

## Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels

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Dharma teaching by the 19th incarnation Lochen Tulku Rinpoche in Singapore  
(Edited version)

Lochen Rinpoche speaks:

Today, we are going to talk about taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

### **The Buddha said to examine his words thoroughly**

First, you must be aware that the Buddha said, “*Monks and lay people should not take my words blindly but should examine my words thoroughly and then you should follow.*” For example, a goldsmith will examine the gold by burning, cutting and rubbing.

A goldsmith will carefully examine the gold, similarly you should examine the words of the Buddha thoroughly and you should not take the words merely because the Buddha said so. It is very clear that the Buddha has said that and all the followers of the Buddha and the non-followers of the Buddha must know about this.

When you take refuge in the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha); you must also examine them thoroughly and understand clearly what it means by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Once you are really convinced that you must take refuge in the Three Jewels then you should go forward and take the refuge seriously and make unbreakable commitments.

Therefore, I thought it is very important to tell you that we should not jump into taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and once you have done it then you should be very stable and unshakeable. That is very important.

Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is the entrance gate for becoming a Buddhist or the entrance gate to the practice of Buddhism. So, if you want to become a true Buddhist then you have to take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It is like becoming a citizen of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the Buddha's kingdom, you should think carefully - whether if, is able to follow the law in that kingdom or if it will benefit you.

### **What are the two causes for Taking Refuge?**

We have already talked about that there will be no result or effect without a cause. So taking refuge also needs a cause. There two main causes are the fear of suffering and faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

### **What does Taking Refuge mean?**

Taking refuge means - you need help. You are seeking for help and you need shelter. Why do you need help? Because you have full of problems and you cannot solve the problems. You are suffering and you don't see the way out, therefore you need help.

### **What are the kinds of suffering?**

You need to fear suffering then you will seek help very seriously. So for that, you got to know the suffering of Samsara. There are many people who do not like to hear about suffering. If we talked a lot of suffering and Samsara, they get bored. But it is inevitable; we must talk about it, if we don't talk about the suffering of Samsara then we cannot detach ourselves from Samsara. We will not be able to be liberated from Samsara. Therefore, we have to realize that Samsara as an ocean of suffering. At the moment, we see Samsara as a beautiful garden; in this case you strengthen the attachment to Samsara in that way you will not seek any refuge, right?

We have already talked about the six realms (*read The Cause and Effect System – Karma*), wherever you take birth among the six realms you are in trouble. At the moment, we are in the human realm and it is full of suffering and we can see that. If we don't give deep thoughts or sometimes you don't have many obvious problems and you think this is quite a good and pleasurable place. But if you think deeply all happiness is in the nature of suffering.

For example: when we are hungry, we can get food that satisfies our hunger and we think this is happiness. But this is not happiness - it is just reducing your suffering of hunger and at that moment you feel some relief and you then think this is happiness. But eating food is not happiness by its nature. If it is so, then if you keep on eating, you should get happier and happier. But if you keep on eating after a while, you will suffer more, you feel like vomiting, your stomach is aching and that shows eating food has the nature of suffering.

Another example: if you are working hard by standing in a factory or wherever. You get tired and you want to sit down. When you get the time to sit down, you feel relaxed and you think this is a happy and pleasurable moment. But if you keep on sitting for one or two hours and you get tired again of sitting and you want to get up. So, it already shows the nature of suffering.

Every so-called pleasurable feeling in the human realm is naturally suffering. When we are taking birth that is called birth suffering and when we get sick and that is also suffering - even though it is a small sickness and if the sickness is greater and the suffering is greater. Then, the aging suffering - everybody gets older slowly, getting a lot of pain and diseases and you can be attacked by diseases easily and you cannot get up and so forth and that is aging suffering - that is a permanent layer of human form. . Finally, the death suffering -this is the main nature of suffering in the human realm.

### **We always get, what we do not want to get.**

We always don't get, what we want to get. That is always there. We want to be rich - it is very difficult to become rich. You don't want to get sick and you get sick. That is also the nature of this human realm. It is always there with everybody, not only with us. - The powerful, the rich and the poor also have a lot of sufferings. So, all these sufferings are in this human realm. So, now we must think how to get out of these sufferings. Is there anyway out? - That is the question.

There is suffering - that is not the question it is there. If we analyze, we can realize it easily but if we don't analyze and we don't want to realize it- that is another question. Sometimes, people do not want to hear about sufferings, they just try to avoid thinking about suffering. That doesn't help. Temporary - it may help sometimes but ultimately that it is not the method to get out of sufferings. So we must realize that.

### **What are the sufferings in other realms?**

In the hell realm you can see that there are sufferings. There are 8 cold and 8 hot realms and altogether there are 16 major hell realms and 8 minor hell realms. Actually, they are countless.

Since you believe in the cause and effect system - so a bad cause has a bad result, right? So, there must be some kind of bad result like hell. We cannot see where hell is. Only the Buddha saw the hell and some superior beings might have seen but we have never seen and the scientists have also never seen. But, they may not be a certain place or like a country, which is called a hell realm.

For example, we are boiling a live fish in hot water you can see - that is hell. Or lobsters dying slowly in boiling hot water, you boil them in boiling water and still they are alive - That is also hell - so hell is there, we can see. Similarly, I think it is happening in the world.

We cannot say that since we cannot see then there is no hell. That is not a valid reason. An Indian Pandit said, "*If that is the reason, if you don't see and you don't believe it.*" If that is the reason, then staying in Singapore, you should believe that there is no America because you don't see it. So, that is not a valid reason. Behind this building there is another building. Can you say that there is no building because you cannot see it from here? So, merely it is not seen by you cannot be the reason. The hell realms can be there, logically we can think of it. We can also take rebirth in different forms like fish, lobsters and we can be boiled in boiling water and that is hell realm we could suffer.

### **The suffering in the Hungry Ghost Realm**

Some people can see some kind of ghosts and spirits - that is there. Normally, we don't see them. It is not only in the east but also in the west some people have seen that kind of beings. There are some kinds of subtle beings that we don't see but they are there - there are also proofs of the existence of such beings. Hungry ghosts normally suffer from hunger - that mainly is the result from being greedy. When we become very greedy and we are not generous, there is a chance to take rebirth in the hungry ghost realm and we can suffer miserably. These spirits have long lives, which are unlike human beings - they live up to 500 or 1000 years.

I heard in the Chinese tradition there are many oracles and in our society we also have many oracles. Most of the spirits in the oracles are hungry ghosts. In our society that kind of hungry ghosts drink a lot of water and they like smells because sometimes they don't have the power to eat or drink but they enjoy the smell of incense and so forth. So they have some kind of power, which is called *karmic clairvoyance*.

Normally, the power of clairvoyance should be attained by mediation and practice but these spirits have certain limited clairvoyance power. They have got this power through their karma and that is called *Karmic Clairvoyance*. So, they can make some kind of little predictions but that doesn't mean that they are gods. Sometimes we get deceived and we may think, " *ah is very useful to consult them*" but they don't see very far and mostly they can mislead you.

### **The suffering in the Animal Realm**

You can see and imagine the animals that are suffering in our society or in our world. There is a greater society of animas than what we see in this world, which is also suffering. When we talk about suffering in the human realm, there are 3 categories:

#### **The suffering in Human Realm: First is Suffering of Suffering**

That is like sickness or unsuccessful business and in jobs and or so forth. - All these are sufferings of suffering. As human beings we are already suffering. When we take birth we have started suffering already because when we are coming out from our mother's womb - we don't remember now because our memory has disappeared or has faded now. It is very difficult to come out from such a small hole and you feel like being squeezed between two mountains. The Buddha said it in his sutra. Living in the mother's womb is very smooth and when we come out and the baby is put in smooth clothes but it is very rough for the new-born baby and at that time we are also suffering.

What I am trying to say is, as soon as we take birth we are suffering. That is the nature. But on top of that we get sickness, unwanted things, bad luck, and unsuccessful business and in jobs and all these are sufferings of suffering.

#### **The suffering in Human Realm: The second is Changing of Suffering.**

This we have already spoken about. When you are thirsty you drink water, at the beginning it is happiness but as you drink a lot, it will turn into suffering. That is changing suffering.

#### **The suffering in Human Realm: The third is Pervasive Suffering.**

It is always there but it is not very obvious, as long as we are in Samsara and even in god or semi-god realms and all other realms we carry this pervasive suffering wherever we go. Unless we can get rid of the third suffering we cannot be liberated. So when we are liberated we can get rid of the third suffering permanently.

### **The Suffering in the Desire God Realm**

The desire god realm almost has no suffering as the way we suffer in the human realm. Therefore, in the desire realm only the third kind of suffering is there. The desire realm does not have the first and second suffering, most of the time the suffering of suffering and the change of the suffering are not there so, they are quite happy.

Sometimes in the god realm, some are richer than the others. Some gods are more powerful than others. Sometimes, the powerful ones try to press down the powerless ones. When seeing the richer gods, the poorer gods get jealous - that kind of suffering is there.

The main suffering is - one week before their death, the powerful and glory bodies start to decline, their bodies start to smell and the flowers that they wear starts to decay. The girlfriends and other friends or boyfriends try to avoid these dying gods because their bodies are smelly and no longer are beautiful. So, they are in great suffering. Some good friends when they see their friends who are dying sometimes put flowers on a long stick and try to put on it on that god. Their friends do not want to go near that dying god because he is smelly and at that time the dying gods can see where they are going to be reborn in the next life. If they are going to be born in lower or human realms, they think it is full of suffering and they do not want take rebirth there but they have no choice and they go through huge and unthinkable suffering.

The god realm's one week is not the same as our human realm. Fifty years of human years is one day of the lowest desire god realm. So for 350 years of human years they have to suffer and that is after enjoying in the desire god realm for 500 years.

Wherever we take rebirth, there are full of suffering and we must realize that. Now we do not want to continue with all these sufferings. We have been suffering for countless of lifetimes. We do not want to suffer anymore. We need help. Who can help us? We must look for those who can help us from these kinds of sufferings.

**We can only find refuge in the Three Jewels – The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.**

No one other can help us not even the gods, as I have just mentioned, they themselves are suffering. They do have certain powers and are indeed much more powerful than us. They also have some karmic clairvoyance powers. In some oracles, both gods and spirits can also enter, it is not only hungry ghosts but their powers are still limited -very limited. They can help us for a short while but in terms of longer periods, they have no power to help us.

So now, we are looking for help to take us from the ocean of suffering which is Samsara. We are seeking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The first cause is fear of suffering. This you have understood.

**The second cause for Taking Refuge: Faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.**

For this you need to know about the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. If you do not know about Buddha, Dharma and Sangha then you cannot have faith in them.

If you do not know about one person and he is a stranger to you. How can you trust this man? He may be a good person but you cannot trust this man because you do not know him, right? Therefore, first you must what are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Then you must know that if you ask for help from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha they can and they will help you. You must know about that.

**There are 3 considerations:**

1. You must regard yourself as a patient.
2. You must regard the Buddha as a doctor.
3. You must regard the Sangha as a nurse

Sangha are like nurses or helpers in a hospital who are helping you to go to the toilet and cook for you and so forth. Why do we seek help from the Buddha?

### **There are Four Reasons why we Seek Refuge from the Buddha**

**The first reason: The Buddha is liberated from all kinds of fear.**

If he is also suffering in Samsara then he may not be able to help. For example, if someone is drowning in a lake, you cannot help each other very much because both of you are drowning and do not know how to swim. So, you need a person who can swim and is not drowning so this person can help you. If the Buddha himself is suffering in Samsara and he has a fear of suffering then he will not be able to help us. But, he is totally free from all these kinds of fear and he is totally free from all kinds' sufferings. Therefore, he is capable to help us.

**The second reason: The Buddha is skillful to help sentient beings.**

If he is capable but not skillful then sometimes instead of helping us, it can hurt us. But the Buddha is not like that he is very skilful and knows the right timing to help us. He knows the nature of all of us. He knows exactly what our intentions are. He knows what kind of potential you have. When he sees his disciples, he can help them in many different ways. According to the individual intentions, motivations, and nature - because we all have different natures and different natures need different methods to practice.

For example, in the Buddha's time, there was a king known as King of Smell-Eater. His name was Ragha - which means an ever-joyful person. The Buddha wanted to help this King to get out of Samsara. But the time was not ripened; whenever the Buddha tried to help him, he couldn't help him. The king was a good guitar player so he always played the guitar and he enjoyed that. His skill of playing the guitar was incomparable and he was very proud of his skills. Playing the guitar always distracts him. He never listened to the Buddha.

When the right time came, the Buddha emanated into another form - he also played a guitar. The king was playing a guitar with a thousand strings. Each guitar had one thousand strings. So, both of them were playing equally good. Then they both took a string out, so now they had 999 strings and they still had the same music. One by one they took out a string and finally there was only one string and the King was playing as good as he played with a thousand strings. The Buddha also played with the same skills. And finally the Buddha took out his last string and without any string he played and has the same music. The king was defeated because he couldn't play without a string. The king's pride gone down and he was not only surprised but also admired the Buddha. Finally, the Buddha showed him his real form and gave dharma talks and finally this King attained Arahathood.

The Buddha was also waiting for the right time. He knows when the right time is but we don't know. There are many stories like that. When the right time comes, the Buddha helps the person. Even the Buddha has all the powers he cannot help when the right time

hasn't come because of karmic power - cause and effect. The law of karma is very powerful.

The power of karma and the power of the Buddha are considered equal. When someone's karma is ripening, to give the result then the Buddha cannot stop that. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any suffering in the world. There wouldn't be any hell realm or lower realms in the world. The Buddha might have already destroyed them if he had the power. But the karmic law is equally powerful. So you have to wait for the right time. The Buddha knows when the right time is for individuals, the nature of the individuals and the intentions of the individuals. So, he is very skilful to help others.

**The third reason: The Buddha has great compassion.**

We also have compassion but our compassion is partial. We feel compassion towards our relatives, children but we cannot be compassionate to our enemies. But Buddha's compassion is impartial. The Buddha's compassion is for everybody. There is no question of enemies, relatives or friends - so this compassion is great compassion. It is equal to all beings. That's why it is called great compassion -even if we hurt him it doesn't matter right?

**The forth reason: The Buddha helps all beings equally.**

Since he has great compassion he will not see if someone benefited him, hurt him or not benefited him. It doesn't make any difference. For example, in our human society if someone has helped us then we would also like to help him or her. If someone has not helped us then we don't care. If someone has hurt us, then we definitely we would like to hurt him or her, too. The Buddha is not like that, he can help all the beings equally -these are the four reasons why we can take refuge in the Buddha.

**The Buddha has other qualities.**

The Buddha has body, speech and mind qualities. The historic Buddha - Sakyamuni Buddha's form is called Nirmanakaya. Kaya means body and Nirmana means emanation. So it means "Emanation Body."

Supreme emanation body - that is Buddha Sakyamuni. His body has 32 major signs and 80 minor signs, which are very attractive. When you see the Buddha's body it is always attractive to everybody and if you have faith in the Buddha then it is very joyful to see the Buddha's body. So out of 32 great signs, there is one hair curled clockwise in the middle of the eyebrows. That is the main major sign of the quality of the Buddha. His crown top is curled and mounting up. When he walks, it looks like he is walking on the ground but his feet are not touching the ground so any kinds of insects cannot be killed by his steps because his feet are not actually touching the ground. These are the good qualities of the Buddha's body and mind.

### **Buddha's speech is melodious**

When you hear the Buddha's voice, just merely hearing the voice you can feel joy and can get realizations. He speaks in one language to a huge gathering of multi-language speakers, but the receivers can hear in their own languages and dialects. That is the quality of the Buddha's speech.

### **His mind is omniscient wisdom**

He knows all the objects of phenomenon very clearly as you have put it on your palm. All phenomena he can see like that. He also sees the ultimate nature of all phenomena and at the same time he can see all existing phenomena and that is the Buddha's wisdom. No any other superior beings can see that because when they are in meditation in seeing the ultimate nature of all phenomena - they are not able to see the phenomena itself. They see the feature of that phenomena – "*this is the ultimate nature*" they can see that but they cannot see the object and to see it together is not possible either but the Buddha can see that. That is the quality of the mind of the Buddha.

With all the qualities and great compassion, we can take refuge and believe in the Buddha because if you ask for help he will definitely help because he has great compassion.

### **What are Dharma of Instructions and Dharma of Realizations?**

What is Dharma? Dharma here means teachings of the Buddha. There are two kinds of Dharma. One is Dharma of instructions. Those are the words of the Buddha and the representative of the Buddha - who are our gurus, masters, lineage masters, and great scholars of India, Japan and China. All these words are dharma of instructions but the real dharma is the dharma of realizations.

The real dharma is the dharma of realizations. That is any kind of realizations:

- Realization of emptiness;
- Realization of bodhicitta;
- Realization of non-duality; and so forth.

There are many realizations and through the dharma of instructions or through the words of the Buddha we can attain realizations. When we attain realizations within ourselves then we can eliminate the negatives from ourselves. So that is how to take refuge in Dharma and how Dharma can help us.

### **The Buddhas and Dharma - What can they do?**

They can show us the path to enlightenment. How to get to enlightenment? What kind of practices should we practice? He gave dharma instructions and through them he can help. It is like a doctor who first diagnoses the disease. Then, he gives the prescription and advises you how to be hygienic and he makes you a diet list. Similarly, the Buddhas will give you the instruction; the Buddhas will show you the path to enlightenment; to liberation.



Then we take the medicine, we eat the medicine and we see the medicine get into our stomachs and it heals the diseases inside our bodies, right? Similarly, we practice Dharma and through the practice of Dharma we attain realizations. We attain more realizations, after realizations and realizations. Then, we go nearer and nearer to enlightenment. That is how Dharma is curing us and how we are being helped by Dharma.

### **The Sangha – How can they help us?**

Sangha are friends whom we associated with. So, it is very important for the beginners like us to associate with good people who have a sense of morality, kindness, shame and so forth. We should not associate with bad people. Parents are always advising their children not to associate with gangsters and not to make friends with those who are taking drugs and to be far away from those who have no sense of morality.

Similarly, the Buddhas also advise us in that way. We must associate with people who give good advices and suggestions and who create good atmospheres for us. That is how to practice taking refuge in Sangha. The actual Sangha is a practitioner who has realized emptiness directly. Those beings are called actual Sangha.

### **What are the Five Paths to Enlightenment?**

First Path - Accumulation Path

Second Path - Preparation Path

Third Path - Seeing Path

*(When you reach to Seeing Path, at that stage of realization, you become the actual Sangha. Why is it called the Seeing Path? This is because this practitioner sees emptiness directly.)*

Fourth Path - Mediation Path

Fifth Path - No More Learning Path

(This is the Buddhahood - no more learning)

The actual Sangha is - those who see emptiness directly and in Sanskrit they are called "Arhats." If you translated into English it is called - Superior Beings. In Tibetan, we say "Phag Pha" so they are the actual Sangha.

Now that you know about the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we see every reason to take refuge in them and we know we can trust the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. They have great compassion, so they will never deceive us. We can trust them fully. That is the second cause for taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

These two causes can generate taking refuge in the Three Jewels. Without these two causes, even if we can recite the prayers, the real taking refuge in the Three Jewels cannot be generated. If you want to generate the taking refuge in the Three Jewels, then you have to have these two causes within yourself. With these two causes we can take refuge in the Three Jewels. At this moment, you have entered into the Buddha's teaching and you have become a real Buddhist. As I have mentioned you have become citizens of the Buddha's Kingdom.

## What are the Benefits of Taking Refuge in Three Jewels?

**Firstly**, you become a Buddhist. **Secondly**, it is the foundation for all the vows. What is a vow? It is commitment, morality and discipline. These are very important for the beginners. Without the practice of morality, discipline and taking vows - we cannot develop further because we are always distracted.

We are familiar with the negative actions and not familiar with the positive actions from the beginning. For example, we can look at a child. You do not have to teach them how to be angry. If someone hits them they will get angry automatically. But to be patient, generous and compassionate, you have to teach them. That is a sign that they are familiar with their negatives actions but they are not familiar with their positive actions.

Therefore, for our development, it is very important to be more familiar with morality and discipline. At the beginning we have to control ourselves by force. *"Anger is not good for everybody, not for myself and others I must control anger"* - you should analyze it yourself whenever you get angry. You should look at yourself and try to find where the anger within you is. When you analyze where the anger within you is - the anger disappears and you will not find the anger within yourself. In that way you can calm yourself down and reduce the power of anger. We must try in every possible way to reduce our anger and ultimately to eliminate our anger. In this way we must train - that is morality, discipline and that is a vow we are taking and making a commitment.

For example, we all know smoking cigarettes are not good for our health. *"I know is bad for my lungs, but today one cigarette is ok, from tomorrow onwards I will see..."*

When tomorrow comes,

*"In the morning I will take one and in the afternoon I will stop smoking..."*

After lunch again the desire arises,

*"Then one is enough or half the cigarette ok?"*

In that way you cannot control yourself, so if you make a strong commitment - *"NO, I will stop smoking. I will make this commitment and I will challenge it."* Then in that way it helps to control more against smoking.

*"Oh, I have made the commitment if I break the commitment how I can face others; I wonder what other people will say."* He keeps on breaking the promises and he will lose his value. Think of that - commitments helps to control.

### **Why you should take the vows?**

In Dharma practice, there are many different stages of vows. The basic vows are the lay-people vows, there are eight self-liberation vows, on top of that Bodhicitta vows that are higher and above that Tantrayana vows that are even greater.

There are 3 different categories of vows in Buddhism. The basic vows are called the self-liberation or individual liberation. There are eight of them and the lay vows are the lowest one. Even if you take the lay vows, according to the Buddha's dharma, you need to take the refuge as a foundation. It is just like if you don't have the foundation so you cannot build or construct a house. So you need a good, firm foundation and taking refuge in the Three Jewels is the foundation. If you do not have the foundation how are you going to build? How are you going to take the vows? So it is the foundation for all the vows. This is the third benefit for taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

If you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels then it is easier for you to accumulate merits. How it is easier? Because when we take refuge in the Three Jewels then we have made a promise, "*I will listen to the Buddha; I will listen to the words of the Buddha.*"

If you don't listen to the doctor you will not be cured so if you want to be cured then you must listen to the doctor and you must follow the advice of the doctor. Similarly, you must follow the words of the Buddha. We have already made the promise to listen to the Buddha. And the Buddha's teaching is to accumulate merits. So, automatically, we will keep on accumulating merits.

### **How to practice Dharma? What does it mean by practicing Dharma?**

We must know that it is not just about reciting mantras or burning incenses. We must extract the benefit from Dharma. There are only two things. It is not a very complicated thing; it is very simple to know. It is a question whether we have the interest to know. It may be difficult to practice but it is not difficult to know.

### **The first is accumulation of merits and second is purification and confession.**

All the sins should be purified through confession and through other means and using the four powers we should purify ourselves. When you have accumulated merits fully - that means you cannot accumulate merits anymore, you have reached the peak, you cannot go further because you have purified all the negative energies. You have purified all the bad imprints and bad karma, no more bad energies or negative energies are left to be purified. That is enlightenment - You must be clear about this.

When you are knowledgeable about Buddhism you can tell others and practice yourself, also. In Buddhism there are two yanas; two vehicles' – Mahayana and Theravada. Theravada way of taking refuge and Mahayana taking refuge is slightly different. The Mahayana practitioners such as us- when we take refuge in Three Jewels we must think of all sentient beings: "*All sentient beings are also suffering, we all are taking refuge in the Three Jewels*" – we should feel motivated in that way.

### **The Power of Relying Upon - Purification and Bodhicitta**

Both Theravada and Mahayana both have purification practices. But when we talk about the Bodhimind; Theravada's Bodhimind is slightly different. In Theravada, the individual wants to be liberated and their final goal is liberation or Nirvana and not the full Enlightenment or Buddhahood. According to Mahayana should be Bodhi-citta – an

aspiration for Buddhhdhood. When we put these two together is one power. That is called the power of relying upon.

### **The Power of Regret**

And then power of regret- you have committed wrong doings, bad actions without knowing that these will give you bad results. Out of ignorance you have committeed these bad actions so now you feel regret.

For example, one poisonous food is in front of you. And you take it without knowing that this fruit is poisonous. Afterwards, somebody tells you that the fruit is poisonous. Then you regret: "Why have I taken this fruit?" You cannot remain still and rush to the hospital. "How do I take out all these poisons out from the stomach?" – So you must feel that kind of regret.

Once there was a monk. He was a huge monk and one day he was attacked by a snake who bit him on his foot. He was so scared; he was running and jumping, almost flying; and the fat body didn't bother him. It was out of fear that he could run and jump to the hospital, which was about two or three blocks away from the monastery. Finally, he reached the hospital. Similarly, we should feel the regret in this way.

### **The Power of Commitment**

Then you make a commitment, "*I never ever will engage in bad actions because these will lead me to suffer.*" So you should make a strong and firm commitment – the firmer the better.

At the beginning, when we make a commitment we will not be able to keep that commitment because we are familiar with wrong doings, so it is not that easy to control. Even so we should make firm commitments that will affect our daily lives. The frequency of making commitments will help you to reduce engaging in bad actions.

### **The Power of Antidote: 100-Syllable Vajrasattva Mantra**

For example, when you take the Highest Yoga Tantra initiation according to Tantrayana- the most dangerous downfall of commitments is the first one, which is the heaviest out of the 18 downfalls. If you break the first commitment according to the Highest Yoga Tantra – How to restore that?

If you recite the 100-syllable mantra one hundred thousand times then it can be restored. The first downfall is considered very scary and fearful and it can be very dangerous if you break it. If you cannot restore it before you die, then is quite definite that you may go to hell.

But there are two or three methods to restore broken commitments. One of them is reciting the 100-syllable mantra- 100,000 times. If that can be restored by reciting 100 syllable mantra- one hundred thousand times then the other small wrong doings can be easily purified by reciting 100 syllable mantra 21 times a day.

You can finish reciting the 100-syllable mantra one hundred thousand times in a month; it is not a big deal. If you go into a retreat, you dedicate most of the time to do this. Like 8 hours a day or 10 hours a day. If you use 10 hours a day reciting this mantra for a month then you can complete the one hundred thousand times of reciting the 100 syllable mantra. For beginners, it will take a little time to make it fluent. But after some practice, everything is possible.

### **Other Antidotes: Reciting Mantras**

There are also other mantras like Tara's mantra, Buddha Sakyamuni's mantra, and Guru Rinpoche's mantra, Lama Tsongkhapa's mantra and meditating on Bodhi-citta mind or emptiness. Maybe you don't have that deep understanding of Bodhi-citta mind or dependent origination and emptiness but you might have some amount of understanding. With that understanding, you can start because to be perfect, it takes time so, you can meditate on emptiness; bodhi-mind and slowly your understanding will improve.

### **Other Antidotes: Listening to Teachings and Reading Dharma Books**

If you can get teachings from Lamas you should get the teachings time and time again because once is not enough as you will forget and you need reminders. Do read books also and reading books once or twice are not enough. You must read three times, five times or ten times. Each time as you read dharma books, each time your understanding will improve. A full understanding cannot be achieved by reading a Dharma book once.

I had studied the Buddhist philosophy for 15 years from many renowned scholars, masters, teachers and Gurus but I still read books and I still get new understandings. So, most of you haven't read many books, so you need to read more. You cannot be perfect in the beginning but with some understanding you can develop by yourself. And through the blessings of the Buddhas, gurus and masters and through your practice of purification, your understanding will develop faster and one day you will suddenly get some realizations - some spiritual or positive powers. But it needs time and effort.

\*Meditation on emptiness is also considered power of using antidote.

### **The fifth benefit: Protected from negative forces from humans and non-humans.**

If you take refuge in the Three Jewels from the depth of your heart, with full trust and with the knowledge of the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha then you will definitely be protected from all evil forces. You should not be scared of black magic powers. You should not be scared of spirit evil forces. You will definitely be well protected. You should have a strong faith and absolute trust from the depth of your heart.

So, actually just reciting the words of taking refuge in the Three Jewels has also a lot of power. It can protect you from many evil forces.

There is a story in Tibet about a monk in a retreat living in a cave in the mountains. It was very cold in Tibet at that time. A thief came to know that there was one famous meditator in the cave and many people made offerings to this meditator. The thief

thought he must have lots of money, "I must steal." The thief was not scared of this meditator because he was alone in the cave. So, the thief went up to the cave but the door was closed so he asked, "open the door or I'll break the door." The meditator knew it was a thief who wanted to rob him. The meditator said, "It doesn't matter you need my money and things, so you put your hands through the window and I will give them all to you and you take it."

So the thief put his hands through the window and the meditator held the hands and tied them up and came out with a big stick and then he beat the thief's buttocks as he was reciting the refuge verses:

" take refuge in Buddha" he hit him once,

" take refuge in Dharma" ; he hit him another time;

" take refuge in Sangha" ; he hit him the third time.

The thief was badly hurt and was hardly able to move. Then, the meditator released the thief and let him go. He slowly went away and when he got to the foot of the hill it was already dark. There was a bridge and under that bridge as he was leading against the rock, he was thinking and his back was hurting badly and he was reciting, *"Take refuge in Buddha, take refuge in Dharma, and take refuge in Sangha. There are only 3 of them if there were four of them, and then my back would have been broken..."*

It said that normally at night on this bridge many spirits are gathering there and walking around and sometimes spirits go there for a meeting. Even in Spiti, we talk a lot about these kinds of things about spirits getting together. I don't know exactly but I have also seen - sometimes, some fireballs that move around - sometimes, these fireballs move along a river and they fall apart 'sparkling' and then they get together and become one big fireball again. So people use to say that the evil spirits when they get together they are having a meeting or a conference. When they are separated; they are go sparkling. That night, because he was reciting the taking the refuge of the Three Jewels, these spirits couldn't cross the bridge to hold their conference. That is also considered the power of the taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

**The Sixth benefit: You will not fall into the lower three realms.**

As I have just mentioned when you take refuge in the Three Jewels, you listen to the Buddha and you will not commit bad actions. If you have no bad actions collected then you have no chance to be reborn in the lower realms. Therefore, if you take refuge in the Three Jewels you will never take rebirth in the lower three realms.

**The Seventh benefit: You can achieve supreme and common attainments with less effort.**

When you listen to the words of the Buddha then there is no difficulty to get the attainments. We are facing problems because we don't listen to the words of the Buddha. The Buddha said that we must not get engaged into bad actions but we always get engaged into bad actions. The Buddha said we must accumulate merits but we accumulate very little merit.

**The Eight benefit of Taking Refuge: You will be enlightened very fast.**

<b>There are 6 Percepts or Commitments.</b>
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**First Percept: Take Refuge Frequently**

One of them is that you must take refuge frequently. What you can do is: You can take refuge in the Three Jewels in the morning when you get up. By now, you should have learnt those four sentences:

**English Version**

I go for refuge until I am enlightened,

to the Buddhas, the Dharma and the highest assembly.

From the virtuous merit that I collect by practicing giving and **\*other perfections,**

may I attain the state of Buddha to be able to benefit all sentient beings.

**(\*And the 6 Paramitas or Perfections are: the practice of giving, morality, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom.)**

**Tibetan Version**

Sang gye cho dang tsog kyi chog nam la

Jang chub bar du dag ni kyab su chi

Dag gi jin sok gyi pay so nam kyi

Drol la pan chir sang gye drub par shog

These are the four verses; it is easy and not difficult to learn. You can recite in English; it is not necessary to recite in Tibetan or in Chinese but in whichever is easier for you. The meaning is very clear. You can recite the taking refuge verses once, twice or thrice when you get up in the morning. If you have time in the day or during lunch then again you recite the verses. It takes only a few minutes, and then maybe when you go to bed you recite again - in this way you keep reminding yourself.

**Second Percept: Remember the Kindness of the Buddha.**

The Buddha has shown the path to enlightenment. He found the path to enlightenment and he didn't keep it for himself. He showed to us and wanted to tell us how to get to

Buddhahood - so kind, right? He did whatever he can for us - he left his messages, he gave his teachings and he asked his disciples to carry on the messages. So, he did everything possible for us. So he is very kind and we must remember his kindness again and again.

**Third Percept: Encourage Others to Take Refuge**

If it is possible for other beings, you should also try to make them take refuge in the Three Jewels because it will benefit them-for the time being and in the long run.

**Fourth Percept: Remember the Eight Benefits of Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels.**

We must count the benefits when you see the benefits then your taking refuge will be strength again and again. It is very important to remember this.

**Fifth Percept: Any Actions should be done after reciting the Refuge Verses**

Whatever actions you do - do a business, start a job or any kind of practice of dharma like make offering, should be started after reciting the refuge verses.

**Sixth Percept: Make Commitments**

You should make a commitment. *"I will never ever break the commitments and I never let the taking of refuge go from me."*

<b>Six Advices from the Buddha that you have to follow after the Taking Refuge</b>
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There are 3 advices on what to adopt and three advices on what to be abandon. The three advices for redemption are:

- You must increase your faith in Buddha.
- You must try to increase all the time trust and faith in Dharma.
- You must try to increase faith in Sangha all the time - as many as possible in a day.

**The three advises to be abandoned**

**First advice: You cannot take refuge in worldly gods**

You must know what it means because taking refuge in worldly gods' mean: you take refuge in a worldly god and ask him to help you to be liberated or enlightened, so that kind of refuge you cannot take because they are not capable to help you in this matter.

But sometimes, if some worldly gods they can help you to get rid of small obstacles or to give you better luck in your business then you can make friends. Just as with human beings, we can make friends and seek help from each other. That is not forbidden. You can do it; we must do it, without doing that there is no way to survive, right? Because we are inter-dependent and we are inter-related. So, we must take help from others but we cannot take refuge in them because they cannot help us out of Samsara. That kind of help, you cannot seek from worldly gods as they themselves are in Samsara, so they are not capable.



**Second advice: What is Dharma?**

Dharma means not to harm others. So, you must abandon harming others.

**Third advice: Be careful of people with wrong views**

That is not to associate with people who have wrong views because they can influence you anytime. We are beginners and we are still not stable, so our faith can be changed. Therefore, we better be careful of people with wrong views. So, that is about Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels.

----- **End of Teaching.**

**Dedication**

May all whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, talks or thinks about Buddha’s dharma never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations conducive to the perfect practice of dharma, meet perfectly qualified dharma teachers and quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately attain enlightenment for the sake for of all sentient and non-sentient beings.

In whichever place the Buddha’s teaching may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, may all enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient and non-sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

May the lives of the glorious gurus be long and all the Buddhas turn the dharma wheel untill Samsara ends. May the precious Bodhimind not yet born, arise and grow and may that born, not decline but increase forever more.

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