

Guided Reflection

The Three Refuges

The three facets of true refuge - awareness, truth, and love - come alive as we dedicate our presence to them. As we open to these three gateways, they reveal the one taste of freedom inherent to all paths of awakening.

This simple reflection will give you increasing access to both the outer and inner refuges. Ultimately, it is an invitation to rest your heart in what is true, the purity and radiance of your own essence.

You will be mentally reciting the three phrases - "I take refuge in awareness; I take refuge in truth; I take refuge in love." - and after each, reflecting on what is vital and meaningful about the particular refuge. Instead of awareness - truth - love, you might use the Sanskrit words Buddha (or Buddha nature) - dharma - sangha.

Feel free to adapt this reflection - the sequence and language - in whatever way most resonates for you. Let this practice be a fresh and creative ritual, one that aligns your life with what most matters.

Now begin the first recitation, mentally whispering,
"I take refuge in awareness."

As you offer these words, you might feel a resonance with a human being or spiritual figure who expresses the qualities of enlightened awareness - of luminosity, openness, love. Can you imagine that same presence illuminating your being? Or perhaps it is more natural to directly sense the awakened presence that lives within you. You might simply ask yourself, "Is awareness (or consciousness) here?" What is it like to notice the presence of awareness? How does your mind experience the space and light of awareness? Your body? Your heart? What happens as you let go into this refuge of awareness? What happens as you rest your heart in what is true?

Now begin mentally repeating the phrase,
"I take refuge in truth."

As you offer these words, you might take a moment to recall what is precious to you about the spiritual path - about meditation practice and

teachings, about living a compassionate life. This is the outer expression of a path of truth. With this in your awareness, open without resistance to the changing flow of your moment-to-moment experience. Coming into the center of now, be aware of the sounds, feelings, and sensations that are arising and passing. What is the experience of opening to life, just as it is? What happens as you let go into this refuge of truth? What happens as you rest your heart in what is true?

Now turn to the phrase,
“I take refuge in love.”

As you offer these words, notice what they mean to you. Do you feel a sense of treasuring and valuing your family and friends? Does it bring up a yearning for more belonging? Allow a particular friend or loved one to come to mind, and as you sense that person’s goodness and dearness, notice the response of your heart. Is there warmth? Tenderness? Openness? Now let go of any idea of “other,” and open directly to the loving itself. Notice what happens as you relax and be that loving. What happens as you fully inhabit this refuge of love? What happens as you rest your heart in what is true?

You can “take refuge” in this way as part of your regular meditation practice, or at any time on its own. If you approach this practice each time with freshness and curiosity, it will continue to reveal the profound depths of your being. Sometimes you may spend many minutes reflecting on each refuge, and at other times, just a brief contact will awaken you to an open and tender presence.