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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

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Summary

This article provides information and guidance on the meaning, significance and practice of taking Refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Refuge in the Triple Gem

The Triple Gem represents the three aspects that Buddhist practitioners take refuge in. They are the Buddha, as the Enlightened One, The Dhamma, the Teachings understood and expounded by the Buddha and the Sangha, that is the community of persons including monks and nuns who practise the Buddha's Teachings.

The Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is a vast topic and we do not proclaim to be able to explain all aspects to you in this short article however we do provide an introduction of how to practice and develop refuge in the Triple Gem.

The Buddha Light International Association has a textbook on their website at <http://www.blia.org> and refuge in the Triple Gem is explained as follows:

"Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is the first step in becoming a Buddhist.

"'Taking refuge' means to seek protection.

"The Triple Gem refers to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. A Buddhist relies on the Triple Gem in order to receive guidance and protection in life.

"Why are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha referred to as the Triple Gem?

"This is because:

"1. Buddha Gem: A Buddha is the one who is enlightened to all the truths of the universe and life, and is able to teach these truths to other sentient beings. A Buddha possesses great wisdom and compassion, and has the ability to lead all sentient beings away from the suffering of this world. Hence, a Buddha is referred to as the Buddha gem.

"2. Dharma Gem: 'Dharma' means the truths taught by a Buddha. If we are able to correct our behaviour by following these truths, we can decrease our suffering and increase our wisdom, and ultimately attain enlightenment. Therefore, the Dharma is also referred to as a gem.

"3. Sangha Gem: 'Sangha' means a harmonious community of those individuals, called monastics, who have renounced their worldly life in order to practice and propagate Buddhism. Monastics are like our teachers who can help us learn the Buddha's teachings and instruct us on ways of practicing those teachings. Therefore, the Sangha is also referred to as a gem. To Buddhists, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are analogous to the physician, medicine, and nurse to a patient. The Triple Gem is also akin to the lighthouse, compass, and sailor to a lost traveller. All three are needed for our protection. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem can affirm our conviction to learn from the Buddha, to follow the monastics instructions, and to apply the Buddha's teachings in our daily life. By doing so, we can avoid making mistakes. Although taking refuge is a decision from within, it is formalized through a Buddhist ceremony. After taking refuge, one should be reverent toward Buddhas, practice the Dharma diligently, and respect all monastics. Taking refuge is not just a one-time act, but a life-long devotion!"

We thank the Buddha Light International Association for their clear explanation on this topic.

Why take refuge in the Triple Gem?

There are many causes of taking refuge in the Triple Gem. In this script when we refer to taking refuge we are referring to the practice of taking refuge in the Triple Gem or the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

The causes for taking refuge in the Triple Gem are as follows:

Fear of the suffering of samsara (the world of existence) particularly the lower realms.

Clear faith, this is the direct perception of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Desiring faith, a wish to obtain the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to be of benefit to other sentient beings.

Believing faith, recognition of the truth of the Buddha's Teachings in one's own life and perceiving the benefits of taking Refuge.

Compassion, wishing all beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

The purpose of the Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd is:

(1) To train beings in the Buddha Dharma (including Buddha, Dharma, Sangha Refuge);

The Buddhist discipline (sila) is the Primary Refuge, the Mother of all Virtues, and the Head of all Dharmas.

In other words, all virtues arise from the Buddhist discipline. Without the Buddhist discipline, there will be no goodness and evil may take place instead.

Most people today certainly lack the Buddhist discipline. Thus, problems and disasters caused by nature and human beings are prevailing.

In fact, all perilous events are caused by human beings that have heavy hearts. They continue to commit negative deeds and get negative retributions.

This is the Law of Karma.

Nothing, except the power of goodness, can obstruct the retribution of the negative karma.

There will be no disunity, if all of you are equal in your Buddhist discipline.

Owing to the Great Wisdom of the Lord Buddha who is above all deities and human beings, the Buddhist discipline is laid down to prevent our disunity.

Thus, preserve well your Buddhist discipline in order to end all wars and dissension.

There is a Buddhist proverb: "May all of you consider disunity a disaster and consider unity as safety for our lives. May you all be in accord and compromise with one another".

This is truly a Buddha's Teaching.

Our Members practise the teachings that one's birthday is a most Auspicious day on which to practice Dhamma, especially the practice of loving kindness, compassion, right action, renunciation, and resolution in one's Triple Gem Refuge.

The multiplying factor of such good deeds associated with right practice on one's birthday helps to create cause for conditions for Enlightenment to arise in the future.

How can we take refuge in the Triple gem?

In order to attain realisation of Enlightenment, we need to rely on the Buddha as our Guide.

We take Refuge in the Dharma as our Path. By following the Path we can reach our destination.

We take Refuge in the Sangha as our Spiritual companions.

There are four ways of taking refuge in the Triple Gem:

Attasanniyyatana - dedication of one's life to the Triple Gem.

Tapparanayana - taking the Triple Gem as the protection of oneself.

Sissa Bhavopagamana - approaching the Triple Gem as a pupil.

Panipata - submission to the Triple Gem with devotion.

When the Dhamma holds as the status of the consciousness of a person, certain unprompted thoughts, which would have resulted in serious decisional conflict in the past, no longer influence the equanimity of a person.

From a mind having equanimity, (symptoms of vacillation or hesitation being absent) and compassion for others, it is likely that wholesome actions can be done with ease.

The Refuge for Dhamma is subtle. One method used by our teacher in a Meditation Course was to increase the power of concentration (Pali: sati) of the Meditators' minds by attempting to exclude as many habitual (chance unprompted) influences, as possible, on their various minds.

The inner natures of literary texts of Buddha's Teachings are a source of realisations and insight wisdom when they are put into practice. So, the instructional nature of the texts available in our Centre's Heritage Library Collection are an indispensable part of the 'sensory education' required by Buddhist Practitioners.

Creative thinking, unless completed to a satisfactory outcome, has a limitless potential of chaos.

The Buddha has warned of the unwholesome results of excessive, uncontrolled imagination.

There are rules for Taking Refuge:

Individual Rules are as follows:

Having taken refuge in the Buddha, you should not take refuge in any worldly deity.

Having taken refuge in the Dharma, you should not harm any being intentionally.

Having taken refuge in the Sangha, you should not take non-Buddhists as your Spiritual companions and you should respect all Members of the Sangha irrespective of their individual characteristics.

The General Rules is as follows:

If you have taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha you should not give it up even at the cost of your life.

Whatever happens, you should not seek any other refuge.

You should make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, every day.

You should help other beings take Refuge.

Whatever direction you are facing you should think of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of that direction.

We will now read for you the 'Verses on the Asseverations of Truth' or in Pali language SACCAKIRIYAGATHA in Pali and English:

NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM
For me there is no other refuge

BUDDHO ME SARANAM VARAM
The Buddha truly is my refuge

ETENA SACCAVAJJENA
By the speaking of this truth

SOTTHI TE HOTU SABBADA
Ever may you be in safety!

NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM
For me there is no other refuge

DHAMMO ME SARANAM VARAM
The Dhamma truly is my refuge

ETENA SACCAVAJJENA
By the speaking of this truth

SOTTHI TE HOTU SABBADA
Ever may you be in safety!

NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM
For me there is no other refuge

SANGHO ME SARANAM VARAM
The Sangha truly is my refuge

ETENA SACCAVAJJENA
By the speaking of this truth

SOTTHI TE HOTU SABBADA
Ever may you be in safety

At the premises of our Temple, we have a Bell situated inside the Bell Tower. It stands 75cm tall and is 34.5cm wide.

Students at this Centre use the Bell in many of their ceremonial activities and also as a meditation device.

One such practice is to use the Bell as an aid for taking Refuge in the Triple Gem. When the Bell resounds, students are instructed to stop what they are doing and pay full Respect to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. This practice is also a method of Teaching students to become instantly in the present, sweeping from their minds all worldly mental chatter. It is also an aid in sending Loving-Kindness (metta) to all beings and to invite Heavenly Protector Beings (devas) to reside on the premises of this Centre.

This Bell has various other uses with regard to meditation practices undertaken at this Centre. We are most fortunate to possess such a precious Buddhist object.

The Theravada School chants unaccompanied by any musical device.

They chant the triple gem -taking refuge in the Buddha, The Dhamma and the Sangha in the Pali language. The Sangha refuge is the group of Buddhist Monks or Nuns - past, present and future who practice the Teachings - the Dhamma.

The Acariyavada School tends to take refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and add a fourth refuge, the Acariya or Guru.

It is not uncommon for persons of that school to chant in ancient Sanscrit language, rather than Pali language.

The words Acariya or Guru translate as "Teacher".

The Teacher is the Shower of The Way.

Usually, the Acariyavada School use gongs, bells, chings, wood blocks in the shape of a human skull and various other devices to make sounds.

The true Buddha Dhamma starts with access to Nibbana as explained by canonical texts. From Nibbana, the three marks of existence can be seen each for himself or herself (anicca, dukkha, anatta). When the various minds understand the three marks of existence, namely, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and absence of a permanent self; the minds are starting to understand the Buddha's Teaching (The Dhamma). Provided such a person does not undertake the five great crimes, he or she will continue in Buddha Dhamma.

At a certain level of attainment, the process of Buddha Dhamma becomes irreversible and the refuge in Buddha Dhamma is not lost even after death and rebirth. It is the latter class that is doing the great work in Buddha Dhamma.

We should vow that we will make this human life that is free of the 8 unrestful states and endowed with the 10 Right Conditions, infinitely meaningful by taking Refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and developing the Enlightenment Thought.

In 1981, our Centre set up the Library Project with a goal that the Library stays cohesive and "non-sectarian" to ensure all aspects of "Buddhism" were included in the Library. This policy has been followed since that date and will continue to be observed.

The prime consideration for the enhancement of the Library is to increase refuge in the Dhamma.

We conclude this article with the Homage to the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) from in the e-learning materials provided by the Buddha Dhamma Education Association and Buddhanet published on website <http://www.buddhanet.net> founded by Vice-President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists Venerable Pannyavaro.

Homage to the Buddha

I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the fully Enlightened One.

I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the fully Enlightened One. I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the fully Enlightened One.

Such, indeed, is the Exalted One: worthy, perfectly enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well-gone, knower of the worlds, supreme trainer of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and exalted.

To the Buddhas of the past,
To the Buddhas of the future,
To the Buddhas of the present
I offer my reverence always.

For me there is no other refuge,
The Buddha is my matchless refuge.
By these words of truth
May joyous victory be mine.

With my forehead I pay reverence
To the dust at His feet;
If I have done wrong to the Buddha
May the Buddha please forgive me.

Homage to the Dhamma

Well expounded is the Dhamma by the Exalted One, directly visible, immediately effective, calling one to come and see, leading onwards, to be personally realized by the wise.

To the Dhammas of the past,
To the Dhammas of the future,

To the Dhammas of the present,
I offer my reverence always.

For me there is no other refuge,
The Dhamma is my matchless refuge.
By these words of truth
May joyous victory be mine.

With my forehead I pay reverence
To the matchless threefold Dhamma;
If I have done wrong to the Dhamma
May the Dhamma please forgive me.

Homage to the Sangha

The Order of the Exalted One's disciples is practicing well; the Order of the Exalted One's disciples is of upright conduct; the Order of the Exalted One's disciples has entered the right path; the Order of the Exalted One's disciples is practicing correctly, that is, the Four Pairs of Persons, the Eight Kinds of individuals, this Order of the Exalted One's disciples - worthy of offerings and hospitality, worthy of gifts and salutation, supreme field of merit for the world.

To the Sanghas of the past,
To the Sanghas of the future,
To the Sanghas of the present
I offer my reverence always.

For me there is no other refuge,
The Sangha is my matchless refuge.
By these words of truth
May joyous victory be mine.

With my forehead I pay reverence
To the matchless threefold Sanghas;
If I have done wrong to the Sanghas
May the Sangha please forgive me.

They go to many a refuge,
Those who have been struck by fear,
They go to mountains and forests,
To parks and trees and shrines.

But this is not a secure refuge,
This is not the refuge supreme,
Not by relying on such a refuge

Can one be freed from all suffering.

But one who has gone for refuge
To the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha,
Sees with perfect wisdom
The Four Noble Truths.

Suffering, the arising of suffering,
The transcending of suffering,
And the Noble Eightfold path
That leads to suffering's final end

This is the refuge that is secure,
This is the refuge that is supreme,
By relying on such a refuge as this
One is released from all suffering.

May your Refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha increase now and in
the future.

May all beings, in the ten directions, seen and unseen, receive
blessings from this article.

We thank the Devas and Devatas of Learning for their help in and
guidance with the writing of this article.

May you be well and happy.

May all beings be well and happy.

This article was written and edited by the Buddhist Hour Radio Team:
Devas and Devatas of Learning and Pennie White.