

Talk on Homage to the Three Jewels

The Homage to the Three Jewels is the opening chant in our daily practice. It is practiced in one form another in Buddhist centers around the world. It is our most active and embracing chant.

We are in this together – bowing, touching our foreheads, opening our hands, following the moktak, raising our voices, perceiving our true nature – together. We pay homage and respect. We take refuge in these treasures. We are honoring our lineage, our philosophy, our community.

There's great comfort in knowing that there isn't just one jewel – it's a trinity – inspiring touchstones that are now the central tenets of our practice. They are independent yet connected.

But what does this chant, this practice mean in our lives? Why is it so central? I want to explore this tonight together. Each of us relating to the three jewels.

- 1. What makes the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha jewels or treasures?***
- 2. How are the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha active in your life?***
- 3. What does it mean to pay homage to the eternally existent Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha in all of the ten directions?***

The Buddha(s) the living embodiment of wisdom – our capacity for freedom, compassion and love.

The Dharma – the philosophy and teachings – our path of investigation and curiosity.

The Sangha – the community of committed beings – supporting each other in myriad of ways and forms.

Just read through this English translation: This sweet scent of the precepts – form a bright shining cloudlike pavilion – may it pervade the whole universe to the countless Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha's in all of the ten directions.

What a beautiful, intimate, optimistic description. We pay a lot of homage here – in every direction, eternally existent. We hope these precious ones

receive our devotions, and that they should empower us spiritually. With all creatures in the universe – we attain the Buddha Way! What is this!?

This is coming home to what is true for us. It is the joining together not just in this sweet scent – but in a challenging path – of turbulence, struggle and suffering. Where this pure land is not just an image of unreachable beauty – but a grounded effort combining the three jewels – Buddha, dharma and sangha.

We come together with relationships built of trust, hope, and experiential knowledge.

We come together where we challenge and hold each other accountable to live ethical lives.

We come together to speak honestly, truthfully, and appreciatively with our teachers.

We come together in our practice where it is supported through the generosity of others as a model of loving kindness.

We come together not just to seek our own awakening but through the awakening of all beings. Where our lives are linked and nurtured together on all shores and mountains. And, where this can lead to an unshakeable liberation and a life of compassionate action.

So tonight – let's use the wisdom of the sangha, the dharma and our lineage to explore together the three jewels as embodied in this chant.