was a *substitute* for our lungs. We don't have to be... *completely* blind about what is happening. But when we breathe, the idea is to breathe kind of deeply and *imagine*... that our belly expands, in which case it probably will. And in that expanded belly, kind of like a balloon, it is filled with our breath.

[00:18:27] And once we have the rhythm of breathing like that into the belly... and exhaling from that position... we don't need to pay attention to the rhythm. ... If you count the breaths, that's fine. Can be helpful. Keep you reminded. But if you wish to *not* count the breaths... that's okay too. ... Just sitting quietly watching... our own breath... like the wind in the trees... we alternate filling and emptying. And the idea here, more importantly, is that we keep our mind... on where we are... and what we're doing.

[00:19:51] Later.... if you're a practicing at home... you keep your mind on where you are and what you're doing. So you're at home. And you're a practicing... shamatha. If you're at home watching television... then it's important to recognize... that you're at home watching television. So in your own mind... maybe under your own breath... acknowledge... all aspects of the situation honestly and clearly.

[00:20:51] After you have... taken... a few breaths in the way that we just prescribed... then you can let go of that... more *strict* method... and just breathe more naturally. ... For the duration of the session... following the breath, coming in and going out.

[00:21:27] *period of meditation*
sangha [00:28:53] *dedicating the merit*
sangha [00:31:11] *reciting Aspiration of Mahamudra.*