

Buddhist Refuge in the Three Jewels

What does the term refuge mean?

- Shelter or protection from danger on distress
- something to which one has recourse in difficulty.

So what is refuge?

- **Refuge** is that thought which of its own power puts all its hopes in another (external) object.
- **Two kinds of refuge:**
 1. **Ordinary** – people in the world take refuge in worldly or material things (food, \$\$\$, sex, rock –n-roll)
 2. **Exceptional/ultimate** – Buddhist refuge in the three jewels. When you have refuge, you have the state of mind of being fearful, and go for protection with the absolute certainty that it will help.

Definition of Buddhist Refuge

Formally putting a "safe and positive direction in our lives" indicated by the Three Jewels and pledging to maintain this steady direction unwaveringly, until it brings us liberation (nirvana) or enlightenment (Buddhahood).

What are the Three Jewels?

- Buddha (Skt.) the awakened one
- Sang.gya (Tib.) sang=clear and purified (Arhat), gya=evolved (Buddha)
- Actual Buddha Jewel - any omniscient being (such as the historical Buddha)
- Conventional Buddha Jewel - any representation of Buddha (statues, art, etc.)

Three Jewels (cont.)

- Dharma (Skt.) that which holds (us back from suffering/dukkha)
- Actual Dharma Jewel - realizations in the minds of Arya beings; any true path and true cessation in the mind of an Arya.
- Conventional Dharma Jewel - any text or book of Buddhist teachings

Three Jewels (Cont.)

- Sangha (Skt.) those who have joined together to realize the teachings and methods
- Actual Sangha Jewel - any person who has had a direct intuitive insight into the wisdom of emptiness (attained the path of seeing), ordained or lay person
- Conventional Sangha - a group of four or more fully ordained monks or nun

The Conventional Jewels are not the Actual Jewels; the practice of Buddhism does not entail worship of idols, texts or monks/nuns.

What do we ordinarily go for refuge to?

- The Eight Worldly Dharmas/Concerns
(we are addicted to deliciousness)

Gain - Loss

Pleasure - Pain

Fame - Disgrace

Praise - Blame

- "Luke, trust your feelings."

-DarthVader

What are the causes of going for refuge to the Three Jewels?

1. **Fear/Dread/Apprehension** in the consequences of negative actions. Focuses on Noble Truths 1 (dukkha) and 2 (causes)
2. **Faith/Confidence** that the Three Jewels can actually deliver. Focuses on Nobles Truths 3 (cessations) and 4 (paths).
3. **Compassion** (unique to Mahayana)

**Causal Refuge in the Buddha -
going to Refuge to beings who are
already enlightened.**

**Resultant Refuge in the Buddha -
... to the Buddha we will become**

**Causal Refuge in the Dharma -
going to refuge to the realizations
in others mental continuum.**

**Resultant Refuge in the Dharma -
...in our future realizations**

Causal Refuge in the Sangha - going to Refuge to the superiors (Aryas) who have already become Sangha.

Resultant Refuge in the Sangha - ...the superiors that we will become

"We should go for refuge in our own future Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as this will generate more interest in the refuge practice and consequently we will put more energy into it." (Quote from Geshe Jampa Gyatso)

Three Kinds of Faith (Not blind faith)

1. **Admiring Faith** - feels joy and happiness toward the Three Jewels
2. **Aspiring Faith** - wishes to attain their qualities
3. **Conviction** - establishes them as a valid bases for taking refuge

"Now you may hear many teachings...but the main, fundamental thing you need to know is how to take refuge, what the essence of refuge is, what karma is and how it is created. Those are the main things you need to know."

(Quote Buddhist saint Song Rinpoche)

"If you are a Buddhist it is a result of your own choice. Therefore you should qualify yourself accordingly. The minimal qualification is to avoid the ten negative courses of action and cultivate their opposites." (Quote by HHDL)

Five Precepts

1. Avoid killing
2. Avoid stealing
3. Avoid harmful sexual behavior (adultery, etc.)
4. Lying
5. Intoxicants

The commitments of taking Buddhist Refuge

What is to be avoided

1. Having taken refuge in the Buddha, one should not take refuge from the depth of one's heart in worldly gods, etc.
2. Having taken refuge in the Dharma, one should avoid harming any being, either directly by oneself, or indirectly by making others do it.
3. Having taken refuge in the Sangha, one should avoid entrusting oneself to and keeping company with negative friends and followers of hedonism.

What is to be practiced

1. ...Buddha, one should regard even statues as actual Buddhas and prostrate and pay respect to them
2. ...Dharma, one should respect all scriptural texts as being the actual Dharma
3. ...Sangha, one should regard one member of Sangha as being the actual Sangha.

General Advice

1. One should rely upon holy beings, listen to the holy Dharma, and after correctly comprehending, follow the Dharma and practice it.
2. One should not let one's senses become excited (that is, one should control the senses when in danger of creating negative karma), and take as many vows as one is capable of keeping.
3. One should have a compassionate attitude toward sentient beings.
4. When eating or drinking, one should make effort to offer to the rare sublime Three Jewels; one should train well in the refuge precepts, exerting oneself to make offerings to the Three Jewels.

Common question

1. Can (or should) Buddhist have fun?
2. Does it matter who I take refuge vows from?
3. Do I really need to commit to Buddhist refuge in a formal ceremony?
4. Vows as freedom vs. vows as limiting my freedom and spontaneity?
5. Should I keep it quiet if I become a Buddhist?
6. How soon can I expect to see results?

7. If someone criticizes me or my family/kids for choosing the Buddhist path, what is a skillful way to handle it?
8. Should I raise my children as Buddhist?
9. What are some of the other challenges of choosing Buddhism in a Judeo-Christian North America?