

2019_05_26_am1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

ways to transcend conceptual understanding of bodhicitta aspiration into direct experience

[00:04:04] So, it's nice to see all of you. And thank you for coming. For those of you not familiar with the schedule we have, first we'll have a session of quiet shamatha with very brief introduction. And the recitation together... of The Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer.

[00:05:00] Often, when we recite the... recitation... of refuge and bodhicitta... because we do it so regularly, it can be... a rather dry exercise. And maybe we make some effort to... embody or be present with our understanding. But still, it can... be dry. It's not meant to be dry. It's meant to be, as some of our texts say, warm and moist. Like a living thing, not a dead thing. So, one might ask, how do I relate... to that recitation in a way which... feels alive? Not just a prerequisite that we are... encouraged, or bound, to do.

[00:06:44] In fact, it's easy to relate to the refuge prayer... in a way which is warm and moist. It just requires a few moments of reminding ourselves, placing our minds, our awareness in a certain state, which is actually easy... to do if we remember to do it. ... First of all... we are here... not to accomplish our own benefit, not to accomplish our own happiness... but to accomplish the benefit of all sentient beings. And it's fairly easy to understand what that means. But really quite difficult to transcend the conceptual understanding of it.

[00:07:59] So, we make an effort... to transform our conceptual understanding into a direct experience. Which can begin by first... thinking of... someone, anyone who you know... who in your experience... you think they may need some help. Perhaps they are terminally ill. Or they're having difficulties... in their life, their mundane life. ... And so, when you recite... the short liturgy, you bring them to mind and imagine that they are sitting in front of you. ... And because you're so close and because you know them and because you care about them deeply... you recite the text with the attitude... that at this moment, in this time... I engage in this practice in order to benefit this or that person or these people.

[00:09:48] And since we recite the liturgy three times, having set it up in this way so that you can... have the *experience* of intending to benefit another person... the *second* time you think of a larger group. You think of... all the beings who you might have connection with in this life. You think of... yourself as being a benefactor for them by virtue of your clear, unimpeded intention to bring benefit to them.

[00:10:38] And on the third round, when we come to it... you can imagine that... arrayed in front of you are *all* sentient beings. Not just human beings. But animals and insects and beings that you cannot see, beings that live in your body even. And at that time than we imagine *all* of these beings. And we make the grand wish... that in this moment, I care only about their benefit. That not a single being should ever need to suffer. And that our wish is that... whatever it costs us individually... we just give rise to the hope... that our presence and our intention... blossoms in their hearts and minds.

[00:12:02] You can imagine them as individuals that you know... sitting in front of you... in multiple tiers, extending out in front of you, we often say, to the very limits of space itself. And as you recite the refuge prayer, you imagine... that your wish is bearing fruit during that time. That

just... the medicine... of being surrounded by those who wish for their benefit... carries the day. And they feel a sense of gratitude. And a sense of joy and happiness.

[00:12:59] So, try that during the recitation. And pay attention during that time, not to your *conceptual* understanding, but to the actual experience that you are having while you are engaging in the recitation. So, we'll recite now the liturgy three times together.

sangha [00:13:29] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:15:56] Following the recitation... we can let go of the visualization of all beings in front of us. ... And rest our minds. Letting go of our concerns for the day. Or the week. Or the year, whatever... is on our minds to just let go of it. Again, the important thing is the experience that we have... in the context of these practices. The conceptual understanding is only really a trigger... to begin the meditation. A trigger to end the meditation. Conceptual understanding is weak in comparison to the experience itself. And of course, each of us will have a different experience. That's not so important.

[00:17:35] But as the moments go by, and the minutes... and we rest our awareness in this way along with our body... various thoughts and feelings will arise. And it's helpful to notice them... without... any particular attachment... to the content of the thought. Without any aversion... to the experience... that we might have. And instead, just continuously... as the mind drifts, which is pretty much guaranteed, we bring the awareness back to whatever experience... we're resting our awareness upon. Repeat that each time, as we discover we're distracted. Bring the awareness back. Settle it. Rest it. And continue.

[00:19:02] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:46:37] *dedicating the merit*