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the experience rather than concept of the bodhicitta aspiration, placing our awareness on experience and resting with it

[00:07:24] So, good morning. Especially on this beautiful day. ... As we begin our meditation... it's helpful to remember the... most important underpinnings... of our approach to meditation... both for our own benefit and for the benefit of others. So, in the mahayana tradition of Buddhism, which is... the underpinnings of all of our practices... we always give rise to the aspiration that... everything we do... every breath we take, every... word that we utter... every thought that we have... we think of those... elements as the basis by which we hold the benefit of others as primary. First and foremost.

[00:09:40] Since the... point of that is to... generate and embody an experience... we have a number of methods... by which we can... help ourselves to hold the benefit of others... above our own benefit. When it comes to the practice of shamatha... one of the primary supports... for keeping our minds... at least loosely focused on the benefit of others... we imagine that in this world, there are unlimited sentient beings... unlimited in number. ... And we imagine these beings in front of us. Thinking that there is not a single one... who has *not* been our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters and so on.

[00:11:33] The *point* is then to... give rise in our stream of consciousness... a strong wish to benefit these individuals. And by extension, of course, the wish to benefit all sentient beings. Which ties it back together. That all sentient beings... are not merely a conceptual idea... but actually... an experience. And the experience that we encapsulate this teaching in is the experience of holding the benefit of others... above our own benefit at all times.

[00:12:48] So, when we begin, then we can think of... all sentient beings... uncountable in numbers. So, we're not talking just about *human* beings, but... all living things. ... We imagine that they are innumerable... in number. Uncountable. And as we imagined this in front of us, these sentient beings, who are... in essence, drawn to our *intention* to benefit them. And we are... continuously making the wish... that our meditation this morning and at all times... brings benefit... to all sentient beings.

[00:14:12] So, the idea of the visualization of all sentient beings is really a support for our meditation... to enrich it so that we don't fall into the trap of... *merely* looking after our own benefit... with just the thin hope that others might also benefit. So, we turn that around. The more we can imagine that the *totality* of the benefit... is for all beings... without any regard whatsoever for our own. ... So, we'll begin this morning then by reciting the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayers together three times.

sangha [00:15:29] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:17:42] As we complete that short liturgy... holding our minds on the meaning... of what we said... the point here is to settle. Settle ourselves both physically and mentally. And in the process of doing that, we have an experience. ... As in most of... our meditation practices... including the most complex... and the simplest, there is always the... element of... placing our awareness upon that experience... and resting with it. ... So, even just reciting this short liturgy, some experience will arise. It could be a feeling of... kindness. Some joy in the practice. It could

even be an unpleasant experience. ... Whatever the experience, we place our awareness upon it... and without any commentary whatsoever... we rest our awareness there... as stable as possible. And as we are distracted, we come back to this same point... over and over during the session.

[00:20:57] So, to the best of your ability, continue with that mode. Returning your awareness to the experience. Not just the concept of your understanding, but the actual experience. And when distracted, at the point where you recognize the distraction, you once again... bring your awareness to the experience of that moment. The experience, perhaps, of being distracted. ... We bring our minds back to that. Placing them there again on the experience, without judgment, without attachment, without aversion... without hope, without fear. ... So, continue as best you can in that way for the duration.

sangha [00:49:52] *dedicating the merit*