

2018_05_06_2_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

imagine that all sentient beings are present when we go for refuge, our own benefit relies upon accomplishing the benefit of others

[00:03:00] Each session when we... begin the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer... we begin by imagining... that in front of us, whatever direction you are facing, whatever is in front of you... are all sentient beings. So we imagine that... since time without beginning... we imagine that all sentient beings... are drawn... to our aspirations to benefit them... by virtue of our aspirations to benefit them. So, when we say, until the summit of enlightenment is reached... we really mean that... until I attain... complete enlightenment... until I become... a beacon of kindness and skillful means for all sentient beings... I will continue... without pause... without discouragement... to work for their benefit.

[00:05:14] So we imagine that in order that that would be accomplished, we hold the view... that all sentient beings gather as we begin the practice. And their numbers... are endless. Their numbers extend to the very limits of space itself. ... So then, this is a big piece of the practice, actually. When we just rest our awareness upon our own experience... there is a benefit to be gained by virtue of doing that. And that benefit, mostly accrues to the practitioner. So as we do that, we gain some clarity about our own minds and our own experiences. And by extension, even *that* will bring benefit to others.

[00:06:43] But our *intention*, in this tradition is, of course, much larger. And the larger we make it, the more inclusive that we make it... the greater the benefit to the practitioner, also. In fact, I think it's safe to say, you cannot actually *accomplish* your own benefit... exclusively... without holding the aspiration to benefit others. So in this way, we need to come to understand that our own benefit actually *relies* upon accomplishing the benefit of others. It is not just a side benefit. It actually is the fundamental cause.

[00:07:37] So again, we say, "Until the summit of enlightenment is reached, I and all beings go for refuge to the sources of true refuge." And as we say that we imagine in front of us are uncountable sentient beings. ... Anxious. ... Drawn to the aspiration to be benefited. ... And then we say, "I will now practice the absorption... of calm abiding... in order to release all beings from their *particular* suffering and establish them in lasting peace and happiness." A key... phrase here is 'their particular suffering'. We're not making a judgment about... what suffering is worthy of being free of? Or for that matter, even any judgment about what their particular suffering is. Whatever it is, our intention... is that through our meditation... through our *activities* in the world... their particular suffering and all the other sufferings *will be relieved*. ... And they will. Our intention until this happens is strong. They'll be released from their particular suffering and establish them in lasting peace and happiness.

[00:09:28] So in one sense... this looks like a very laudable and worthwhile goal. Which is also at the same time utterly unaccomplishable. It *is* unaccomplishable because we hold a rather small view... of what that accomplishment looks like or what might be the *seed* of accomplishing it. ... But at least we can understand... that the larger the view we hold to bring benefit to others... we can *experience* from holding that view... a greater sense of equanimity, kindness, compassion and loving kindness and *joy* in relationship to others, which we also then benefit from. So in the practice of Shamatha, not only are we trying to settle our minds... trying to recognize... with some sense of clarity exactly what is going on with our minds and our bodies...

we're also reaching out... beyond the boundaries of our own... *small* sense of self... that we might actually... accomplish something profound. ... So we will begin by reciting the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer together three times. And while we're doing that... bring your mind back as often as possible to the *meaning*... of what it is that we're doing.

sangha [00:11:32] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:13:11] Now, again, as before... especially bring your... own awareness... of your continuously unfolding experiences... to mind. Rest your awareness on those experiences. ... Free of concept. Free of expectation. Free of any sense of self-aggrandizement. These are the *means* by which to accomplish your own benefit and the benefit of all others. Therefore, when distracted, carried away by worldly things like that lunch that you forgot about... bring your awareness back to the point. And rest your awareness on the experience... of your aspiration to benefit all beings. Continuously, when distracted... bring the mind back. Without judgment. Without disappointment. ... Just continuously... bring your mind to the same... fruitful endeavor... and rest your awareness in that space.

[00:15:21] *period of meditation*

[00:32:05] During the meditation... it can be helpful, from time to time to stretch a little. Stand up. Move around. Your body is a support for your meditation... and without any effort at all... it's not likely that it will be... positive support. So, you can move at any time that you want, but occasionally we just take a few moments and encourage ourselves to do... *anything* to loosen up and get the energy flowing through our bodies again. So this would be a good time.

[00:33:04] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:48:07] *dedicating the merit*