

Reasons for taking refuge (seeking a safe direction in life)

- (i) **Healthy fear** of death and rebirth in the lower realms (1st scope); fear of all samsara (2nd scope); fear of others' suffering in samsara and of the Arhat's nirvana (3rd scope).
- (ii) **Faith** that the Three Jewels can protect from these terrors: Buddha shows the way to avoid harm; practising Dharma is the only way to overcome negative karma; Sangha are the spiritual friends who help and guide one's practice.

Identifying the objects of refuge and cultivating faith

To escape samsara one needs the external cause of receiving teachings and the internal cause of trust and full refuge in the teacher and teachings, otherwise one's practice will be half-hearted.

Three forms of faith are required at the beginning, middle, and later stages of practice:

- (i) *Admiring faith*, an initial affinity for the practice, admires the good qualities of the Three Jewels and is a joyful mind that decreases jealousy. Sometimes called *clarifying faith* because it makes the mind clear – we can see where we are going. It is the foundation of all virtue.
- (ii) *Faith of conviction* arises from listening to and contemplating the meaning of the teachings. One sees the nature of the object of faith and fully comprehends the reasons for relying on it.
- (iii) *Aspiring faith*, based on that well-founded trust, is a strong desire to obtain those qualities and to become an object of faith and trust in one's own right.

Buddha is a suitable object of refuge

Worldly spirits may give limited help, but are fickle and unreliable. With sincere refuge, the Three Jewels require no offerings and will always give protection.

- (i) *Buddha has freed himself from all dangers*: the result of eliminating all afflictions is a state of peace and fearlessness. Persons worried about themselves cannot protect others.
- (ii) *Buddha has skilful and effective means to free others from fear* (to tame them).
- (iii) *Buddha has complete equanimity with indiscriminating compassion for all sentient beings*. If a person is skilled and fearless but lacks compassion he won't protect others. Buddhas are bound by their great compassion to help others just as we are bound to samsara by ignorance and attachment.
- (iv) *Buddha fulfils the aims of others whether they have helped him or not* The only reward he seeks is our happiness from practice. Countless Buddhas have appeared but we remain in samsara because we have not taken wholehearted refuge in the perfect teacher. Like children always seeking fun, we are oblivious to the consequences of our actions. Refuge is the door of entry to the Buddhist path. Although all Buddhas possess these 4 qualities, they are not omnipotent and cannot help the closed-minded who are unreceptive to the teachings, or the lazy who do not put them into practice.

The **relative** Buddha Jewel is the *Rupakaya* (emanation and enjoyment bodies).

The **ultimate** Buddha Jewel is the *Dharmakaya*, (wisdom truth body and nature body).

The **relative** Dharma Jewel is the teachings, the three-baskets.

The **ultimate** Dharma Jewel is true cessations and true paths in the minds of Aryas.

The **relative** Sangha Jewel is the person of any arya.

The **ultimate** Sangha Jewel is the community of true cessations and true paths in the mind of an arya.

Causal refuge is the Three Jewels in the continuums of others.

Resultant refuge is the Three Jewels within one's own continuum.

Taking refuge by knowing the good qualities of one's refuge

1 The body of a Buddha is adorned by 32 excellent signs indicating a great person and 80 exemplary features signifying personal attainment and inner qualities that make positive impressions upon others.

2 The speech of a Buddha has 60 special qualities.

3 Mind of a Buddha sees ultimate and relative truths simultaneously and has universal loving kindness. There are ten powers of a Buddha's mind:

- (i) Buddha's mind knows the relation between karmic actions and results.
- (ii) Sees the ripening results of all karmas and knows the cause of every karmic effect.
- (iii) Knows the aspirations and capacities of all beings and helps them accordingly.

- (iv) Sees enlightenment potential and lineages of all beings, their realisations and misconceptions.
- (v) Knows the degrees of interest and capability of sentient beings and teaches accordingly.
- (vi) Knows the paths that lead to the three goals of hearer, solitary realiser, and bodhisattva, as well as the paths that lead to rebirth in the six realms.
- (vii) Knows meditative attainments and afflictions of others and can lead beings from those states.
- (viii) Mindful of all own and others' previous rebirth states.
- (ix) Knows own and others' deaths and future rebirths up to enlightenment.
- (x) Knows the extinction of contaminations in any being's mind. Cannot be tricked.

Good qualities of the Dharma Dharma is *Lam Rim*, 5 paths, 10 grounds, etc. Specifically, it is the truth of cessation and uninterrupted paths of seeing and meditation.

Good qualities of the Sangha: attainments of hearers, solitary realisers, and bodhisattvas are vast.

Seven features that distinguish Buddha and Dharma from all other doctrines

- (i) Buddha is without faults and has fulfilled all virtuous qualities.
- (ii) A Buddha's teaching bestows the fruit of happiness through a path easy to traverse.
- (iii) The teaching enables you to move against the flow of samsara's floods.¹
- (iv) The teaching removes the afflictions.
- (v) The teaching does not deceive those seeking liberation.
- (vi) The teaching is singularly virtuous and enables you to eliminate faults.
- (vii) Resultant (inner) refuge actually saves. Other beliefs only have causal (outer) refuge.

Taking refuge through belief in these three ideals

Buddha teaches refuge: he is your guide on the proper path. Listen and rely on him from your heart.

Dharma is the actual refuge: take refuge with the deep thought that liberation is the real refuge.

Sangha share the same goal: they assist those who take refuge; see them as your spiritual friends.

The benefits of taking refuge

- (i) Provided this is your heartfelt aspiration, you enter the path to liberation and enlightenment. This is the defining characteristic of being "a Buddhist." Philosophically, a holder of Buddhist tenets is one who asserts the four seals.
- (ii) It is the foundation for taking and maintaining all further vows.
- (iii) You remove past negative karmic obstacles, even heinous actions. The virtue of taking refuge weakens and even destroys the ripening power of negative imprints (rebirth result).
- (iv) You can easily accumulate vast amounts of positive karma: the virtue of taking refuge is immeasurable due to the immeasurable qualities of the Three Jewels.
- (v) You cannot be bothered or overwhelmed by the harmful actions of humans or non-humans. It gives an aura of protection against black magic spells etc.
- (vi) You will not fall to any of the three lower realms when refuge is in your mind at death.
- (vii) Effortlessly achieve virtuous aims: initial refuge gives confidence to achieve results.
- (viii) By taking the essence of your perfect human rebirth, you will quickly attain Buddhahood.

Advice after one has taken refuge

Specific commitments as to what you should avoid doing

- 1 With refuge in Buddha, do not take refuge in worldly gods. Show respect; if in a situation where society demands prostration to a worldly god, imagine Buddha is there and prostrate to him.
- 2 With refuge in Dharma, avoid harming sentient beings.
- 3 With refuge in Sangha, avoid influence of misleading friends with other philosophies etc.

Specific commitments as to what you should do

- 1 Respect all Buddha images, even those poorly crafted.
- 2 Respect even a single letter as if it were the Dharma Jewel.
- 3 Respect even the Sanghas' robes as you do the true Sangha.

¹ As *causes*: desire, wrong views, ignorance, ripening force of karma; as *results*: birth, ageing, sickness, death.

General commitments

- 1 By recalling the good qualities of the Three Jewels, repeatedly take refuge.
- 2 Recalling kindness of Three Jewels, worship them and offer first portion of food and drink.
- 3 Compassionately encourage others to take refuge by your own example, explaining benefits, etc.
- 4 Recall benefits and take refuge three times by day and by night.
- 5 Whatever you do, have complete trust in the Three Jewels and abandon worldly methods.
- 6 Never forsake the Three Jewels even at the cost of your life.

Attainment of Buddhahood

Nature Body (*svabhavakaya*): essential body possessing 2 aspects of purity; both are ultimate truths:

- (i) *Innate purity*: the void nature of a Buddha's mind that has been empty since beginningless time.
- (ii) *Adventitious purity*: condition of having abandoned the two types of obscuration, (emptiness of inherent existence of a mind that has been cleansed of all obscurations – adventitious stains).

Wisdom Dharma Body (*dharmakaya*): ultimate wisdom transformed beyond all states of impurity:

- (i) **Mirror-like wisdom** (*Vairocana*): the immutable (forever fixed on voidness and bodhicitta) upon which the next three wisdoms are based. This wisdom is achieved by keeping the Dharma: properly serving a guru, listening, thinking, and meditating on the teachings, and eventually abandoning the two obscurations. "Mirror-like" because it manifests the reflections of these wisdoms. Five main characteristics:
 - (a) No attachment because it doesn't conceive mind and its objects as inherently real and has no sense of "I" or "mine." Thus it's also free of any impulse (karma) to strive after things.
 - (b) Unlimited in that it perceives all objects existing in the infinity of space.
 - (c) Covers all objects of the three times.
 - (d) Free of bewilderment towards, and comprehends all existent things.
 - (e) Perceives all things while forever remaining free of discrimination.
- (ii) **Wisdom of sameness** (*Ratnasambhava*): evolves from realisation achieved by bodhisattva while still on the path that his own condition and that of others is the same. By meditating and perfecting this knowledge he abandons subtle traces of an "I" and "mine" and thus enters "non-abiding nirvana," where even samsara and nirvana are seen to have the same essential nature. This wisdom is perpetually endowed with great loving-kindness and compassion towards all. Achieved by developing great loving-kindness to pursue the welfare of others as we would pursue our own.
- (iii) **Wisdom of discernment** (*Amithaba*): Derives from ordinary mental consciousness that identifies entities as blue, yellow, etc. Free from conceptualisation, it has no obstruction to recognising the general and specific properties of all things. Achieved by teaching Dharma correctly.
- (iv) **Wisdom of accomplishment** (*Amoghasiddhi*): that mind which accomplishes the welfare of all sentient beings by projecting countless emanations throughout all realms. Comes from helping others to achieve everyday goals.
- (v) **Wisdom of dharmadhatu** (*Akshobya*) knows the two levels of truth about all things.

Enjoyment Body (*sambhogakaya*): Absorbed in *enjoyment* of the Mahayana Dharma; the ultimate physical body. Effortlessly reveals physical manifestations, speaks Dharma, and performs Buddha's mental activities uninterruptedly; manifests in different forms although its nature is free of diversity. Possesses 5 certainties:

- (i) *Location*: always in *Akanishtha* pure land. (Birth in pure land is due to uncontaminated virtue and prayer; "pure" means no suffering; take rebirth only through bodhicitta)
- (ii) *Retinue*: surrounded only by *arya bodhisattvas*.
- (iii) *Physical attributes*: always adorned by 32 major and 80 minor marks of a great being.
- (iv) *Dharma*: only teaches Mahayana Dharma.
- (v) *Duration*: doesn't give appearance of entering nirvana until samsara is emptied of all beings.

Emanation Body (*nirmanakaya*): acts extensively on behalf of others through appearing directly to ordinary beings – both those with and without karmic obstructions; 3 forms:

- (i) *Emanation body skilled in arts and crafts*, such as musician who subdued the *gandharva* king.
- (ii) *Birth emanation body*, such as a deer.
- (iii) *Supreme emanation body* acting extensively for others through any of the twelve major deeds.

37 factors conducive to enlightenment (common to all 3 vehicles but vary in scope and procedure)

Four establishments in mindfulness Attained on lesser path of accumulation: meditation on impermanence, misery, emptiness, and selflessness of:

- (i) *Body*: *impure* nature, true suffering; overcomes attachment to body and one wishes to separate from it.
- (ii) *Feelings*: all are unsatisfactory and different forms of *suffering*. Feelings and objects have no self-existent nature yet feelings generate attachment and aversion. This cultivates aversion to attachment.
- (iii) *Mind*: six consciousnesses are *impermanent* but their continuum remains forever. There is no self separate from mind, thus no self-sufficient, permanent person. You come to understand the peace of selflessness, nirvana.
- (iv) *Other internal phenomena* (the 50 mental functions and non-mental aggregates) are all *selfless*. Investigating the character of what is to be adopted or discarded, you come to understand true paths.

Four effortful abandonments: effort, from beginner's striving to abandon desire up to striving of 10th stage bodhisattva to abandon obscurations to Buddhahood. Especially, refers to effort to overcome obstacles to meditation: excitement and laxity. Attained with middle path of accumulation:

- (i) Effort to not generate afflictions not yet generated
- (ii) Effort to abandon afflictions already generated
- (iii) Effort to generate pure phenomena (virtues) not yet generated
- (iv) Effort to increase pure phenomena already generated

Four legs of manifestation: powers for attaining concentrations that are bases for clairvoyance. Attained on great path of accumulation; differentiated according to the way one enters concentration:

- (i) *Strong aspiration* to perform virtue.
- (ii) *Constant effort* to perform virtue.
- (iii) Prior cultivation (*thought*) of single-pointed concentration.
- (iv) *Discriminative awareness* (analysis) gained by receiving instructions.

Five faculties for practising virtue: states of mind that focus on the four noble truths. Attained on heat and peak levels of path of preparation. These five are common to both vehicles.

- (i) *Faith* with respect to what is to be adopted or discarded from among the four noble truths.
- (ii) *Joyful effort*: enthusiasm for adopting and discarding what is appropriate. This complements faith: without joy, one will not apply oneself to overcoming karma and afflictions
- (iii) *Mindfulness*: non-forgetfulness with respect to such adopting and discarding.
- (iv) *Meditative stabilisation*: one-pointedness of mind with respect to these.
- (v) *Wisdom*: individual analysis of these, understanding most skilful way to act.

Five powers Stronger than the faculties, cannot be diminished, attained on last two levels of path of preparation. These are unique to the Mahayana.

- (i) *Faith*: refuge in Three Jewels has special intention to save all beings by attaining Buddhahood.
- (ii) *Joyful effort*: enthusiasm for the practice of the six perfections.
- (iii) *Mindfulness*: non-forgetfulness of the altruistic intention to become enlightened.
- (iv) *Meditative stabilisation*: is non-conceptual.
- (v) *Wisdom*: knows all phenomena to be non-apprehendable as truly established.

Seven branches of enlightenment Attained with path of seeing: mindfulness, discrimination of phenomena, effort, joy, pliancy, meditative stabilisation, and equanimity

Eight-fold path: attained with path of meditation but practised by all beings:

- 1 *Correct views* opposing five wrong views.
- 2 *Correct realisation* seeing and teaching subtle emptiness.
- 3 *Correct speech* vows and teaching emptiness without contradiction.
- 4 *Correct aims of actions* following vows.
- 5 *Correct livelihood*.
- 6 *Correct effort* to abandon afflictions.
- 7 *Correct mindfulness* on objects and modes of perception necessary for ascending paths.
- 8 *Correct meditative stabilisation* on objects of the paths.