

# Instructions for Refuge Retreat

## Recite Essence of Good Fortune Prayers up to the prayer of The Stages of the Path

### Refuge meditation (6 parts)

**Part One:** The practice begins with meditation on the dangers of lower rebirth. Through this we develop fear of taking such a rebirth, and as a result of meditating deeply on this fear we develop a strong and spontaneous wish to protect ourselves from the dangers of lower rebirth.

Although explicitly this meditation is on the dangers of lower rebirth, simplicity it contains many other meditations. According to the sequence of meditations in *The Meditation Handbook*, this meditation is included within those of the initial scope, and so it emphasizes the dangers of lower rebirth; but when we are doing a refuge retreat we do not need to meditate only on the dangers of lower rebirth. What is implied in the meditation on the suffering of lower rebirth is that we should develop fear of taking rebirth anywhere in samsara. This fear directly leads us to developing renunciation, the wish to be liberated from samsara; and so in this way we are practising refuge in conjunction with the intermediate scope. We can also practice refuge in conjunction with the great scope.

In reality, therefore, the first meditation we do when going for refuge, both in retreat and at other times, is to train in renunciation; generating a strong fear of taking rebirth anywhere in samsara through contemplating the sufferings of samsara in general and the sufferings of the lower realms in particular. When we develop this fear we simultaneously develop the strong wish to be free from samsara. Thus, renunciation is the first realisation that we attain through this special refuge practice

. (5 minutes)

**Part Two:** Since all the fears and dangers of samsara, including rebirth in the lower realms, arise from our deluded states of minds, our real refuge is Dharma, the spiritual realisations that directly protect us from delusions. For example, if we gain a realisation of death & impermanence this will help us to reduce our attachment to the things of this life. If we have strong awareness of the inevitability of death and the uncertainty of its time, we shall naturally value the practice of moral discipline more than the pursuit of transitory sense pleasures, wealth, or power. We shall not be tempted to commit non-virtuous actions such as killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct, and so we shall not have to experience the unpleasant consequences of such actions. This is how Dharma realisations protect us from suffering. The ultimate Dharma refuge is the realisation of emptiness. This permanently eradicates all our delusions and frees us once and for all from suffering. Whereas Dharma is the actual refuge, Buddha is the source of all refuge. He is the supreme Spiritual Guide who shows us the way to attain Dharma realisations and who sustains our Dharma practice by bestowing his blessings. The Sangha are the supreme spiritual friends who support our Dharma practice. They provide conducive PTO... conditions, encourage us in our practice, and set a good example for us to follow. Only the Three Jewels have the ability to protect living beings from all suffering. By thinking in this way we generate a strong conviction that the Three Jewels are the only true objects of refuge, and we **develop faith** in Buddha, Dharma and

Sangha. We meditate on this without allowing any doubts to arise. When we meditate on a mental attitude such as faith, we do not merely think about it and focus on it as if it were separate from our mind; rather we transform our mind into that state and hold it single-pointedly. We should feel as if our mind has merged with an ocean of faith. **(5 minutes)**

**Part Three:** After meditating on faith in the Three Jewels for a short time, we imagine that in front of us is the living Buddha Shakyamuni surrounded by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, like the full moon surrounded by the stars. We generate ***strong conviction*** that all these holy beings are actually present before us and focus on them for a while.

**(5 minutes)**

**Part Four:** Fearing rebirth in the lower realms and having deep faith in the Three Jewels, we generate a ***strong determination*** to build the foundation of the Dharma Jewel within our mind by relying upon the Buddha Jewel and the Sangha Jewel. **(5 minutes)**

**Part Five:** With this motivation we then make the following ***request***

***“All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and holy beings,***

***Please protect me and all living beings***

***From the various sufferings, fears, and dangers of samsara. Please bestow your blessings upon our body and mind.”***

We recite this refuge prayer many times with the deep faith in the Three Jewels.

**(5 minutes)**

**Part Six:** We now put our refuge determination into practice by reciting the Stages of the Path Prayer and meditating on a Lamrim Meditation from the Meditation Handbook. **(15 minutes)**. After this we finish by dissolving the Field of Merit and reciting dedication prayers.

### **Subsequent Practice**

During the meditation break we should practise the twelve commitments of refuge. Keeping the refuge commitments helps us to strengthen our refuge practice so that it will quickly bear fruit.