

Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha

Preparation: Start with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the breath (the sensation of the breath flowing in and out at the opening of the nostrils). Let all thoughts go, like clouds in the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath.

Motivation: When the mind is calm and quiet and you feel relaxed and focused, create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual intellectual or emotional benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to reach a state where you can benefit all beings.

Body of the meditation: As you generate the bodhicitta motivation, imagine that seated around you are your friends and family, and seated around them are all sentient beings, who, just like you, wish for happiness and wish to avoid any kind of suffering. Bring to mind that, just like you, all these beings suffer in different ways. Feel that you are doing the meditation for yourself and also on behalf of all these beings.

Visualize (imagine) in front of you, at the level of your forehead, about 6 - 8 feet in front of you, Buddha Shakyamuni. He is made of light, very bright and clear, transparent.

Begin with visualizing a large golden throne, made of light. On the throne is a white lotus, then a cushion of sunlight and a cushion of moonlight. These represent the three principles of the path - the lotus represents renunciation, the sun cushion represents the wisdom realizing emptiness, and the moon cushion represents bodhicitta.

Seated upon the throne, facing you, is Shakyamuni Buddha. His holy body is the colour of fine gold, made of light. He is wearing the saffron robes of a monk, and is sitting in the vajra, or full lotus position. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, with his fingers touching the moon cushion, signifying his great control over all delusions. His left hand is in his lap in the posture of meditative concentration, and holds an alms bowl filled with nectar, which represents the medicine which can cure our delusions.

Buddha Shakyamuni's face is very beautiful, and very peaceful. He smiles at you with eyes filled with love and compassion. He has blue-black hair, and an ushnisha (a crown protrusion). Feel very strongly that you are in the presence of an enlightened being, who understands and accepts you just as you are, and who strongly wishes to help you to reach his state of enlightenment.

Visualize that rays of light are emanating from each pore of Buddha's holy body, reaching every corner of the universe. The rays are actually composed of countless miniature buddhas, some going out to help living beings, some dissolving back into his body having completed their work.

Develop an attitude of taking refuge in the Buddha's enlightened qualities, recognizing that by applying the medicine of the Buddha's teachings we can become enlightened ourselves. Make a request from your heart to the Buddha for his blessings that you can

become free from all negative energy and misconceptions and develop all the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Feel that your request has been granted, and a stream of purifying white light flows from Buddha's heart and enters your body through the crown of your head. Feel that all your negativities have been dispelled, and that you are filled with blissful white light.

Recite Shakyamuni Buddha's mantra:

TADYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SVAHA

(commonly pronounced: TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SOHA)

Then make a strong request to the Buddha for his blessings that you can develop all his enlightened qualities for the benefit of all sentient beings (which includes yourself). Feel that your request has been granted, and visualize that a stream of golden light flows from the Buddha's heart, entering your crown chakra and bringing all the qualities of enlightened body, speech and mind in the form of this golden light. Imagine that your body is completely filled with this golden light, and that you feel great bliss.

Recite the Buddha's mantra.

Next, visualize that Buddha Shakyamuni comes to the crown of your head, facing the same direction as you. Then focus on all beings visualized sitting around you, and generate love and compassion for them. As you generate this love and compassion, recite the Buddha's mantra and imagine that rays of light, in the nature of wisdom and compassion, radiate out from the Buddha's heart to all beings, bringing them all the qualities of enlightened body, speech and mind. Feel very strongly that all their negativities are purified, and that they themselves become perfectly enlightened, experiencing great bliss and wisdom.

Then visualize that the Buddha melts into pure golden light, which absorbs into you. Imagine your ordinary concept of yourself dissolves, and you become union oneness with the enlightened body, speech and mind, one with the Buddha's blissful, omniscient mind in the aspect of vast empty space. Rest in that blissful space for as long as you can before distractions arise.

Finally, rejoice in having done this meditation and created the cause to be able to enlighten yourself and others.

Dedication: Now dedicate any benefit you have gained from doing this meditation towards attaining a perfect state of mind where you can benefit countless beings.

Meditation on Refuge

Introduction

This is a brief meditation on refuge. Before we start the meditation, I want to review very briefly what refuge means from a Buddhist perspective. Refuge is like going for ultimate help. Sometimes I think of it as though I am a boat caught on very stormy, scary sea. Then I see a harbor that looks very safe and calm. I immediately want to head confidently and quickly to that safe haven for protection. *(Pause)*

Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) "Buddha" refers to Buddha Shakyamuni, the one who taught us the path to end all suffering, the path to enlightenment. "Dharma" is that path and the realizations of that path within our minds. "Sangha" are other realized holy beings who can help us progress along the path.

This meditation is meant to give us a taste of what refuge means and feels like. You will not be asked to actually take refuge.

The analogy we will use is of being a sick person with a very serious disease. We go for refuge to a skillful healer, to an effective remedy, and to the skilled assistants who can help us take the remedy. Our reliance on these is our refuge.

Preparation

Let's start the meditation by adjusting our posture. Our back is straight with our head sitting upright and relaxed on our shoulders. Our shoulders are back, down, relaxed. In particular focus attention on the muscles in the face, around the eyes and jaw. If you notice any tension, just allow it to be released. *(Pause)*

Now bring your attention to the sensation of breathing. Notice the sensation at the openings of the nostrils as the breath goes out (warmth) and in (slight coolness). Simply place your awareness here. You can count your breath if that is helpful. Out and then in is one breath. *(Note 21 breaths)*

Motivation

Bring to mind a particular mental problem or difficulty you are having. It might be depression, sadness, grief, anxiety. Or it might be agitation - strongly wanting something or someone you don't have. Try to be specific and real as you think of this and the suffering it brings. *(Pause)*

Now, imagine yourself surrounded in this room by all other living beings who suffer in similar ways - beings of this world and others. Imagine them really here. See if you can develop the intention to work on your mind in order to benefit both yourself and all these others who are suffering as you do. Allow your heart to really open. *(Pause)*

Body of the meditation *(Pause after each sentence to contemplate each point.)*

Now come back to the specific emotional problem or difficulty you were working with. Imagine it as a physical disease or great source of pain.

What would be the best way to treat this? What do you need?

Probably you need a skilled healer to diagnose the cause and prescribe a remedy.

Imagine that you found such a healer, were able to check out this person and in that way developed complete confidence in him or her. How would you feel if you did find such a healer?

If the healer told you that the food you have been eating your whole life is in fact poison and then showed you different food to eat and a remedy that would definitely heal you, what would you do? Would you want to continue eating your food or take the healer's remedy?

And if you found healing assistants who understood how and when to take the remedy and offered to help you do that, would you want their help?

What if you investigated and found that this combination of healer, remedy, and healing assistants could help not only you but all the others with similar diseases?

Where would you put your trust? How relieved would you be?

The Healer is the Buddha.

The Remedy is the Dharma.

The Healing Assistants are the Sangha.

Our reliance on them to cure the disease of suffering is Refuge.

Allow yourself to experience what this confidence, this reliance might feel like.

Dedication:

We dedicate any positive potential born in our minds through this practice to our ability to develop true Refuge, to our commitment to taking the remedy as directed in order to help all other living beings, those perceived and unperceived, to be cured of their sufferings as well and to abide in everlasting happiness. We dedicate this effort to the lasting presence of the Healer, the Remedy and the Healing Assistants in this world. May they live long and happy lives. May their wishes be fulfilled and may we always be in their presence.

Meditation on Refuge in the Three Jewels

Introduction

Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) “Buddha” refers to Buddha Shakyamuni, the one who taught us the path to end all suffering, the path to enlightenment. “Dharma” is that path and the realizations of that path within our minds. “Sangha” are other realized holy beings who can help us progress along the path.

Preparation: Start by taking just a minute or two to focus on your physical body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid. Become present in the moment and place where you are.

Continue with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the sensation of the breath flowing in and out at the opening of the nostrils. Let all thoughts go, like clouds in the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath until your mind is peaceful and clear.

Motivation: Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. So think that you are meditating not just for your own well-being or peace of mind or good reputation, but you are taking the time now to meditate and accumulate vast stores of merit to be able to reach the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings.

Body of the meditation: *(Pause after each paragraph to contemplate each point.)*

Start by contemplating the fears and dangers of samsara. Think about the great good fortune of having obtained a perfect human rebirth in this lifetime.

Then think that this incredible opportunity can come to an end at any time, and when death comes, there is no guarantee that we will be reborn in comparable fortunate circumstances in our next rebirth. Given the powerful negative karmic seeds on our mindstreams, there is a good chance to take rebirth in one of the three lower realms. Spend some time thinking extensively about the sufferings of the three lower realms.

Generate a strong sense of fear of the sufferings of the lower realms. (This is the first and most basic cause of taking refuge according to the lower scope.)

Contemplate the fears and dangers of all of samsara – not only the three lower realms, but the three higher realms of rebirth as well. Contemplate the sufferings of continually cycling among the six realms, without control.

Generate a strong sense of renunciation and fear of remaining in any part of the whole of samsara. (This is the first cause of taking refuge according to the middle scope.)

Contemplate the fears and dangers of all of samsara for all living beings. Contemplate that all beings have been our mothers infinite times and have been inconceivably and immeasurably kind to us in our previous lifetimes. Think that these mother sentient

beings are caught in the web of samsara, drowning in suffering, and that for the most part they are continuously creating causes for more suffering rather than causes to be free of samsara.

Generate strong compassion for their plight and strong loving kindness for them, wishing them to be completely free from suffering and wishing that they have everlasting happiness.

Cultivate the strong determination to gain enlightenment as quickly as possible in order to free them from their suffering and guide them to the everlasting happiness of buddhahood. (This is the first cause of taking refuge according to the great scope.)

Now contemplate why the Three Jewels are fitting objects of ultimate refuge, able to liberate us completely and permanently from all our sufferings, rather than acting as Band-aids or temporary fixes for our problems and difficulties. To ascertain this, we contemplate four primary characteristics of the Buddha-Jewel that testify to the fact that the Three Jewels are suitable objects of ultimate refuge:

- ❖ Buddha is free from all fears.
- ❖ Buddha has skillful means to free others from all fears.
- ❖ Buddha has great compassion for all living beings, without exception, whether or not they are close or kind to him.
- ❖ Buddha fulfills the aims of and acts to help all living beings, without exception, whether or not they have helped him.

The Buddha is like the doctor, diagnosing our illness (the first noble truth, of suffering) and its cause (the second noble truth, of the cause of suffering), as well as teaching us the remedy for our illness.

The Dharma is the actual remedy, the medicine, (the fourth noble truth, of the path to the cessation of suffering) that brings us to the state of complete health, complete liberation (the third noble truth, of the cessation of suffering).

The Sangha is like the nurses, who help us to apply the remedy, to practice the Dharma, and to progress along the path to liberation.

Think of yourself as the patient, seeking the advice of the omniscient physician, the Buddha, following his teachings, which are the medicine, and being assisted in one's practice by the kind nurses, the Sangha.

Only these three can keep us from the three lower realms. Only these three can liberate us from samsara. Only these three can bring us to enlightenment and liberate all sentient beings from their suffering.

Only someone who is free can free another. Only someone who is perfect can lead another to perfection. Contemplate the specific qualities of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (as taught in your DB course) and generate as much faith in them as you can. (This is the second cause of taking refuge: generating the conviction that the Three Jewels have the power to protect and liberate us.)

As you come to the end of this meditation, remember that the best manifestation of taking refuge is to be mindful and to observe our karma carefully, abandoning non-

virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind and practicing virtue as much as you can.

Dedication: Please bless me and all sentient beings to fear the dangers and sufferings of the three lower realms especially, as well as all of samsara, to take heartfelt refuge in the Three Jewels, and to put continuous enthusiastic effort into the practice of abandoning all negativities and accumulating virtuous deeds.

Due to these merits generated in this meditation, may I quickly attain enlightenment and lead all living beings, without exception, into the everlasting and blissful state of enlightenment as well.

THE REFUGE MEDITATION

TRAINING YOURSELF IN THE PRACTICE OF TAKING REFUGE

After generating, as described, the realizations that relate to the suffering in the three lower states,

You will also develop the desire to find a refuge that can save you from this plight.

When this occurs, you are ready to contemplate how the Triple Gem
Is the only true refuge and to reflect on their various qualities

You will elicit a mental transformation by reflecting for about seven days
On the four reasons that explain why they are a worthy object of refuge.
After that, meditate on a Buddha's physical, verbal and mental qualities, and on the qualities of his activities.

Do this in accord with your intellectual powers, either in brief
By following the explanations that appear in the Lamrim writings or in detail
by following those presented in major philosophical treatises, Such as the two
Ornaments, the *Higher Science*, and the like.

The measure for having generated the proper experiential realization is to
develop an intense faith that cannot be reversed.

Meditate similarly on the qualities of the dharma and the Sangha –
Either in brief as taught in the Lamrim or in detail as taught in the major
treatises.

The measure for having generated this realization is again to develop a strong
faith which cannot be overcome,

Through having recognized the qualities of this system's Triple Gem – That is,
our teacher, his teaching, and those who practice the teaching.

After eliciting a realization of this topic, do the same for each of those
In the section called "learning the distinctions".

The measure for having generated this realization is to be able to apprehend
clearly the distinctions associated with each aspect of the Triple Gem.

After eliciting that realization, go to the next topic, which addresses how to
take refuge by professing faith in the Triple Gem.

Reflect: "I accept my guru and the Buddha as the ones who teach me how to
find refuge; I accept the holy dharma gem as the actual refuge;
And I accept the Sangha as the companions who help me to find refuge."

The measure of this experiential realization is to gain the conviction that you
could accept only the Triple Gem with such strong faith, because no other
teacher, refuge, or followers are their equal.

After generating this experiential realization, the next topic is to take refuge by disavowing faith in any other tradition.

Reflect carefully how our teacher, the Buddha, and his teaching are the sole point of entry for those who seek liberation, and how they are superior by virtue of possessing six distinctions.

Reflect as well how other teachers and their teachings – Such as the Bon, the Tirthikas, great worldly gods,

And all those teachings and teachers different from this dharma – Are inferior in that they possess six opposite distinctions.

Through reflecting thus, bring forth a heartfelt conviction of how

Our supreme teacher, his teaching and those who follow it are the sole refuge, and how no other tradition whatsoever is a true refuge.

The measure of realization is reached when this keeps you from generating even the slightest thought of taking refuge in someone else.

After that, you will elicit a mental transformation by meditating for about seven days on the benefits of taking refuge and also for about a week on the precepts to be observed. So exert yourself with heartfelt conviction.

Because it does not take very long to generate realizations

Of the meditation topics associated with taking refuge,

Study and reflect on the explanations found in the major scriptures,

Learn as well to meditate on them with single-minded determination;

For the virtuous qualities of the Triple Gem are as vast as space, as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, and as deep as the ocean.

Moreover, the three realms are too small to hold the merit that is gained by recognizing and developing faith toward even a portion of them.

So devote yourself to this practice earnestly and vigorously.

RESOURCES;

Rinpoche, Pabongka; *Liberation in Our Hands*, Part 2, pages 340-342; Howell, New Jersey: Mahayana Sutra and Tantra Press, 1994