

Columbus KTC Intro Class 7: Taking Refuge

I. Overview

- A. Refuge means shelter or protection
- B. In the Buddhist context, we mean shelter from ignorance, self-clinging, and their resultant suffering.
- C. The path to achieve the end of suffering is summarized as: do no harm, practice virtue, and tame your mind.
- D. There are stages of deepening commitment, one of which is the vow of refuge.

II. Results of Dharma Practice

- A. Shamata helps us
 - 1. Recognize our mental states
 - 2. Let go of negative thinking
 - 3. Develop a sense of inner ease, freedom, and clarity
- B. Others will notice and appreciate the change in us

III. Turning the Mind Towards Dharma

- A. The Four Thoughts are designed to turn us away from samsara and towards Dharma. They are:
 - 1. Precious Human Birth
 - 2. Impermanence
 - 3. Karma: Causes and Results
 - 4. The Defects of Samsara
- B. The Refuge Vow Ceremony is a formal way of turning our mind towards Dharma

IV. The Significance of Refuge

- A. The Refuge Vow brings our aspiration for enlightenment to the forefront of our lives, and signifies a change in direction
- B. Taking refuge is a natural tendency. But we usually take refuge in mundane things such as possessions, entertainment, etc, which cannot bring us lasting happiness.
- C. By taking refuge in enlightened objects rather than mundane objects, we utilize our natural tendency for refuge in a much more effective way.

V. The Refuge Vow Ceremony

- A. Is conducted by a qualified preceptor, usually a lama
- B. We take refuge in:
 - 1. The Buddha as the enlightened teacher
 - 2. The Dharma as the teachings which lead to enlightenment
 - 3. The Sangha as our guides and companions on the path to enlightenment

Refuge Vow: To take refuge in the 3 Jewels until enlightenment is attained

In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha (the assembly most excellent)

I take refuge until I reach enlightenment.

*By virtue of generosity and the other deeds (6 perfections)**

May I attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

*Six Perfections: (1) generosity (*dāna*), (2) morality (*śīla*), (3) patience (*kṣānti*), (4) vigor (*vīrya*), (5) concentration (*dhyāna*), and (6) wisdom (*prajñā*)

- C. The vow is repeated three times. Before the third repetition, the preceptor will:
 - 1. Cut a small bit of hair from the top of the head as an offering to the Three Jewels
 - 2. Give us a Dharma name, signifying being born into the family of the Buddha
- D. There are also prayers, a period of silent meditation, and description of the commitments of refuge

VI. The Commitments of Refuge of include:

- A. Making offerings to and respecting the qualities of the Three Jewels
- B. As much as possible, not harming other beings
- C. Not putting our trust in the misguided
- D. Respecting images of enlightened beings, dharma books, and the robes of monastics and lamas
- E. Renewing vows of refuge twice daily