

Course on Meditation (Stopping & Deep Looking) November 21, 2010 - February 20, 2011

Verse 14:

Supported by the Sangha Body my practice flows easier, allowing me to swiftly realize my great determination to love and understand all beings.

Alternate Translation:

With the support of the Sangha one can practice successfully with ease and accomplish quickly the Great Aspiration to help all beings.

Reflection Ouestion:

What do I rely on and take refuge in? Who is my Sangha? What supports me in the practice of awareness? What is my deep aspiration in life?

Practices:

Attend a local Sangha or start one!

Readings

The Three Refuges
The Four Recollections
Discourse on Taking Refuge in Oneself



Taking Refuge in Myself

Be an island onto myself, as an island onto myself. Buddha is my mindfulness, shining near shining far. Dharma is my breathing, guarding body and mind. I am free.

Be an island onto myself, as an island onto myself. Sangha is my Five Skandhas, working in harmony. Taking refuge in myself, coming back to myself, I am free, I am free.

The Three Refuges

I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows me the way in this life. I take refuge in the Dharma,

the way of understanding and of love.

I take refuge in the Sangha,

the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

[bell]

Dwelling in the refuge of Buddha,

I clearly see the path of light and beauty in the world.

Dwelling in the refuge of Dharma,

I learn to open many doors on the path of transformation.

Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha,

shining light that supports me, keeping my practice free of obstruction. [bell]

Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself,

I aspire to help all people recognize their own awakened nature, realizing the Mind of Love.

Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself,

I aspire to help all people fully master the ways of practice and walk together on the path of liberation.

Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself,

I aspire to help all people build Fourfold Communities,

to embrace all beings and support their transformation. [bell, bell]

The Four Recollections

The Blessed One is worthy and fully self-awakened.

I bow before the Buddha.

The teaching is well expounded by the Blessed One.

I pay homage to the Dharma.

The community of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced well. I pay respect to the Sangha.

The Noble Teacher in whom I take refuge

is the One who embodies and reveals the Ultimate Reality,

is the One who is worthy of all respect and offerings,

is the One who is endowed with perfected wisdom,

is the One who is endowed with right understanding and compassionate action,

is the One who happily crossed to the shore of freedom,

is the One who looked deeply to know the world well,

is the highest charioteer training humankind,

teaching gods and humans,

the Awakened One, the World-Honored One.

[bell]

The Teaching given by my Noble Teacher

is the path I undertake, the Teaching well-proclaimed,

is the Teaching that can be realized right here and right now,

is the Teaching that is immediately useful and effective,

is the Teaching inviting all to come and see directly,

is the Teaching that is leading to the good, the true, the beautiful, extinguishing the fire of afflictions;

it is a teaching for all sensible people to realize for themselves. [bell]

Practicing the Teachings, the Noble Community in which I take refuge is the Community that goes in the direction of goodness

in the direction of truth,

in the direction of beauty,

in the direction of righteousness;

is the Community that is composed of four pairs and eight kinds of holy people;

is the Community that is worthy of offerings, worthy of great respect, worthy of admiration, worthy of salutation;

is the Community standing upon the highest fields of merit in all of the world.

[bell]

The Mindfulness Trainings, the wholesome way of living taught by my Noble Teacher.

is the wonderful practice that remains unbroken,

that remains harmonious, that remains flawless, that remains refined; is the wonderful practice that has the capacity to prevent wrongdoing and to prevent danger;

is the wonderful practice that has the capacity to protect self and others and to reveal beauty;

is the wonderful practice that is leading to concentration, leading to peacefulness, leading to insight, leading to non-fear;

is the wonderful practice that shows us the way to total emancipation and long-lasting happiness.

[bell]

Discourse on Taking Refuge in Oneself

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was staying in the Mango Grove in the cool shade of the mango trees along the bank of a river in the land of Magadha. The elders Shariputra and Maudgalyayana had recently passed away. It was the full-moon day of the Uposatha Ceremony and the precepts were recited.

The Buddha spread out his sitting mat and sat facing the community. After looking out at those gathered, he said, "As I look at our community, I see a large space left by the Venerables Shariputra and Maudgalyayana. In our Sangha, these venerables were the monks who were the most eloquent in giving Dharma talks, encouraging and instructing all the other monks, nuns, and laypeople.

"O monks, people seek two kinds of riches — material riches and the riches of the Dharma. In their search for material riches, they can go to worldly people. In their search for the riches of the Dharma, they could always go to the Venerables Shariputra and Maudgalyayana. The Tathagata is someone who is not searching for anything, whether it is material or the Dharma.

"O monks, do not be sad or anxious because Shariputra and Maudgalyayana have passed into nirvana. On large trees, filled with leaves, sumptuous fruits, and flowers, the largest branches always die or are broken first. On jeweled mountains, don't the highest peaks always erode before the smaller ones? In the Sangha of the Tathagata, the Venerables Shariputra and Maudgalyayana were the greatest students. So it is natural that these venerables would enter nirvana first. Do not give rise to feelings of sorrow or anguish.

"All phenomena that are born, exist, and are subject to the influence of other phenomena, in other words, all phenomena that are composite, must abide by the law of impermanence and eventually cease to exist. They cannot exist eternally, without someday being destroyed. Everything we cherish and hold dear today, we will have to let go of and be separated from in the future. In not too long a time, I will also pass away. Therefore, I urge you to practice being an island unto yourself, knowing how to take refuge in yourself, and not taking refuge in anyone or anything else.

"Practice taking refuge in the island of the Dharma. Know how to take refuge in the Dharma, and do not take refuge in any other island or person. Meditate on the body in the body, nourishing Right Understanding and mindfulness to master and transform your cravings and anxieties. Observe the elements outside the body in the elements outside the body, nourishing Right Understanding and mindfulness to master and transform your cravings and anxieties. That is the way to take refuge in the island of self, to return to yourself in order to take refuge in the Dharma, and not to take refuge in any other island or thing."

When the bhikshus heard the Buddha offer this teaching, they were all very happy to put it into practice.

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