

## THE THREE REFUGES (The Triple Gem)

1. Buddha – the Teacher, Awakened One
2. Dhamma – the teachings of the Buddha, the Middle Path
3. Sangha – the enlightened disciples who have followed the teachings

When people begin to understand the Buddha's teachings and wish to formally adopt them as the guiding principle in life, they undertake the tradition of "Going for Refuge" and "taking the Five Precepts" (discussed in next session).

The attitude of Going for Refuge is important. It is the foundation of one's practice of the Buddhist path.

What do we need refuge from? The suffering (dukkha) that we inevitably confront in this life and in the repeating round of birth and death (samsara).

We seek refuge in the Teacher (Buddha), who by his own efforts reached liberation (nirvana), in a clearly described Path that we can follow (Dhamma), and in those who have reached a stage of enlightenment by following this path (Sangha). They are often referred to as the Three Gems.

Confidence in the Refuges deepens and becomes internalised as one develops understanding of the teachings through one's own practice. Going for Refuge regularly is a reminder of the guiding Principles which support our practice so that our practice will gradually open our eyes to reality and be free of all delusion.

Traditionally the act of Going for Refuge is performed in a ceremony, with chanting in *Pali language* as described in discourses dating back 2500 years and followed ever since.

Homage to the Buddha:

*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma-sambuddhassa*

Homage to him the Blessed One, the Noble one, the Perfectly Enlightened One. (three times)

Going for Refuge:

*Buddham saranam gacchami* (to the Buddha I go for refuge)

*Dhammam saranam gacchami* (to the Dhamma I go for refuge)

*Sangham saranam gacchami* (to the Sangha I go for refuge)

*Dutiyampi* (for the second time) *Buddham saranam gacchami*

*Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami*

*Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami*

*Tatiyampi* (for the third time) *Buddham saranam gacchami*

*Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami*

*Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami*