

Precepts of Refuge

Once you have taken refuge, the stages of the precepts:

The Precepts are explained in 2 ways:

1. How they appear in the Compendium of Determinations
2. How they appear in the oral tradition

How they appear in the Compendium of Determinations

First set of subdivisions

1. **Rely on excellent persons** - You rely on excellent teachers when you see them as the source of all good qualities. You have already gone to the Buddha for refuge and thereby uphold the teacher of the path as your refuge. The practice that accords with this is actual reliance on the one who teaches the path to you.
2. **Listen to the sublime teachings** and
3. **fix your attention properly on them** - You should listen to whatever is appropriate among the sutras and the like, teachings which are sublime because the Buddha and the Buddha's disciples explained them. In addition, focus on whatever serves to dispel the afflictions, for you have already gone to the teaching for refuge and you have thus undertaken to actualize both the verbal teachings and the teachings as they are realized. The practice that conforms with this is listening to and fixing your attention properly on the sublime teachings.
4. **cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings** - you should practice in accord with the teachings on nirvana. When you have gone for refuge, to the sangha you have therefore taken as companions persons who are on the path to nirvana. The practice that accords with this is training in the way of those who are intent upon liberation.

Second set of subdivisions

1. **Do not excite your sensory faculties** - When the sense faculties draw the inattentive mind to objects, you should view this excitement with regard to the sensory objects as a fault, and withdraw the mind from them.
2. **Take up the precepts correctly** - You should take up the trainings set forth by the Buddha - as many as possible.
3. **Be Compassionate Towards Living Beings** - The Buddha's teaching is distinguished

by compassion. Therefore, once you have gone to his teachings for refuge, you should also be compassionate towards living beings and forsake harming them.

4. **Strive to Make Periodic Offerings to the 3 Jewels** - Each day you should make offerings to the 3 jewels.

How they appear in the Oral Tradition

In the Oral tradition, the precepts are divided into special precepts and general precepts

Special Precepts

These are explained in terms of proscriptive and prescriptive precepts

The Proscriptive Precepts

Those who go to the three jewels for refuge
Come closer to the truly virtuous
They never go
To other deities for refuge .

Those who go to the sublime teaching for refuge
Harbor no harmful, murderous thoughts.
Those who go to the community for refuge
Do not associate with non-buddhist philosophers

Thus there are 3 prescriptive precepts: 1. Not going to other deities for refuge 2. abandoning harm and malice towards living beings - in thought or deed 3. not befriending non-Buddhist philosophers - not agreeing with those who do not believe in the 3 jewels as refuge and who repudiate them

The Prescriptive Precepts

1. **Treat images of the Buddha as objects of reverence** - as though they were the real teacher himself. Not pointing out their faults regardless of their quality, not disrespecting them and treating them with contempt by putting them in dishonorable places, pawning them, etc.
2. **Never show disrespect for writings on the teachings**, even those composed of as little as 4 words. You shouldn't pawn them, place them on the bare ground, carrying them with shoes, walk over them, etc. Treat them with respect as if they were the teaching jewel itself.
3. Never revile or despise members of the community, renunciates, or those who merely possess the symbols of a practitioner of virtue [someone who dresses like a monk or nun]

but has no vows]. Never in any way divide yourself and others into opposing factions and view the others as enemies. Always treat members of the community with respect as if they were the community jewel itself.

This dwelling in the forest, desiring good qualities,
Should not scrutinize others' faults.
They should not think,
"I am superior; I am the best"

Such arrogance is the root of all unruliness.
Do not despise inferior monks,
Or you will not achieve liberation for an eon.
Such is the way of this teaching.

-Exhortation to Wholehearted Resolve.

For as much as we respect the 3 jewels, so will living beings respect us.

You will obtain a result similar
To the kinds of karma you do.

General Precepts

There are 6 general precepts:

*** 1.)By recalling the distinctions and good qualities of the 3 jewels, go for refuge again and again-** as previously explained, you should repeatedly keep in mind the difference between non-buddhist and buddhists, the distinctions among the 3 jewels, and the good qualities of the 3 jewels.

*** 2.)By recalling the kindness of the 3 jewels, strive to worship them constantly and offer the first portion of your food and drink. -**

Though they obtain food due to the buddha's merit,
The childish do not repay their kindness

- The King of Concentrations Sutra

Thus, knowing that all temporary goodness and certain goodness that you experience, symbolized by good, are due to the kindness of the 3 jewels, you should make offering with the intention of repaying their kindness.

With regards to offerings there are:

1. actions of offering
2. the attitudes

actions of offering

1. **Offerings to the Buddha's body** means offerings to the actual embodiment as form
2. **Offerings to stupas** - offering to stupas and the like
3. **Offering to a perceived object** - offerings to the above mentioned two as they manifest to your own sensory faculties
4. **Offering to a unperceived object** - offerings made to a Buddha or his stupas that are not actually present, and made for the sake of all buddhas and stupas. When you make an offering to the unperceived buddhas and stupas, you are also making offerings to the perceived objects, for the reality of emptiness of one of them, is the reality of all of them. It is standard to make offerings to perceived and unperceived with the thought "I make offerings to all the Buddhas of the three times and to the stupas of the 10 directions of the limitless universe". Making an offering to a perceived object accumulates mass merit, and unperceived even greater. Making offerings to all the buddhas and stupas accumulates more merit than even that. Thus it is important when you make an offering to a single buddha or his image, you recollect the indivisibility of reality and project the thought that you are making offerings to all of them.
5. **Offerings made yourself** - offerings made manually by yourself. Do not have other make them for you out of your laziness.
6. **Offerings that you help others to make** - offerings that you out of compassion, cause someone else to make. You will both share the merits.
7. **Offerings of wealth and service** - offerings to a buddha or his stupa consisting of gifts of clothing, food, bedding, seats, medicine, personal necessities, incense, aromatic powders, ointment, flowers, music, various types of lamps. There is also offering of prostrations, rising, hands joined together respectfully, obesiensene with limbs or head touching the ground, clockwise circumambulation. Inexhaustible gifts such as fields can be given, jewelry, bells, silver coins, etc.
8. **Vast Offerings** - Means offering the above over a long duration of time. They have 7 qualities: being copious, excellent, both perceived and non perceived, done by both oneself and others, being offered with heartfelt delight, fervent aspiration, with merit being dedicated towards perfect enlightenment.
9. **Offerings not contaminated with afflictions** - offerings with 6 qualities they are made 1) manually by yourself or not making others do them out of contempt, careless, or laziness 2) respectfully 3) without distraction 4) free of the afflictions in that they are not mixed with attachment and the like 5) without expectation of receiving wealth and service from a king who has faith in the buddha 6) proper material accompaniments(whatever is free

of inappropriate things).

10. You should delight in all the appropriate offerings to the tathagata that exist through the universe... imagine them to be vast and pervasive, and rejoice in others offering them.
11. Having made this great measureless offering, you will, with little difficulty, amass the accumulations necessary for attaining enlightenment. Strive constantly to do this with a contented, happy mind.
12. **10. offerings of practice** - entails recollecting the 4 immeasurables, the fourfold condensations of the teaching [impermanence, suffering, selflessness, nirvana], three refuges, and the perfections, admiring profound emptiness and fixing it without conceptualizations; disciplining your mind through the vows of ethical discipline; meditating on and striving for the factors of enlightenment, the perfections, and the 4 ways of gathering disciples, all for 10 to 15 minutes.

To make these 10 types of offering to the 3 jewels is to make a complete offering.

attitudes of offering

When you make these 10 types of offerings, there are 6 attitudes that will render immeasurable the result of even small offering to any of the three jewels. You should make offerings with the thoughts that:

1. there is no higher field of good qualities
2. there is no higher benefactor
3. he is the best of all beings
4. he is extremely rare, like the udumvara flower
5. since only one buddha appears in a universe of three billion world systems, he is the only one
6. he is the foundation of all mundane and supra mundane good

These 10 types and 6 attitudes are from *the bodhisattva levels*

You should always make the best offerings you can, make especially good offerings on holiday and auspicious days.

Since you constantly have to eat and drink, always offer the first portion of your food and drink.

If you do this without fail, you will easily amass a large accumulation of merit. Thus, from the bottom of your heart, always offer the first portion of what you consume from the bottom of your heart, even water.

No field of merit like you
Exists in the three worlds--
You are the supreme recipients of gifts,
The pure one who makes a row of monks pure.

Just as the height and breadth
Of the firmament have no limit,
There is no limit to the fruition
Of helping or harming you.

-Praise in Honor of One Worthy of Honor

Since our practice is such that we cannot even think of a supreme field of merit as we would an ordinary field, we should always strive to make offerings to the three jewels.

By doing so our mind's power with respect to the stages of the path will increase as a result of the strength of the roots of virtue grown in this excellent field of merit. Therefore, when our mind's power is so weak that we cannot retain the words we study, understand the meaning when we reflect, or gain knowledge when we meditate, we should rely on the power of the field of merit. This is a personal instruction.

By depending on you Bhagavad,
My mind, though weak, has broadened
Like a river in the rainy season,
Attaining great skill in composing poetry.

-Sri Matreceta

Offerings are not determined by the material objects offered, but your faith

Thus if you do not have materials, then water, mandalas, etc will suffice if you have faith.

*** 3.) Establish other living beings in this practice by considering them with compassion**

This means that you should use all available means to daringly establish other living beings in the practice of going for refuge

*** 4.) Whatever activity you engage in, and whatever your purpose, make offerings and supplications to the three jewels, forsaking any worldly benefit**

Whatever activity you engage in, and whatever your purpose, rely on and do what accords with the three jewels, such as making offerings to them. But never do that which does not accord with the three jewels, such as relying on another religion. Always entrust yourself to the three

jewels.

*** 5.) After you have understood the benefits, for for refuge 3 times in the day and 3 times at night.**

The benefits of going for refuge are first explained according to the *Comendium of Determinations* and then according to the personal instructions.

Benefit as they appear in the Compendium of Determinations

These are explained in 2 sets of four.

First Set of Four

1) You will Obtain Vast Merit

The Bhagavan Buddha is inconceivable.
The sublime teaching is also inconceivable.
The noble community is inconceivable.
For those having faith in the conceivable
The fruition is also inconceivable.

-The Immortal Drumbeat Dhahran

If there merit of going for refuge took form,
Even these three realms would be too small to contain it--
A cupped hand cannot measure
The great ocean, the storehouse of water.

-Aryasura

2) You will Obtain both joy and supreme joy

Those who, recalling the Buddha
During the day and night,
Go for refuge to him,
Gain the advantage of being human

-Collection of Indicative Verse

You should apply this to the other 2 jewels swell. Those the one who relies on these 3 refuges grows more joyful with the thought "I have really gotten something worth getting!"

3) You will Obtain concentration and 4) you will obtain purity

You will be liberated through training in concentration and wisdom

The Second Set of Four

1) You will have great protection

This will be explained later

2) You will reduce, extinguish, and totally annihilate all obscurations derived from incorrect belief

You will reduce and clear away all bad karma accumulated on account of your believing in bad teachers, teachings, and friends and upholding them as refuges

3) You are counted among excellent persons, who genuinely accomplish the sublime

You are included among excellent persons

4) You delight and receive the approval of your teachers and religious companions, and of the deities who take joy in the teaching

You please your teachers and religious companions. The deities think "The person named such and such, who, like us, has gone for refuge, will die and be reborn here. Because he or she has gone for refuge and has become stable in it, she or she will be our companion!"

Benefit as they appear in the Personal Instructions

There are 8 in number.

1) You are included among the buddhists

The Elder and Santipa distinguish them according to the refuges they seek, and you should count as Buddhists those who have obtained and not forsaken their refuge. Thus, to initially be included among the Buddhists you must uphold the three jewels as your teacher and so forth from the depths of your heart. Without this, you are not included among buddhists, no matter what virtue you create.

2) You become worthy to uphold vows

0 lay practitioners, going for refuge to the 3 jewels is the basis of the 8 vows

-Chandrakirti

The meaning is that, you make your aspiration for nirvana by going for refuge, and that your vows arise from this.

3) You reduce and eliminate previously accumulated bad karma

Just as the god who was about to be reborn as a pig avoided such a birth by going for refuge, so too do you climate the conditions for rebirth in a miserable realm by going for refuge.

Those who go for refuge to the Buddha
Do not go to miserable realms.
After giving up human form,
They assume the bodies of dieties

The same applies to going for refuge to the other 2. Karma is reduced and eliminates

4) You will accumulate mass merit

This has been explained already

5) You will not fall into miserable realms

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6) You will not be thwarted by human or non human hindrances

7) You will accomplish everything you wish

If, before undertaking a religious activity, you make offerings to the 3 jewels, go for refuge, and then pray to succeed, you will easily accomplish it

8) You will quickly achieve buddhahood

Through faith you overcome lack of leisure

- The Sutra Requested By a Lion

Thus, one who obtains a special kind of leisure, encounters the refuge, and rains in the special path will achieve buddhahood without delay.

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Each day recall the benefits in the manner above. Then go for refuge 3 times during the day and 3 times at night

*** 6.) Maintain your refuge and do not forsake the three jewels, even in jest of if it costs you your life**

Inevitably you will lose your body, life, and resources. But if you forsake the 3 jewels for the sake of these, you will suffer continually throughout many lives. Thus, you should repeatedly vow that whatever happens, you will not forsake your refuge --- not even mouthing the words in jest.

How contravening these precepts causes weakening and forsaking your refuge is explained as follows.

An actual forsaking of your refuge means the you have contravened the precept not to forsake refuge any for the sake of your life.

If you do not forsake the three jewels, but also contravene the precept not to acknowledge the refuges... since you are not fully entrusting yourself to the refuge, you have forsaken it. If these 2 do not occur, other contraventions of the precepts are just contraventions, but not the causes of forsaking refuge.

This being the case, going for refuge is the main door the buddhas teaching. If you go for refuge in a way that transcends mere words, you will not be defeated by outer and inner obstacles, for you are relying upon the highest power. Since good qualities develop easily and deteriorate with difficulty, they can only continue to increase.

Therefore it is extremely important, as previously explained, to uphold the refuges by means of fearing suffering, recalling the good qualities of the refuges, and so forth, and to make an effort to not transgress the precepts.

How does the refuge protect your from the fear of falling to lower realms after death?

I, the Tathagata, the Teacher,
Reveal to you,
The path that stops the pain of existence;
You must follow it.

Thus, the Buddha is the one who teaches refuge, and the community assists you in accomplishing refuge, but the real refuge is the jewel of the teaching, because once you have attained it, you are liberated from fear. With regard to this, the ultimate teaching jewel is defined as being the special fulfillment of the gradual increase of 2 things -- the beginning practitioners eliminations of a mere portion of faults, and his or her knowledge that brings about a mere portion of good qualities. This is not something that appears adventitiously(formed accidentally).