

Week 3 – Introducing the Sevenfold Puja

Buddhism Level 2 – Ritual & Devotion

INTRODUCTION TO SEVENFOLD PUJA

Text is Sangharakshita's extract from Bodhicaryavatara, 8th century CE, written by Shantideva. It's one of great classics of world spiritual literature, evoking the Bodhisattva Ideal – highest Ideal known to man. Seven sections, each section tries to evoke a particular spiritual emotion:

Worship, salutation, going for Refuge, confession of faults, rejoicing in merit, entreaty & supplication, transference of merit & self surrender

Relationship between the first 3 sections

Supposing you're travelling and you see a beautiful mountain peak in the distance and you admire it for its beauty; you look up to it, enjoy it and delight in it. This corresponds to worship [puja]. But it doesn't occur to you at this stage that you could possibly climb that peak. Then you start to think: 'That mountain is so much higher than I am. To climb it would be very difficult'. Becoming aware of where you are in relation to the mountain in this way corresponds to the Salutation [vandana]. And having absorbed that situation, you decide, "All right, nonetheless, I'm going to climb that mountain", and you start walking towards it. That is Going for Refuge.

Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism, Sangharakshita, p 67

GOING FOR REFUGE

Central unifying action of all Buddhists (Sangharakshita's insight). The Refuges & Precepts are chanted all over Buddhist world. What is Going for Refuge?

- Practical priorities – where do your time, energy, money flow?
- Existential security – what gives you a sense of meaning, Oneness, a place in the world, sense of security?
- Commitment – what are you really committed to?

To go for Refuge to the Three Jewels more deeply need to deepen faith. How?

- Need to be convinced of truth of Dharma & efficacy of the practice. This requires study, practice, reflection, discussion.
- Discuss any areas of unclarity or doubt that you come across, especially if it feels undermining of your efforts.
- Practice puja – can work as a "saddha bhavana" practice. Like metta bhavana, try to look for a sense of sincerity, however feeble or vague, behind the words you're saying.

Remember the iceberg example. Maybe faith is mostly below the waterline. When it surfaces, you see it as clear thinking in terms of the Dharma (cognition), action in line with the Dharma (volition), and as inspiration (emotion).

HOME PRACTICE

Reflect on your refuges – your sources of confidence – and areas of faith & doubt. The worksheet may help guide your reflections. And next week we will rejoice in the merits of each other. You may want to reflect on the good qualities of individuals in the group.