

Morning Meditation (One of Four): Ritual

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

The next four Tips are concerned with the morning meditation. This sitting at the beginning of the day is something stressed by all my teachers. And it became a regular practice for me from the very start as Zazen. It is the time of the day when we set the position we hope to maintain throughout the day. And it always seemed to me to be a little rushed and unprepared to just plonk myself in posture and start meditating. But like all important occasions there is a 'ritual' we perform to set ourselves in the right mode. Even going to work, there is the preening to be done, the last glance in the mirror. So it is with a sitting practice. We need to remind ourselves of the importance of what it that we are about to do. A simple lighting of a candle may suffice. The candle is probably the best symbol of the spiritual path: the light symbolising the path in insight and wisdom; the heat, the path of love and devotion; the flickering of the flame, the path of action. I recommend bowing. So difficult for us! It is an act of surrender, of yielding. The Dhamma is always going to ask us to do what we (those self-serving selves) don't want to do. It is a very strong body language for 'I shall follow the Teachings'. If you find this too bruising (the self always tells you it is silly, pointless - 'I don't do bowing.' 'If I bowed, it wouldn't be me.'), you may find it useful to bow inwardly and find for yourself a phrase which express the desire to follow the Path. If you get this far, you may even want to take the Refuges and Precepts. (If you want the chant and the literature, you can download it from the website.) We have to make sense of these practices for ourselves. Taking Refuge in the Buddha traditionally is the historical personage, putting out trust (not blind faith) in the teacher, but it is also having confidence in the Buddha Within – that which is seeking liberation. Taking Refuge in the Dhamma is traditionally the teachings of the Buddha, but in this post-modern era you may wish to include all the teachings that you find useful. And taking Refuge in the Sangha is again traditionally only those who have entered one of the Four Paths and Fruits and intuited Nibbana. For them all doubt as to the truth of the Buddha's teachings has gone. But considering how important the Buddha taught that good companionship was, we may wish to include all our spiritual companions for their confidence and practice is a great support to us. And finally the Precepts are simply the basic training rules of the spiritual life. We have to prepare ourselves mentally for any important task. So find a way – and a way that will help you overcome any negativity or unwillingness to do the practice.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.