

GUIDED MEDITATIONS FOR TOUCHING THE EARTH

36. *Studying With Purpose*

Lord Buddha, my insight and understanding concerning the 4 Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—is still very shallow. I can only understand fully what it means to take refuge in the Three Jewels when I have looked deeply. As my insight and understanding of the Three Jewels grows deeper every day, my practice of taking refuge will increasingly bring about more solidity, peace, and happiness. Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is not just a belief or a ceremony, but is a daily practice. Every moment of my daily life can be a moment to practice taking refuge in the Three Jewels. Placing myself under the protection of the Three Jewels, I feel safeguarded, solid, happy, and free.

When the energy of the Three Jewels is present in me, the practice of the Mindfulness Trainings and the fine manners do not present any hardship. Lord Buddha, you have taught in the Sutra on the White-Clad Disciple that the practice of the Three Refuges and the Five Mindfulness Trainings can bring happiness in the present moment. I have solid faith that this is true because I have experienced it for myself. I vow to practice the refuges and the trainings deeply and to help my loved ones to do the same. You gave many teachings to your lay disciples and I shall devote time to studying these sutras. I shall also study the sutras that you taught the monks and nuns, in order to gain a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Faculties, the Five Powers, the Seven Elements of Enlightenment, the Six Paramitas, and the Middle Way of Interdependent Arising. Lord Buddha, you have said that laypeople can also practice in order to be liberated from birth and death and arrive at the understanding of the unborn and the undying, if they know how to organize their daily life to leave enough time for the practice. I vow that in Dharma discussion, I shall make an effort to listen deeply to the experience of others, and when I share, I shall not try to flaunt my knowledge or be caught up in debating and disputing, but only present my own experience of the practice in the light of the teachings I have received.

Lord Buddha, as a monk or a nun, I vow to learn and to practice to become a true teacher of the Way, able to liberate others from their suffering and help the world. Many people have finished a doctorate in higher Buddhist studies but their knowledge about Buddhism has not helped them to transform their afflictions and produce peace and happiness. I vow to give priority to studying those subjects that I can apply in my daily practice, and that whatever I study in addition will also be able to guide me on the path. I do not want to study only to become a scholar of wide knowledge. Lord Buddha, I shall study with the purpose of transforming my afflictions and to have enough experience so that I can help others transform their afflictions. I know that in this way I can continue the Buddha's career.

Lord Buddha, in the past I have gone astray in the way I have studied. Now I make the aspiration to turn back to the path which you have shown me.

Touching the Earth

Lord Buddha I touch the Earth before you, the one who understands the world deeply, before Manjushri Bodhisattva, and the Venerable Ananda. [Bell]