4' The stages of training in the precepts after taking refuge

1" The precepts related to the individual Jewels

(a) By recalling the distinctions and good qualities of the Three Jewels, go for refuge again and again

Having left behind other teachers,
I take refuge in you, O Lord.
If one asks, "What is the reason?"
You have all good qualities and no faults.

To the extent that I think about
The systems of the non-Buddhists,
To that extent my mind
Develops faith in you, my protector.

Their minds are ruined by faulty tenets
Established by those without omniscience.
Those with such distorted ideas
Cannot even see you, the faultless teacher.

Your teaching causes fortunate ones
To obtain happiness through that which is joyful.
Therefore, O lion among teachers,
We come to rely upon your scriptures.

Not blind faith.

Regarding taking refuge in the Buddha, first you ask yourself, "Why am I taking refuge?" You take refuge to attain freedom from all kinds of suffering and misfortune.

Attaining the goal of emancipation or enlightenment is the purpose of taking refuge. The Buddha has done it, knows the way and willing to share.

Memorise and think about these verses. If your trust is based on good reasons and sound understanding, then your praise of the Buddha will be sincere. It will grow into firm, strong faith. That will lead you to take actual heartfelt refuge in the Three Jewels.

Relying on a source of protection with conviction is what taking refuge really means

(b) Take up the precepts correctly

Lay Refuge Vows

The foundation of practice is taking vows. The Buddha, like a skilful doctor, prescribed certain precepts as the basis for progress on the path.

Avoid:
1. Killing
2. Taking what has not been given
3. Sexual misconduct
4. Telling lies
5. Drinking alcohol

Vows are a commitment to do certain things and not to do others. You make this promise to the buddhas, bodhisattvas, the Sangha, not just your own teacher.

The power of an intentional commitment makes the act of doing a practice much stronger.

Don't over commit. These are serious commitments. If you do not do what you have promised, the negative karma you create will be much stronger and cause you many difficulties.

If you find that you can take vows and keep them, they are suitable for you.

You should take vows that suit your level of practice. Do as much as you are able. You can do trials; eg one-day Mahayana precepts — bodhisattva vows taken for just one day — or every morning for a month. This kind of practice is very valuable.

(c) Be compassionate toward living beings

A buddha's intention is to protect all beings from every kind of suffering; every single sentient being is always under his kind care.

all the teachings and rules are based on the principle of not harming others. This is the essential doctrine.

when you take refuge in the Buddha it means that you, too, should be compassionate toward other living beings. You should avoid harming any other being and cultivate a kindhearted attitude as best you can.

you should always be aware of this precept so you can avoid accidentally or unnecessarily injuring other beings, even insects.

Awareness of this precept is fundamental to making any positive change. By taking refuge in the buddhas and recollecting the teachings, you can refrain from harmful negative actions. It is a great practice.

(d) Strive to make periodic offerings to the Three Jewels

The Jewels do not need our worship but we need to keep reminding ourselves what we are doing.

we make symbolic gestures to remind ourselves of the actual Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

2" The second set of subdivisions

(a) Do not let your sense faculties become distracted

You will not be able to take refuge properly if your five physical sense organs and your mind are constantly undergoing excitement and agitation.

Then, it is easy for you mind to head down the path of the 6 mental afflictions

The first is restraint: try preventing the sense faculties from wandering toward attractive or repugnant objects.

Once you see that your mind is distracted by sense objects is a problem you have two lines of defence.

Awareness is the second defence in preventing the mind falling under the power of mental afflictions. Use mindfulness become aware of heading to desire or aversion.

For now, keep away from such objects so you can keep your mind from wandering. Later, these objects will strengthen your wisdom.

(b) Listen to the sublime teachings and (c) Contemplate them properly

In order to practice Buddha's teachings, you must rely on a wise and proper teacher - without him/her you will not know what to do to reach your goal.

When you find a proper teacher who can guide you on the path, you rely on him in the same way that you would depend on the Buddha.

Saying, "I take refuge in the Buddha" means that you revere your spiritual teacher as your guide on the Buddha's path.

It is the disciple's responsibility to find and rely on a spiritual teacher. This effort must come from your side.

Listen to the holy Dharma and to think about what you have heard in order to establish it in your mind.

By thinking about the teachings you accustom your mind to them. This builds up your defences against the inner enemies—the mental afflictions.

Practice of these two methods—listening to the holy teachings and getting rid of all mental afflictions—is the real meaning of taking refuge in the Dharma: the scriptures and realisation of their meaning.

(d) Cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings

Undertake whatever practice that works to achieve your goals: group or solitary

1" The first set of subdivisions

(a) Rely on excellent persons

(b) Listen to the sublime teachings and (c) Contemplate them properly

(d) Cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings

(ii) The benefits as they appear in personal instructions

Review

Continuous effort and intense application

You should make every effort to avoid transgressing the precepts of refuge. This is the heart of the matter. It is very, very important.

You have to establish both vivid concern for your future problems and confidence that the Three Jewels have the power to save you from those problems. When you have faith that the Three Jewels provide the only way to escape from samsara and reach highest nirvana, you take actual, real refuge.

The three steps of taking refuge for the person of small spiritual scope.

the first step is to contemplate the suffering of the lower rebirths. Imaging you are there.

The second step is to respond to the thought that "everything is ok". "Do I have more positive karma or negative karma?" You may find that your dominant mental attitude has been desire, attachment, anger, conceit, pride, jealousy, or ignorance. If the majority of your actions have been driven by such tendencies you may find that most of your actions have been negative.

Real fear should arise if you find that you possess the causes for bad migrations. The thought, "Right now I have this high rebirth, but all the causes and conditions are in place so that after this life I will definitely go to a terrible, suffering state," has to produce terror. That is the point of the second step.

When that fear arises in your heart you think, "There is a way to be saved from those sufferings. If I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha right now, it will prevent me from having to face such experiences." With that sincere and deep appreciation for the Three Jewels you begin seriously to take refuge in order to prevent those sufferings.

Conclusion

"From now on, I take refuge in the Buddha as my protector and guide. His teaching is the real saviour—I a true method to save me from those sufferings. From now on, to the best of my ability, I will take these teachings seriously and put them into practice because they are the antidotes to the causes of misery."

Persons of Intermediate Scope and Greatest Scope

The motivation of those of intermediate spiritual scope is to become completely free from samsara. Practicing the Dharma with this motivation brings you to realise that the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering. You use your realisation of the four noble truths to cut the very root of samsara—the mental afflictions and ignorance. In that way you are saved from falling into cyclic existence at all.

The practice of this superior spiritual capacity are motivated to protect and save not only themselves, but all other beings as well. Their practice combines the realisation of emptiness with bodhicitta, universal love and compassion. Through the various bodhisattva practices they become the protector of all others. They do not adopt a small, selfish goal of personal peace; they become beneficial to all sentient beings.

Dharma Jewel is the protection and needs continuous effort over a long time

In the early stages of your practice you try to remove a few of the more superficial faults and mental afflictions. Beginners like us just try to accomplish one of the positive qualities taught as antidotes to the faults that are easiest to remove. This is a process of gradually reducing the negative side and building up the positive side.

you should think about the relationship of cause and effect, and the two types of action and their respective results. Only when you have a clear understanding of which actions are negative, which are positive and the kinds of consequences each of them produces, can you can act in accordance with the precepts.

In that way you reach different levels until finally you have completely eliminated all faults from their root and achieved the perfection of all mental and physical qualities.

Tsongkhapa says you must master the distinction between virtuous and non-virtuous actions and their respective results. Without a clear understanding you might mistake what is to be gotten rid of and what is to be adopted.

the only protection is the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You must rely on them with your body, speech and mind. **You must make them the centre of your life**; the Three Jewels must become the foundation of all your activities. If you do that then you will follow in the direction that these three lead you.

methods to bring us happiness in our future lives. The lamrim tradition is not concerned with how to find happiness in the present life. Dharma practice is not directed toward how to enjoy this life; its concern is beyond this life. In a sense, the Dharma almost advocates that you avoid the pleasures of this life. Those who seek only enjoyment in this life are chasing after very small, temporary and unreliable kinds of happiness.

method to find happiness in future lives:
* taking refuge and
* trusting in karma and its results.
The actual method that brings happiness is
* following the Dharma teachings.
* The gateway to those teachings is taking refuge.
Therefore in the beginning your main task is to learn
* where you should look for guidance,
* who is qualified to be a protector and
* how to take refuge.
* First you have to understand what the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha mean.
* Based on that understanding you have to develop confident faith in their ability to guide you in the right direction.
* Then based on that faith you have to rely on them from the heart.
* Then you proceed to work under their guidance.

According to the lamrim tradition
* It is not sufficient to take refuge merely with words.
* You need to actually do what should be done and avoid what should not be done;
* actually following the instructions and precepts is practicing the Dharma.
* In order to do that, you have to understand positive and negative karma and their results.

(c) Establish other living beings in this practice by considering them with compassion

Teaching just because you do it is a bad reason.

Every Mahayana action is directed toward others with compassion, not with some kind of selfish or egoistic attitude.

* To the extent that you are able you should help others to see how the Three Jewels can save us from all kinds of misfortune.
* You should lead them to take refuge in the Three Jewels;
* guide them to an understanding of the nature of the Buddha and to trust him based on that understanding.
* You should help them to understand what the Dharma means and how it can protect them.
* you should teach them about the Sangha and how they assist you on the path.
* Out of compassion you should lead others to appreciate the Dharma as much as you can.

Your motivation is very important when you are teaching the Dharma. It is essential that you act out of a compassionate intention to alleviate others' suffering.

(d) Whatever activity you engage in, and whatever your purpose, make offerings and supplications to the Three Jewels, forsaking any other worldly method

After you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels you should rely on them entirely as your source of protection. You should avoid methods that are contrary to the teachings.

Because you have taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and trust that through them you will attain the final goal of emancipation, you should not do anything contrary to the ethical principles of the teachings.

Any practice that in some way harms other beings is contrary to the Buddhist teachings. The basis of the Buddha's ethical instruction is to not harm others.

(e) After you have understood the benefits, go for refuge three times in the day and three times at night

(f) Maintain your refuge and do not forsake the Three Jewels, even in jest or if it costs you your life

The sixth and last, of the common trainings is that you should not give up your refuge in the Three Jewels, even for the sake of your life.

The Three Jewels are both direct and indirect antidotes of suffering. Giving up refuge in the Three Jewels means pushing aside those helpful methods. Merely saying you give up your refuge for worldly purposes will have bad results.

it is imperative to learn about the Three Jewels' qualities and functions and how they lead you to your goal. With firm trust rooted in a deep understanding, you will not want to give up your refuge no matter what happens. You should fix this understanding based on clear reasons in your mind again and again.

The path was taught by the Buddha; you only need to study it and follow it. It is based on the truth, so in the end you will not fail.

2" The general precepts

(a) The proscriptive precepts (what you should not do)

* You should not go to other gods for refuge
* You should not indulge in any harmful thoughts or actions toward other living beings
* You should not associate too much with those holding wrong views

you should avoid seeking protection from other sources — they cannot offer you the highest teachings leading to freedom from samsara.

You should always avoid harming other sentient beings. The foundation of the Dharma is nonviolence. So if you take refuge in the Dharma your relationship to all beings should be based on the principle of not harming them.

You should avoid showing disrespect to even one four-line stanza of the scriptures. Books of Dharma should be respected - put neatly on shelves, never on the floor, thrown away, stepped on or over, sat on or bundled with shoes. If you do something disrespectful to a text, you should feel ashamed.

You should not associate with those who hold to extreme wrong views. When you reach the ārya stage, you have a refuge that nobody can shake because it is made firm by realisation of the Four Noble Truths.

You do not need to see these people as enemies, rather you should have compassion and concern for them.

(b) The prescriptive precepts (what you should do)

* Treat images of the Buddha with respect
* Honour the writing of the teachings
* Revere members of the community

You should have the same reverence for images of the **Buddha** as you do for the Buddha himself.

When you take refuge in the Buddha you place your trust in his knowledge, compassion and power.

All images of the Buddha deserve respect regardless to shape, colour, artistry, or material, if they are ugly or beautiful, valuable or cheap, made of gold, silver, stone, clay, or wood.

Avoid showing them disrespect in any way.

Karma note. There are three factors that determine the positive or negative quality of an action. First there is the nature of the action itself; second, there is the intention that motivates the action; and finally, there is the power of the field of action.

Even a small action done towards a powerful field such as the Buddha or Sangha can yield great effects.

The actual **Dharma** is the realisations and cessations that free you from all the causes of suffering.

The Dharma also refers to the scriptures which explain how to practice.

We have to learn how to attain realisations. It is through the scriptures that we come to understand the actual Dharma. Therefore the scriptures are worthy of the highest respect.

You should respect someone who wears the robes that symbolise the higher qualities of the **Sangha**. What matters is your actions; your behaviour will bring you either negative or positive results regardless of the attributes of the other person. You cannot tell the qualities of any person. They may be a bodhisattva.

it is dangerous to act negatively towards anyone. Because you do not know what type of field you are planting a karmic seed in, you cannot predict what kind of crop it will bring. You do not know what magnitude of negative karma you are creating.

Pure, true Dharma practice mostly arises in terms of the way you deal with others. Therefore the recommended process is to train yourself before you try to change others. If you really want to check for faults, start by looking at yourself.

Criticise your own harmful actions and attitudes rather than accusing others of bad things. Talk to yourself, saying things like, "You did it again today. When you met that person you used sharp, nasty words. You were disrespectful." Only when you are truely free of faults can you give any advice to anyone else.

(i) The benefits as they appear in the Compendium of Determinations

How do I know if "I am and Buddhist"?

A Buddhist is someone who believes in the four seals, or Dharma conclusions. These four points summarise the essential teachings of the Buddha

1) All things produced from causes and conditions are impermanent;
2) All things contaminated by karma and the mental afflictions are in the nature of suffering;
3) All phenomena are empty of an inherently existent, independent self;
4) Nirvana is peace and freedom from all samsaric causes and conditions.

In the Lamrim Chenmo, Tsongkhapa following Atiśa and Śāntipa. According to these two teachers, the dividing line between Buddhists and non-Buddhists is a high level of trust and faith in the Three Jewels. Once refuge is taken and not refuted, you are a buddhist.

(a') You are included among Buddhists

(b') You become worthy to uphold all vows

(c') You reduce and eliminate previously accumulated karmic obstructions

(d') You will accumulate vast merit

(e') You will not fall into the miserable realms

(a) The first set of four

(1') You will obtain vast merit

The buddhas are complete and perfect in every way with qualities beyond ordinary thought. The same is true for the sacred Dharma and Sangha. This particularly refers to ārya Sangha, those Sangha members who have reached the supra-mundane path.

If you sincerely take refuge from the heart and practise the advice of the buddhas, you can achieve all your goals—from the smallest temporary goal in samsara up to the highest achievement of buddhahood.

(2') You will obtain both joy and supreme joy

Contemplate what it means to be a buddha. What is his function? How did he become a buddha? What does a buddha do? Once you are familiar with his perfect qualities, you recognise that he is worthy of being a refuge in every respect.

consider what the Dharma means, its function, qualities and nature. What does it mean to you? How is it used? What is its result? From that analysis you develop trust in the Dharma and want to pursue it.

Recollecting means recognising the qualities, worthiness and value of the objects of refuge. Trusting them means that based on understanding you take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

When you trust the Buddha you think, "He is my perfect guide. His advice is only for my benefit and emancipation." You will then do what he recommends.

Practicing the Dharma is to always fight against wrong thoughts, negative actions and the mental afflictions causing all misery and trouble.

(3') You will obtain concentration and (4') You will attain purity

The two trainings—the development of meditative stabilisation and the realisation of wisdom—will free you from the mental afflictions and their results.

These are the centre of the Dharma; you will reach emancipation from suffering by uniting them. The third and fourth benefits of taking refuge are attaining the union of meditative stabilisation and wisdom. From this union you obtain freedom from samsara.

(b') The second set of four

When you go for refuge to the Buddha, And to the Dharma and the Sangha, You will see with wisdom These four noble truths

Suffering, the cause of suffering, The complete transcendence of suffering, And the bliss of the eightfold noble path That leads to nirvana.

This is the principal object of refuge; This is the supreme object of refuge. If you rely upon this object of refuge, You will be freed from all suffering.

(1') You will have great protection

???

Incorrect beliefs come from admiring inferior teachers, erroneous teachings, or harmful friends and companions - all leading you away from emancipation and accumulating negative karma.

By taking refuge in the Three Jewels, you can diminish and purify the accumulation of negative actions that arise from that wrong thinking. They may even be eliminated from the root so that you completely end them.

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

That list is a general collection of the important practices that make up the worship of accomplishment. To get there, you have to study each of these elements and make them part of your life over a long period of time.

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

(4') You please and attract your teachers, religious companions, and the deities who take joy in the teaching

(ii) The benefits as they appear in the Compendium of Determinations

Chapter 12
The Precepts of Refuge

a" How they appear in the Compendium of Determinations

i" The founder of this lamrim tradition, Atiśa, passed to many great Kadampa teachers and yogis including Tsongkhapa

ii" Relying on the means to achieve happiness in future lives
Matches i) in Ch 9

Taking refuge takes you deeper into the teachings.
Next is to develop unshakable faith in karmic causality

a' Taking refuge: the sacred door to entering the teaching. Chapter 11

b' is in Chapter 13
4' of this a' is in Chapter 12.

b" How they appear in the oral traditions

This is the 4th topic under refuge - What do you do once you have taken refuge. Things to do and things to avoid. Here are presented the special trainings (or precepts) to observe.

(f) You will not be thwarted by human or nonhuman hindrances

(g) You will accomplish everything you wish

(h) You will quickly achieve buddhahood

Importance of (ii)

(a) Rely on excellent persons

In order to practice Buddha's teachings, you must rely on a wise and proper teacher - without him/her you will not know what to do to reach your goal.

When you find a proper teacher who can guide you on the path, you rely on him in the same way that you would depend on the Buddha.

Saying, "I take refuge in the Buddha" means that you revere your spiritual teacher as your guide on the Buddha's path.

It is the disciple's responsibility to find and rely on a spiritual teacher. This effort must come from your side.

(b) Listen to the sublime teachings and (c) Contemplate them properly

Listen to the holy Dharma and to think about what you have heard in order to establish it in your mind.

By thinking about the teachings you accustom your mind to them. This builds up your defences against the inner enemies—the mental afflictions.

Practice of these two methods—listening to the holy teachings and getting rid of all mental afflictions—is the real meaning of taking refuge in the Dharma: the scriptures and realisation of their meaning.

The Dharma of realisation is the real protector: it directly gets rid of all mental afflictions causing suffering.

Saying, "I take refuge in the Dharma" refers to both the scriptures and your comprehension of them.

(d) Cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings

Undertake whatever practice that works to achieve your goals: group or solitary

(b) By recalling the great kindness of the Three Jewels, strive to worship them constantly and offer the first portion of your food and drink

The Buddha taught others the method that he used himself to complete the path to liberation from suffering. The Dharma is the great method that can benefit all sentient beings. And the Sangha are the followers who carried on the teachings and made them available to us. When realisation of this dawns on you, you will genuinely appreciate the kindness of the Three Jewels of refuge. With this awareness you should always make a great effort to worship them.

From their side the Three Jewels do not need offerings; they do not come to us in order to eat or receive something. Offerings are gestures of our respect and trust in them

They are leading you and other beings to the highest goal. You make a gesture of thanks. Imaging the buddhas and bodhisattvas in front of you, think about how kind they are and make offerings of thanks for their kindness

(1') Worshiping the Buddha's body

His body when he was alive.

Stupa is a stand-in for the actual body.

(2') Worshiping a Stupa

You can do that with a stupa.

When the object of reverence is not present you worship from a distance in time or space, or build a stupa or create an image of the Buddha.

(3') Worshiping directly

You worship all the buddhas in common.

In their final nature the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are all the same.

(4') Worshiping indirectly

All Three Jewels are manifestations of the Buddha's perfect wisdom—and hence all Three are the same in their perfect final nature. Ie, worship one ===== worship all.

If it will benefit an individual a bodhisattva can appear as a Buddha, Sangha member, stupa, Dharma scripture, ordinary individual.

Other manifestations of perfect wisdom are the stages of the path, realisations and cessations.

there are three general ways of worshiping: directly, indirectly and with the recognition that their final nature is indistinguishable.

when you worship one of the Three Jewels it is important to recall that, in terms of their perfect nature, each one is the same as all the countless buddhas throughout limitless space and past, present and future time. Worshiping with that thought will bring the greatest merit.

(5') Worshiping with your own actions

The difference between making offerings and charity is based on the recipient.

Making offerings is a form of worship directed to higher beings such as buddhas, bodhisattvas and teachers.

(7') Offering wealth and honour

The recipient of a charitable donation is an object of compassion or pity, such as the poor, the sick and the needy.

Wealth can be cash, clothes, food, bedding, seats, cushions, medicine, flowers, flowers, music, etc.
Honour - rising, prostration, two hands together.

(6') Worshipping by causing others to do it

whether making offerings or giving charity the merit is greater if you do it yourself.

It is important to be respectful. The words you speak when making the charitable gift should be kind and spoken kindly—with an earnest, respectful and kind attitude.

In order of increasing merit. You might not have the resources to give but encourage others to give; you might give another person the gift to give to a third party; you might get a person to do something beneficial along with you.

(8') Extensive offerings

Continuously over a long time. Defined by 7 qualities: Materials (larger amount, high quality); process of offering (direct, indirect, done by yourself, have another do it); motivation (earnestly from your heart with strong, joyful devotion - no reluctance).

(9') Unafflicted offerings

Your motivation for worship should not be mixed with attachment, hatred, pride, or any of the other mental afflictions.

Admiring others' achievements and virtue enables you to share in the positive potential they generate. In some cases, the merit can be even greater than the merit collected by those who actually did the action. This practice of celebrating others creates the causes for attaining the highest enlightenment.

For collecting a great tide of merit with little effort, Rejoicing in others' virtue is said to be supreme.

Actually, producing that admiration can be a little difficult. It requires being well versed in Buddhist teachings and controlling your mind. Until you reach a certain level of peace, it is difficult to feel earnest admiration for the meritorious actions of someone else.

You can also create enormous merit by mentally offering unowned objects. There are many things that are not owned by any particular person: wildflowers, fruit, trees, oceans and all natural things in the world. Anyone can mentally offer these beautiful things to the buddhas for the benefit of all sentient beings.

(10') Offerings of accomplishment

This supreme form of worship is to do exactly what the Buddha taught. The thing that will most please the buddhas is to take their teachings to heart and accomplish them. They will be very pleased if you accomplish their aim by liberating yourself through spiritual practice.

It does not please them if you do not act according to their advice, but merely make offerings to them.

Antidotes

Four limitless thoughts

First, think about your own problems and cultivate compassion, love, equanimity and joy in relation to yourself

Next think about an animal (a cat, dog, horse) feel this animal possesses: ignorance, food etc. Think about how wonderful it would be if this cat could be free of all her sufferings and have genuine happiness

Extend this to all sentient beings. You can certainly make your mind think in this way.

The Buddha, the great doctor, gave us a graduated path of practice; the Dharma has many different doses and levels of medicine. You cannot use all of these antidotes at once; they have to be taken in sequence, one after the other, to take effect.

This medicine has to circulate in your mind. All of the afflictions are mental; therefore, most Buddhist practices involve training the mind.

You can train your mind while you are working, eating, or walking. You don't need to be cross-legged. If that is all you do, forget it. That is not nearly enough.

If you have a good grasp of the teachings, you can fit your practice into every worldly activity all the time. Regardless of what you are doing, you could be contemplating the four limitless thoughts, the four conclusions of the Dharma, the three refuges, or the perfections.

Four Dharma Conclusions

Recollect the four Dharma conclusions at any time in your daily life.These four points summarise the essential teachings of the Buddha.

You could inquire into the profound topic of **emptiness** or even abide in the non-conceptual awareness of it.

First, all composite things are impermanent. Whatever exists as the result of causes and conditions is transitory.

Second, all contaminated things are miserable. All samsaric phenomena are contaminated in that they are created by karma and the mental afflictions; they are subject to and are in misery and suffering. Suffering pervades the body because of its conditioning by karma and mental afflictions

Practice ethical conduct; this puts your behaviour in line with the mental training you are trying to pursue. The Buddha made the vows or rules of conduct in order to provide the necessary environment for effective mental training.

Ethical Conduct

You could apply yourself to the discipline of the training in **ethics**, the **thirty-seven factors conducive to enlightenment**, or the **four activities to gather disciples**.

Third, all phenomena are empty of inherent, absolute, or independent existence. All existing things lack a permanent, absolute self or soul

just such an independent, inherent self is what we have in mind when we talk about "I." However, that self does not exist as we perceive it. This misconception of the true nature of self is what we call egoism, wrong view, or ignorance. Wisdom is recognising that the self is actually empty of that independent existence.

Regularly check your behaviour and mind. Spy on them. If they are wandering from the standard of ethical self discipline restrain them again.

Fourth, nirvana is peace. You can identify many different levels of peace, but the Buddhist way of defining it is passing beyond sorrow and misery. When you have completely gotten rid of all suffering and eliminated its causes from the root, then you have peace.

Practicing what they teach is the highest offering you can make to the buddhas.

Attitude while making offerings

1) Think that there is no higher field of virtuous qualities than the Three Jewels. The way you behave toward the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha will magnify the karmic effect of whatever you do. The object, or field, of an action is essential in determining the merit of any action.

2) Think that there is no higher benefactor than the Three Jewels. The benefit that comes from the Three Jewels has no limit; they can bring you both temporary happiness as well as the highest attainments right up to buddhahood.

3) Think that the Three Jewels are superior to all ordinary beings. The Three Jewels are the helpers and protectors of sentient beings.

4) Think that the Three Jewels are extremely rare.

5) Unique

6) Think that every perfection, accomplishment and blissful quality is produced by the Three Jewels of refuge.

Don't just repeat these four conclusions blindly. Our ordinary perception of ourselves and the world is mistaken. It is actually the opposite of these four points, To get rid of these mistaken views you have to realise the truth.

First, get a rough idea of these right views by examining the logical reasons behind them.

Then, with more thinking and meditation, you can obtain an inferential knowledge of these truths.

Finally, using your understanding as an instrument, you can gain the direct realisation that cuts the mental afflictions that are the opposite of these truths.

Think, "This has something to do with eliminating the causes of suffering." First you learn, then you investigate various approaches to grasp the how, why etc. Eventually you understand the meaning through inferential knowledge. Then you try to develop that understanding fully by joining it to *single-pointed* meditation. Your meditation becomes clearer and clearer until finally, without thinking of reasons, you experience direct realisation.

The process just described pertains to the other topics as well. Eg emptiness or śūnyatā