

Notes on Refuge Day

The Refuge Ceremony

It is a common buddhist practice to make offerings to teachers. This is an important preparation for the student that helps them to receive teachings. In Tibet, it is the custom to offer a scarf - not just to spiritual teachers but to any visiting guest. The scarf is traditionally a thin white scarf, made of silk when available. This is initially held in a folded state. It is unrolled across the outstretched arms of the host and offered to the guest, maybe in conjunction with other offerings. The guest may retain the scarf but in the case of a spiritual teacher, it will often be given back to the student and placed around their neck. In this way, it carries the blessing of the teacher.

The Refuge Ceremony is a short ceremony where an offering of a scarf and a flower, and perhaps some other offerings, is made by each student to the teacher. The teacher then returns the scarf to the student, placing it around their neck as a blessing. The teacher then gives the student a red cord that is also placed around the neck and tied. In this cord is a knot which has already been tied and blessed by the teacher. This cord is worn by the student at all times as a reminder of taking refuge. The teacher sometimes brings his or her forehead into brief contact with the student's forehead and clasps their hands.

What you should bring

Please bring an offering scarf and either a single flower or small posy of flowers. The scarves are usually available in the shops at the Lam Rim Centres. If you can buy one in advance, it gives you the opportunity to wash and iron it. You may also make other offerings to the teacher if you wish.

There will be some scarves and flowers available on the actual day if you have not been able to obtain them beforehand.

The Programme

There will be a short introduction followed by the Refuge Ceremony with Geshé-la who will guide us through it.

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