

GOING DEEPER MEDITATION MORNING

GOING FOR REFUGE

GOING FOR REFUGE AND MEDITATION

- The centrality of going for refuge is one of the six distinctive emphases of Triratna.
- This was drawn out by Bhante as the unifying principle of all Buddhist traditions
 - All Buddhist traditions are rooted in the person, teaching, and community of followers of the Buddha
- Going for refuge makes meditation distinctively Buddhist rather than secular or religious in a theistic sense
- So what does it mean to go for refuge in meditation? How do we make that more explicit

TO THE SANGHA

- We can draw on the support of meditating amongst brothers and sisters in the sangha who are also going for refuge in the same sense that we are
- As a refuge, the sangha is the company of Bodhisattvas and arahants – we don't go for refuge to contemporary individuals – such as the public preceptors or Bhante. In Tibetan Buddhism practitioners would take refuge in their lama (personal guru). This isn't something Bhante wanted to replicate.
 - So, taking the sangha refuge to be the bodhisattvas and arahants, these embody / symbolise particular facets of enlightened awareness. We may have a response to a particular bodhisattva for example – in which case that figure will hold for us an authentic quality of enlightened awareness: compassion, energy, clarity, or wisdom for example. This figure could be our focus rather than the Buddha Shakyamuni – and the comments on going for refuge to the Buddha given below apply.

TO THE DHARMA

To go for refuge to the dharma is to enter deeply into the sutra treasures whereby our wisdom may grow as deep as the ocean. It is to take as our inner direction the intention to enter deeply in to the Dharma, into the understanding of the nature of our experience, into the nature of our awareness and our mind, into the nature of the reality of all this.

We can do this by exploring, and taking an interest in the nature of our experience (dharma) – moving attention from the content of the thoughts (prapanca) to the underlying experience of intention (samskara) and feeling (vedana) – and from there to the nature of the experience: what is the felt sense of it? How is it to be having this particular experience? How is it to be aware in this way? To be alive?

The central principle of the dharma is conditionality, which has two distinct modes: reactive and creative. In meditation we can get a feel for

- The experiential quality of creative responsiveness rather than reactivity
- The experiential quality of wholesomeness in positive mental states as distinct from the unwholesomeness in reactive ones (appamada)

TO THE BUDDHA

Letting the Buddha meditate:

- Imagine how the Buddha would respond to just this experience that you're having now
- Fully opening to the felt quality of sensations, relaxing deeply in to them, being fully present with them

- If the experience includes kleshas/hindrances: relate to these as “something in me” (eg “something in me is feeling anxious”) rather than as “I” (eg “I’m anxious” or “Oh my god, what am I going to do?”).
 - Bring and embodied awareness and sensitive presence to this klesa/hindrances.
 - The Buddha wouldn’t be experiencing klesas/hindrances himself, but he would have a very direct empathic, sensitivity to them in others.
 - If this sensitive presence we bring to the experience we’re having were the sensitive presence of the Buddha’s awareness of the painful mental states of another: how would he respond?

OPENING TO MEDITATION

- With the motivation of wishing to benefit all beings
- We imagine that we approach the Buddha seated under a tree, out in nature
- We prostrate and pay homage to him
- And we take our refuge:
 - We go for refuge to awakening
 - We take our inner direction to enter deeply into the Dharma, into the understanding of our experience, of our mind, of reality
- And we develop that feeling of opening up to the help of the sangha, calling to mind any bodhisattva, arahant, Dakini, Dharmapala to which we have a particular connection
- And then, just like 2,500 years ago, we imagine hearing the words of the buddha, who encourages us to meditate in a very simple way