Chapter 11 Going to the Three Jewels for Refuge

ii) Relying on the means to achieve happiness in future lives

(Matches the i) in chapter 9)

Once you have learned that there is so much suffering in the three lower realms you become motivated to make an effort to prevent that kind of rebirth. For those of the Small Spiritual Scope fear of this misery is the primary motivation to follow the path.

Now we move on to the actual method to avert the predicament of rebirth in the lower realms. So how can you obtain a good, happy life? The method to protect yourself from misery and obtain a good rebirth has two subtopics:

a' Taking refuge: the sacred door for entering the teaching (Chapter 11-12 in this volume)

b' Developing the faith of conviction that is the root of all well-being (Chapters 13, 14, 15 this volume, or Commentary Volume 2: chapters 1-3)

The most important thing to do in the beginning is to take refuge in the Three Jewels. This is the way to enter deeply into the teachings of the Buddha. The next step is to examine causality (karma) until you are convinced that positive actions result in happiness and non-virtue leads to unhappiness. Faith in karmic causality is the root of all happiness through to the bliss of emancipation and enlightenment.

a' Taking refuge: the sacred door for entering the teaching

(b' is Chapter 13) Is in 4 parts listed below. Part 4 is in Chapter 12.

1. you must have reasons for seeking refuge; if you do not see the need you will not sincerely search for protection.
2. you have to be clear about who you are going to for refuge.
3. the way to take refuge. In this section we also consider the standard that measures whether you have actually taken refuge.
4. the actions that you should undertake after you have taken refuge.

1' The causes of going for refuge

Being mindful of what they need to do to prepare for death and their next life is *the* cause of taking refuge. The Small Scope is focused on next rebirth. Focus on impermanence of life leads to recognition that after death they have no power to choose where to be reborn; they will be completely under the power of karma.

> I'm on a difficult path to an unknown destination.
> When the way is blocked by the army of the Lord of Death,
> I recognise that the pursuit of worldly treasure was a deception.
> I regret it now, but it is far too late.

At time of death, you realise that it was a mistake to chase worldly things. They are useless, your struggle go get them has done great damage. The negative karma you created in pursuit of wealth, fame and power, terrors loom in front of you. Although you may now regret all those negative actions, it is too late—far, far too late.

Most people do not give thought to karma. When they do, they figure, "Well, I have created a little non-virtuous karma, but I have done some virtuous actions too. So I don't need to worry about it too much." That is very flawed thinking. Most of your life your thoughts and actions are under the power of mental afflictions, which tend to be negative. Virtuous attitudes and activities are so rare they are almost nonexistent.

Buddhas appear very rarely in the world. Occasionally, after many eons, a Buddha appears and teachers. Even when a Buddha's teachings are available, it is uncommon to have the good fortune to encounter them and even rarer to practice the instructions as they are taught. Most sentient beings do not recognise cause and effect, nor receive the Buddha's teachings, care and help.

This applies even for a Dharma practitioner. How many previous lives have you gone in the wrong direction? In this life, what has gone on in your mind? Were your mind and actions on the virtuous side? Or, were you mostly following a negative path? Have you created much virtuous karma? Your non-virtuous actions have been many and powerful. Not good. You will have to experience the results of all that negative karma. You should be seeking some form of protection - a secure place of refuge.

In samsara, you are eaten by desire, hatred and other mental afflictions. There are two main causes for a strong and sincere desire to go for refuge: fear of the suffering of lower rebirths; and the confidence that the Three Jewels have the ability to protect you from that misery. Without these two, even though you may loudly recite "I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Sangha," your

refuge is mere words - it will not actually cure the disease of suffering. However, if your fear and faith are firm, then your refuge may be strong. Therefore, you should make a great effort to integrate those two causes into your mind-stream.

The refuge here is not ordinary. It is not concerned with temporary minor troubles like losing your livelihood, loved ones, or even your life. Your concern here is about the misery and pain of the three lower realms, not worldly matters.

A general understanding and trust in these teachings will not bring heartfelt refuge. In order to sincerely seek help, you need to connect these points to yourself. You must understand the causes of bad migrations; then, consider whether you have created those causes. Fear will naturally arise if you have created such karma and understand that you have no means to block the results that will come from it.

When that fear is strong and constant you will begin to earnestly search for protection from the consequences of your actions. Only the Three Jewels gives you a means to save yourself. The Buddha can definitely show you how to save yourself from harm. Th only way to protect yourself from those terrifying consequences is to use the methods taught by the Buddha. Ie, practicing the Dharma is the only thing that will overcome your negative karma. Anyone who helps to guide and strengthen your practice of the Dharma in any way is a spiritual friend, the Sangha. Taking refuge means completely relying on these three—the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—with your body, speech and mind. That is what will protect you from fear.

2' Based on that, the objects to which you go for refuge

a" Identifying the objects of refuge

The one in whom all faults
Are completely absent
And in whom all good qualities
Are always present in every way

If you are sensible
You will go to such a one for refuge.
It is right to praise him, honour him,
And live according to his teachings.

You should honour and respect the Buddha. Most of all, you should follow the course of his teachings. The other sources of refuge, the Dharma and Sangha flow from the perfect qualities of the Buddha.

Once you recognise that the Buddha has attained the highest level of knowledge, compassion, power and freedom from all forms of misery and it causes, then you can be sure that the method he teaches is also perfect. When you know how and why the Dharma is reliable, you see that those who are properly practising it can assist you in your practice. So once you trust the Dharma, you will naturally rely on the Sangha. A well founded trust in the Buddha causes trust in that Dharma and Sangha to develop.

b" The reasons why they are worthy to be a refuge

There are four reasons why the Buddha is worthy of being the highest refuge:

i. The Buddha has attained the fearless state of complete self-control

The Buddha eliminated all of the mental afflictions of hatred, attachment, pride, etc. The result of eradicating all these rough samsaric faults is a state of fearlessness - because one is no longer under the power of uncontrolled causes and conditions.

A person who is worried about his own preservation cannot be your saviour. A person who is afraid cannot save others from all fear.

ii. The Buddha is an expert in training disciples

The person in whom you take refuge must have mastered the ways to help other sentient beings. He must be skill at taming disciples.

iii. The Buddha has great compassion

Even with the first two - free of fear and skilled to help, if he does not have great compassion, he will not protect you.

iv. The Buddha does not delight in material offerings, but rather is pleased by the offering of spiritual practice

Offering him worldly goods such as food or money is not what pleases The Buddha. What pleases the Buddha is our practice—actually doing what he has advised us to do.

> Buddhas appear in various forms in order to help others. The best assistance they offer is to teach us the way to apply the antidotes to our inner poisons. These are mental sicknesses and for each of those ills and its source they offer a therapy. But if you do not undertake the actions they recommend you will not accomplish what they have taught. Merely making offerings, praising them, or bowing down thousands of times will not please the buddhas. They are delighted by those who actually follow their instructions to purify their mental continua. This is their wish for us.

These four perfect qualities found only in the Buddha - so, only he is fit to be a refuge. Those qualities make his teachings and the disciples who correctly practice his instructions worthy to take as refuges also. The Buddha is the perfect doctor and his medicine is the Dharma. The nurses to take the prescription themselves and care for other patients by helping them follow the therapy are the Sangha. Since the medicine and nurses are direct products of the highest doctor, they are objects of refuge.

Once you are certain that the Buddha has these four qualities, with strong confidence you should single-pointedly rely on the Three Jewels for refuge.

Although these conditions exist (the Buddha learned the path, taught the Dharma and established the Sangha), we have not escaped samsara because we have not fully committed to refuge in these Three Jewels. We are like a sick person who does not trust his doctor or the medicine he prescribed. Even though the medicine may be just what the sick person needs, he doesn't take it. In our case, we do not fully trust the teacher and the methods he has recommended, so we do not seriously rely on them by taking wholehearted refuge. Therefore we still lack emancipation and experience misery and suffering—along with other sentient beings.

You should look towards the Buddha and think, "I have a refuge. I have a saviour. Now I only need to take his advice seriously and practice what he taught."

We are lazy and do only those things that are fun, bring us enjoyment and are within our comfort zone, so we don't commit to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We don't take study and practice seriously. The Buddha's teachings are not difficult or complicated. They have many steps to follow in specific order.

We behave like children—fun and enjoyment oblivious to consequences.

Being a Buddhist is defined by taking refuge in the Three Jewels. The answer to the question "Am I a Buddhist?" is based on whether or not you have taken refuge. There is no external sign marking someone who has entered the Buddhist path. If you have not fully committed to the Three Jewels, you are not a Buddhist. Taking refuge is the entry to the Buddhist path. An important point.

3' The way you go for refuge

(Heading 4' is all of Chapter 12. And ends the first volume of Commentary.)

How should you take refuge in the Three Jewels? Once you have an aversion towards more rounds of samsara , especially fear of lower rebirths, there are four approaches to taking refuge. Without knowing the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you cannot take refuge in them properly. You also need knowledge of the differences between them; you must be able to distinguish their different abilities so that you can rely on each of them properly.

You should take refuge fully, from the heart, knowing that these Three Jewels have the complete power and ability to help you. Disavow faith in any other refuge. You should not have a divided mind thinking someone else might help.

a" Going for refuge from knowing the good qualities of the Three Jewels

1" The good qualities of the Buddha

(a)The good qualities of the Buddha's body

Three bodies

- The wisdom body—is ultimate and immaculate wisdom; it is the mind that has been transformed beyond all states of impurity.
- The enjoyment body—is the perfected form in which a Buddha attains enlightenment. It is the ultimate physical body, completely absorbed in enjoyment of the Mahayana Dharma. Only perceptible to advanced level bodhisattvas.
- The emanation body—takes various forms that can be perceived by our limited senses. It is the emanation body that we see as the Buddha in our world. Also has 32 major marks and 80 minor marks that have meaning.
  - 40 very straight & white teeth.
  - Palms are beautified by the mark of the wheel.

- Right hand out in a gesture that means "Come to me; I will help you. I can protect you".
- Bottom of Buddha's feet also marked by the wheel.
- A thin membrane of skin between the Buddha's fingers and toes.

(b) The good qualities of the Buddha's speech

> Thus, if all sentient beings in their own languages
> Asked many questions all at one time,
> In a single instant he would comprehend them all,
> And with one utterance give an answer to each.

The Buddha guides sentient beings from lower conditions up to higher states, from samsara to nirvana. He gives teachings to bring to an end the suffering of gods and humans. This is called **turning the wheel of the Dharma** because when disciples follow his instructions they can achieve the same kind of perfection. Then, in turn, those disciples teach the method to others. In this way his teaching is a cycle bringing emancipation to all beings.

His speech is like rain because it clears away the dust of desire, attachment and the other mental afflictions. In Indian mythology there is a special kind of bird called a garuḍa, mortal enemy of poisonous snakes which he tears to pieces. Similarly, the Buddha's speech destroys the serpents of anger and hatred.

Constant ignorance causes us not to see things properly. The Buddha's speech is like the sun that illuminates the darkness of ignorance clouding our ability to see things as they truly are. His speech is like the diamond thunderbolt, or vajra, that destroys our mountain of pride and conceit.

> Because you see the truth, your speech is without error.
> Because you are faultless, your speech is genuine.
> Because it is well composed, it is easy to understand.
> Your speech is eloquent in all these ways.

The Buddha's words attract us right away. If we contemplate what he said, all of our mental afflictions—including desire, anger and ignorance—can be eliminated.

The Buddha's speech is perfectly suited for each person: it brings each individual exactly what he or she needs. It makes some people joyful and others seriously reconsider their condition. Just hearing the words of the Buddha helps those agitated by pain and anguish to relax and feel better. Some gods and humans do not see the faults of samsara because they are spellbound by bliss. Hearing his words makes them wake up and think about the possibility that they are not perfectly safe; it gives them reason to feel some dissatisfaction with their life of pleasure.

The Buddha's speech is beneficial for all beings: the high, the low and the intermediate. Hearing his teachings produces joy and happiness in already wise, skilful masters. It assists the mental development of average people who have some level of knowledge. His words vanquish the darkness of ignorance for the slowest type of person—those who have no knowledge of good and bad, or virtue and non-virtue.

(c) The good qualities of the Buddha's mind

We are specifically, looking at the reasons why the qualities of the Buddha's mind make him a worthy object of refuge. Specifically, we need three qualities: Knowledge, compassion and power. Someone who has perfect knowledge of our problems, the cause of our problems and how to solve our problems. He will also need to have compassion. Therefore, we are seeking someone with perfect love and compassion, in addition to knowledge. Even if he has these, he must also have the ability to convey assistance in a way that will be of use to us. So, the perfect object of this refuge, has these three qualities: knowledge, compassion and power. The first two of these knowledge and compassion are discussed in this section. The third quality power is presented later in the context of the Buddha's enlightened activities in the next section (d) - about page 61 below.

(i) The good qualities of knowledge

Everything that exists can be classified as belonging to one or other of two natures. These natures can also be called the *two truths*: conventional and ultimate. Conventional nature or conventional truth, conventional truth, refers to the way things appear to our ordinary senses and knowledge. The term phenomenal or relative are often used as synonyms for conventional, because they to indicate the variety of things that we commonly take for granted as our ordinary world. But actually, things do not ultimately exist in the way that they ordinarily appear to us. The conventional

nature is not the ultimate mode of existence of any phenomena. The ultimate nature or ultimate truth refers to phenomena's true modes of existence; it is an object's final nature because once it is recognised it requires no further interpretation. The ultimate nature of things is seen when you obtain a direct realisation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) on the path of seeing. Then you see things exactly as they truly are. Everything that exists has this final or ultimate nature.

Buddha's have obtained omniscience; they know everything, both ultimate nature and conventional nature. They can plainly see every object of knowledge. No barriers impede his knowledge. Nothing is hidden from his mind.

Until they obtain Buddhahood, all beings have some level of ignorance that impede their knowledge of all phenomena. Ordinary individuals like us have gross obstacles. But even those who have attained advanced levels on the path – such as arhats and high stage bodhisattvas – still have subtle obscurations preventing them from knowing certain objects of knowledge. They cannot perceive the very subtle qualities of the Buddha's mind, the most subtle aspect of the cause and effect relationship in the web of karma. Nor can they know the past and future in all their infinite depth. In this sense, their knowledge is narrower than the Buddha's knowledge.

The Buddha comprehends all phenomena. This includes knowing every sentients being's faults and problems. He understands the causal sequence that brings about negative experiences and he knows the most skilful way to solve those problems.

The Buddha is completely awakened from the sleep of ignorance and his compassion and love are impartial and for all sentient beings. He is a perfectly reliable refuge in whom you can place your trust.

(ii) The good qualities of compassion

In samsara, sentient beings are bound by various mental afflictions—desire, hatred, ignorance, pride, etc (See footnote 1, page 32). These powerful emotions seem to take control; living beings have no freedom because these strong passions govern their lives. Buddhas have completely eliminated that kind of passion, but they too are inextricably bound—a buddha is completely under the power of compassion and love. In this sense buddhas have no freedom; they are tied by their great compassion and love for sentient beings. When they see the misery and suffering of sentient beings, their compassion rises without cease.

Before the Buddha attained enlightenment, for many eons he lived like other beings so that he could perform bodhisattva activities to help them in the most meaningful way. Even though he was perfectly aware of all the faults of samsara he remained in it to help others. What caused him to do this? Great compassion. Therefore both the Buddha and the great compassion that motivated him are equally to be respected.

The Bodhisattva's long practice arose from compassion. As a result of that practice he became the Buddha. The Buddha taught disciples; his teaching enabled some of them to attain arhatship while others became bodhisattvas and finally achieved buddhahood. But the initial cause of all of these results was great compassion for other sentient beings.

The Buddha feels great compassion when he sees poor beings who are overwhelmed by desire— ie all the forms of craving and attachment found in samsara. The Buddha's great compassion, love and kindness always flow without cease; there is never a time when they are absent. He is always thinking about the welfare of all sentient beings. Buddhas act completely under the power of compassion because they have entirely gotten rid of self-cherishing. Because **self-centred egotism** is the root of other faults, we can say that buddhas do not have any of those faults at all.

(d) The good qualities of enlightened activities

This section is the weakest. It sounds like god making. We don't know any of this based on anything other than these claims. We have only the texts that are there to convert us not to provide historical information, but to convince us to join up. Nothing exists about his life—only commentary, interpretative text about his existence. However, this text might be a commentary on something he taught.

The Buddha's actions of body, speech and mind are spontaneous and unceasing. The Buddha knows what should be done and does exactly that. Because he has perfect compassion, he acts without any selfish regard for his own interest. The Buddha acts to benefit other beings all the time and will continue to do so until the end of Samsara.

A disciple does need to have the potential to benefit from the Buddha's physical, verbal and mental actions. If suitable, the Buddha will bestow everything to help or rescue them. Those who are not prepared will not receive any benefit from the Buddha's actions. The success of the Buddha's actions depends on conditions from the side of the disciple. The seed must be ready to sprout and not already destroyed -

in a human not in a lower realm and not with sprouted bad karma or not already following a religion and unwilling to connect to buddhist teachings - upside down cups. He cannot remove your bad karma nor can he transfer his own realisations into someone else's mind. Only you can do that with work.

Freedom from samsara only comes from removing the mental afflictions. But these inner obscurations cannot be eliminated the way a doctor removes a tumour. The only way that the buddhas can bestow total cessation of suffering is to teach each individual the method to accomplish it themselves. The Buddha will teach disciples who are suitable to be trained methods leading away from lower rebirth and every misfortune; he will show the Dharma leading towards every wonderful, blissful attainment, including higher birth and total liberation from samsara. The Buddha teaches the truth: what is correct, what is incorrect, what is the cause of suffering and what is the cause of happiness. He points to the highest possible goal and he explained in detail how to achieve it. He explains who should take which path and the steps to follow. The Buddha helps beings by showing them what they need to do. Just as a sick patient, must take the medicine prescribed by the doctor, disciples must take the medicine prescribed by the buddhas. They have to extricate their mental afflictions by using wisdom to pull out the root of suffering – ignorance. That is the only way to remove the cause of suffering and obtain total freedom from samsara.

The necessary element from our side is taking refuge. Taking refuge means, "I trust you. Please give me the medicine and I will take it." Then you and the Buddha are working harmoniously together.

The Buddha has shown us the four noble truths; he has demonstrated both the nature of samsara—suffering and the causes of suffering—and also the fearless side of freedom and the path leading to emancipation. Compassionate buddhas have done everything that could possibly be done to benefit sentient beings. They have revealed a method to transcend every form of misery, suffering and unfortunate circumstance. But from our side - we haven't done our homework!

For a more extensive practice you need to think about who the Buddha is in relation to you. You are someone searching for protection and each of the Buddha's teachings has a purpose for you; you have to learn how each part works and how they all fit together. Once you recognise that the teachings are trustworthy and profound, deep faith in both the Buddha and your teacher will naturally develop - together the confidence to rely on them.

a" reprise

You are not trying to produce blind faith. You should not believe everything someone says merely because you respect him. The Buddha said you should first determine whether a teaching has the capacity to lead you out of suffering and toward happiness. Analyse what teachers say, determine if they are trustworthy, able to protect you and have perfect knowledge. If their instructions are sound, then you can take them seriously.

Examine how the Buddha's teachings and actions reflect his perfect knowledge. Once you recognise this, you will also see his compassion and his power. As you examine the qualities of the Buddha from many angles, faith and trust will emerge in different ways. If you contemplate these qualities again and again over a long period of time, your confidence in the Buddha will become stronger and more long lasting.

Ditto for the Dharma and Sangha — what do they bring to the table; are they trustworthy and able to provide adequate refuge. Once you develop that trust and think about it more and more over time, the greater your confidence grows and the stronger you commitment to doing your homework — your Dharma practice.

Every teaching reveals the qualities of the Three Jewels — every scripture and commentary is a special instruction to protect you from your tendency for error.

You tend to discriminate between the teachings, devaluing some and praising others. But once you understand how each of these teachings in its own way can lead to accomplishment of certain necessary and beneficial changes, then a judgmental attitude will not arise. You see how they are all valuable.

You must think deeply about what you are studying - especially during meditation.

You should relate the teachings to whatever is going on in your mind, whatever you are doing and whatever you are saying. You should always be checking and analysing yourself. Your mind is trainable; it can become accustomed to new ways. Of course at first it may be a little difficult, but with daily practice your mind will get to the point where it naturally acts in the new manner. If you practice constantly in all kinds of ordinary circumstances—when you are walking, talking, watching, or meeting others—

your mind will develop in the direction that you wish. That is how to really practice the teachings as they are explained in the Lamrim.

Thinking about the qualities of the Three Jewels also leads to bodhicitta arising. To obtain bodhicitta first you have to recognise all the problems faced by yourself and others. Then you must discern the qualities and nature of buddhahood. When you see that a buddha has the capacity to benefit other beings you begin to think, "How wonderful it would be if I had such qualities." That kind of desire nurtures development of bodhicitta. That is the way bodhicitta arises naturally. If you practice this way day and night, the Buddha will always be in your mind. Even at the time of death, no matter what suffering or pain may arise, you will be able to recollect the Buddha.

If you constantly dwell on the attributes of an object, your attitude toward it becomes stronger and stronger. This natural process can happen whether your feeling for an object is desire or aversion. When you think about how beautiful and wonderful an object is you find so many reasons why you want it. The attitude arises effortlessly and streams in that direction as naturally as water flows downhill. You can focus your mind on the excellent qualities of the Buddha. If you constantly focus on and accustom yourself to the superior qualities of the Buddha, you eventually maintain the wish to obtain the perfect wisdom of a Buddha all the time in every situation.

Give praises to the buddhas constantly,
With body, speech and a mind of enthusiastic faith.
If you cultivate your mental continuum this way,
You will see the World Protectors day and night.

By cultivating faith with your body, speech and mind you will eventually reach a stage where you see the Buddha in your mind day and night. A time will come when you get sick or other forms of trouble. Even facing the pain and sorrow that comes at death you will still be able to focus on the qualities of the Buddha and take refuge.

After learning about the qualities of the Buddha you should think about them again and again. If you accustom your mind to these things your trust in the Buddha will become greater, your negative motivations and attitudes will diminish and your mind will become purer. You receive the blessings or inspiration of the Three Jewels.

Why is most of what we do is not aimed at attaining freedom and the highest goal? Why is most everything we do negative and going in the opposite direction from our goals? What is the problem? Geshe Potowa said our problem is that we do not value the Buddha's wisdom even as much as we value the advice of media, acquaintances.

All the Buddha's scriptures teach over and over that you should do certain things and you should refrain from others. Certain guidelines are very clearly laid out. The Buddha didn't make these rules because he wanted to rule over us; it was only in order to help us that he spelled out the specifics of ethical conduct. But do we trust that advice? No. We have his advise as a very low priority — easily overridden by almost any thing else. You get to the point where you just toss out the Buddha's compassionate advice. Then your behaviour falls completely under the power of your own ignorant, selfish inclinations. You just react to your feelings and perceptions in the course of your everyday activities. The Dharma doesn't even enter your mind.

When you seriously examine your mind, you will understand that your refuge is not pure, because you do not sincerely put your trust in the Buddha or his teachings. Properly taking refuge based on pure and correct understanding is very rare — but is what you should strive for so your practice will become powerful and on track.

You should contemplate the great virtues of the Buddha until you definitely understanding them — that is the path to the Dharma Jewel — the Sangha is the assembly who follow the Buddha's teachings and help others practice. Faith in Buddha -> faith in Dharma -> faith in Sangha. This is a pivotal essential point. There is no other path to emancipation. Without understanding this is the only path, strong refuge will not arise.

2" The good qualities of the Dharma

The *Dharma of scripture* refers to all the instructions given by the buddhas and other proper teachers. All advice which leads toward the attainment of emancipation is included in the Dharma of scripture. The *Dharma of realisation* also be called the *Dharma of understanding* or the *Dharma of knowledge* is an individual's accomplishment of these instructions. Realisations develop through practicing and meditating on the stages of the path. As realisations are achieved you begin to eliminate the mental afflictions. At first they are suppressed temporarily; later permanently. Removal of mental afflictions is called *cessation* because the causes

completely cease, or stop. A cessation shields you from suffering. These cessations are also Dharma. The Dharmas of scripture and understanding are the real protection.

The phrase, "I take refuge in the Dharma," refers to both the meditations that lead step by step to the various levels of realisation and the resulting cessations. In the context of the four noble truths, the Dharma is the truth of the path and the truth of cessation. The truth of the path is the practices and realisations through which the afflictions are eliminated. The cessations that occur when the afflictions are removed are the truth of cessation. These two are the principal elements of the Dharma Jewel.

As you practice the levels of the truth of the path, you eliminate progressive levels of afflictions until you totally eliminate all faults, afflictions, obscurations and ignorance. When you achieve this state you are omniscient; this is buddhahood. Therefore highest enlightenment is attained only by means of the Dharma: the truth of the path and the truth of cessation. The good quality of the Dharma Jewel is that it is the only cause that brings complete, perfect buddhahood.

The Dharma includes all practices and virtues that lead toward the cessations, ie actually get rid of negative karma and mental reflections from the root. So while you are still an ordinary individual, all practices that lead to those higher paths are Dharma.

First you study and learn what is to be practiced. Then you analyse and try to understand these things. In order to attain a direct realisation of any of the teachings you must become accustomed to them in many different ways, with real effort, over a long period of time. Finally, through direct realisation, you will achieve the cessations. Thus any practice of body, speech, or mind that is a method to internalise the teachings so that you eventually accomplish the cessations is the real Dharma Jewel.

You start practicing on a lower level and gradually rise higher and higher until you completely and fully develop. The teachings are the nourishment that makes you grow. You have to make them fit your particular mind, body, lifestyle and daily routine. You must find a way to practice so that you always incline further toward the Dharma. Finally these teachings will become actualised in you.

3" The good qualities of the Sangha

The Sangha are those trying to accomplish the Dharma by practicing seriously—practitioners; they rely upon the Dharma. The Sangha also help others by teaching them to practice; ie, the Dharma arises in the field of the Sangha. The Sangha find their enjoyment in the Dharma. (In contrast, we ordinary people find pleasure in objects like food and worldly goods.) The Sangha are naturally straightforward, earnest, without deceit and try to always perform positive actions. They are also compassionate toward others.

If you desire emancipation, these are the people you should look upon as friends. They are the ones who can help; they will lead you to the higher goal. We rely on them because they can help us reach that state of emancipation.

The Sangha fully commit their lives to attaining emancipation or enlightenment.

b" Going for refuge from knowing the distinctions between the Three Jewels

The second of the four approaches to taking refuge is to take refuge by understanding the *distinctions* between the Three Jewels. What different expectations, qualities and benefits are there from taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma or Sangha?

1" The distinction based on their defining characteristics

The distinguishing characteristic of the Buddha Jewel is highest perfect enlightenment. The Buddha is completely pure and fully realised.

Defining characteristic of the Dharma Jewel is it being the result of the Buddha's enlightenment. Once the Buddha perfected his own knowledge and freed himself from all obscurations he taught other sentient beings the method to do the same. Because he had perfect knowledge his faultless method gives each different individual just what he or she needs. Each type of disciple is guided along a path that suits his or her particular propensities and aptitude.

The nature of the Sangha Jewel is that they seriously try to accomplish the instructions they received and teach these instructions.

2" The distinction based on their enlightened activities - function

Buddha like a highly skilled doctor who prescribes specific medicine for a specific persons problems. The Buddha correctly gives complete instructions in accordance with the need and ability (aptitude) of each disciple.

The function of the Dharma is to eradicate mental afflictions and thereby get rid of all suffering. The Dharma Jewel eliminates misery just as medicine does with sickness. By intently following the various levels of practice taught by the Buddha you eliminate faults until you are free of all suffering.

The Sangha's distinctive activity is to take joy in practicing and sharing these teachings - guide and accompany others on their journey along the path.

3" The distinction based on devotion

Since each of the Three Jewels has different characteristics and functions, we should have a different approach to them. The correct manner of taking refuge in the Buddha is to honour him and trust what he says. When you respect others and their words you will be inclined to follow them. The correct attitude for taking refuge in the Dharma is not merely to revere it as an external object of worship, but to actualise it within yourself and change your behaviour. The proper attitude for taking refuge in the Sangha is similar; you naturally respect those who are in harmony with the Dharma. The Sangha are practitioners whose entire manner of living is in accordance with the teachings. They listen to the teachings, practice the teachings, live by the teachings and share them with each other. In this sense, they accompany the Dharma; members of the Sangha are like companions who escort you on the long journey toward buddhahood. You respect them as your friends, traveling partners and helpers.

4" The distinction based on practice

Once you know the distinct manner of respect you should have toward each of the Three Jewels, you actually express it in practice. The way to honour the Buddha is to perform offering ceremonies and services that assist him in accomplishing his goals.

You show your respect for the Dharma by actualising the teachings in your mind. You accustom your mind to the teachings with meditation. This transforms your wild mind into the path of the Buddha. It takes intense effort in the beginning, but as you become accustomed to a practice it begins to flow spontaneously. In this way these teachings become natural; they become one with your mind.

The way to show respect for the Sangha is to share your knowledge, experience, advice on the Dharma. Help each other.

5" The distinction based on recollection

In order to take refuge in the Three Jewels, you must contemplate their perfect qualities as they are taught in the sutras.

6" The distinction based on how they increase merit

Whether direct or indirect action gives different levels of merit. ??

c" Going for refuge with commitment

The third mode of taking refuge is to take refuge through belief in the Three Jewels. Taking refuge in the Buddha means acknowledging the Buddha as your teacher—your guide and leader; you look to him to show you the way along the proper path. Since he is the perfect teacher of the method to attain liberation, you rely on him seriously and deeply from your heart.

The Dharma is the actual protection and refuge; it is emancipation, or freedom, from samsara. The goal of all the work you put into practicing the path is nirvana—freedom from all suffering. When you attain nirvana you have the actual refuge. So here you take refuge with the deep-seated thought that liberation is the real refuge.

The Sangha share the same goal as you. They help you to accomplish that real refuge. They are your friends and assistants on the same path. They help you with their experience and knowledge. The way to profess your faith in the members of the Sangha is to believe in them as your spiritual friends.

d" Going for refuge by disavowing any other refuges

You should not take refuge in anyone or anything other than the Three Jewels. This means that any teacher or teaching that wholly contradicts the Three Jewels is something you should not regard as a source of protection.

The difference between Buddhism and other systems is that in Buddhism the emphasis is on your training your mind. The Buddhist path entails recognising your negative mindset and combating it with wisdom and positive attitudes. On the Buddhist path you develop a way of thinking that leads to peace and emancipation. The Buddhist path shows you the way to eliminate the mental afflictions motivating negative actions. It thereby breaks the continuous cycle of birth and death in samsara. The goal of the path is also comfortable: it is happiness, the highest joy and the attainment of perfect peace. Therefore it is a proper teaching because it will not deceive those who seek emancipation. It is virtuous, meritorious and purifying.