

Introduction

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is the first step to become a Buddhist. Before you decide to take refuge in the Triple Gem, you should read Triple Gem, and get fully acquainted with what the Triple Gem represents. Some people may find that they acquire more faith by taking refuge from a virtuous monk, and this is totally fine. In fact, taking refuge from a Noble monk should be more encouraged than taking the refuge alone.

(the text below is an extract from [The Triple Refuge](#) by Sayagi U Chit Tin)

Taking refuge will be broken for ordinary people when they die, but this breaking is blameless and does not bring bad results. On the other hand, breaking the taking of the Triple Refuge during one's life is very serious. This is broken whenever a person goes for refuge to a teacher outside the Buddha's Dispensation or when a person is disrespectful to the Triple Gem. Those who are Noble Ones will never break with their refuge. But ordinary people, through ignorance, doubt, and wrong knowledge about the special qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, are susceptible to breaking their refuge.

Once a person has taken refuge in the Triple Gem, including the Sangha in its ultimate sense, refuge will not be broken by paying respects to the *Sangha* that includes ordinary persons (the Bhikkhu-Sangha, the Bhikkhuni-Sangha,

the Sangha headed by the Buddha, a chapter of the Sangha

or even one person who has ordained in the Buddha's Sangha

). There are other circumstances when it is also possible to pay respects without breaking the Triple Refuge. If a person pays respects to a relative while bearing in mind, "He is my kinsman," the Triple Refuge is not broken, even if that relative belongs to another religion. Or a person can pay respects out of fear to someone like a king, thinking, "If honor is not paid to the one who is honored by the whole country, he will harm me." Finally, a person can pay respects to someone who has taught him some science, art, or craft, if that person is honored in his capacity as a teacher.

Taking the Triple Refuge can be of great benefit. In two discourses to the layman Mahanama,

the Buddha says that those who attain unwavering faith in the Triple Gem by reaching one of the four stages of Awakening are assured of release from suffering. But even those who are not Noble Ones and whose faith may not be absolute can escape from rebirth in the lower planes of suffering. Two types of individuals are mentioned: (1) those who possess the five faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, and who approve of the Buddha's Teachings by having developed insight; (2) those who possess the five faculties and who have faith in and affection for the Buddha.

We can see from these texts that it is very important to combine taking refuge with practising the Teachings of the Buddha. This will mean making the effort to acquire the faculties that enable us to wake up from the long sleep of ignorance that has brought us so much suffering.

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Taking Refuge

Ashin Buddhaghosa explains that there are several ways to take refuge in the Triple Gem, and they are,

1. The best known way to take refuge is to use the three statements. To take refuge, chant the following,

Buddham saranam gacchami.
Dhammam saranam gacchami.
Sangham saranam gacchami.
I go to the Buddha for refuge.
I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami.
Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami.
Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami.
For the second time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.
For the second time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
For the second time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.

Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami.

Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami.

Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami.

For the third time, I go to the Buddha for refuge.

For the third time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

For the third time, I go to the Sangha for refuge.

2. A person can take refuge by assuming the status of a pupil. The leading disciple Ven. Mahakassapa is the example of someone who took refuge in this way.

3. A person can take refuge by paying homage. The example is given by *Ashin Buddhaghosa*, who was the layman Brahmayu.

4. Refuge may be taken by devoting oneself to the Triple Gem, just as a meditator devotes himself to his meditation subject.

5. Those who become Noble Ones (*Ariyas*) attain the Supramundane Refuge by cutting off their imperfections.

Final Words

Now you have officially become a Buddhist if you take refuge in the Triple Gem. If you have fully read Triple Refuge, you should know what to do next for yourself. Most people also choose to take the Five Precepts in order to devote themselves more into the practice of the Dhamma.

You may also find many useful resources on our website, and if you have questions, please don't feel embarrassed to ask.