



DO WE GO
TO THE
TRIPLE
GEM
FOR
REFUGE?



Aggacitta Bhikkhu

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Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary presents a series of Dhamma resources that investigate popular interpretations and practices of Buddhism in the light of the Pāli scriptures and real-life experiences. Using a critical yet constructive approach based on the Four Great References of Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (DN 16) and Mahāpadesa Sutta (AN 4.180), as well as on Kālāma Sutta (AN 3.66), the series is an attempt to reconcile ancient teachings with selected contemporary life experiences and research findings. In this way, Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary hopes to bring us closer to a practical reality we can more easily connect with.

Four Great References Before he passed away, the Buddha gave us practical advice to assess situations in which we hear a monk proclaiming that what he teaches “is the Dhamma... the Vinaya... the teachings of the Master”. He may say that he heard and learned it in the presence of

1. the Buddha himself
2. a Saṅgha in a certain monastery with its elders and leaders
3. many learned elders in a certain monastery who are recipients of the oral tradition, and upholders of the Dhamma, Vinaya and the summaries, or
4. a learned elder in a certain monastery who is a recipient of the oral tradition, and upholder of the Dhamma, Vinaya and the summaries.

In such situations, without rejoicing in or scorning the monk’s words, we should investigate to see if such teachings are included in the sutta or seen in the Vinaya. If they are, we may conclude that they are the words of the Buddha and that they have been well learned by the speaker. Otherwise, we may conclude that they are not the words of the Buddha and that they have been wrongly learned by the speaker, and so we should reject them.

Kālāma Sutta Also named Kesamutti Sutta and popularly known as “The Charter of Free Inquiry”, the discourse was given by the Buddha to the Kālāmas who were perplexed by the conflicting claims of visiting monks and priests. It stresses on cautious discernment, as the abridged excerpt below shows:

“Come, you Kālāmas. Do not go by repeated hearing, nor by tradition, nor by hearsay, nor by scripture, nor by logical thinking, nor by inference, nor by theorising, nor by considered acceptance of a view, nor by apparent capability, nor by thinking: *The monk is our teacher*. When you yourselves, Kālāmas, know: *These things are unskillful, blameable, disapproved by the wise; carried out and undertaken, these things lead to harm and suffering*—then, Kālāmas, you should abandon them ... When you yourselves know: *These things are skillful, blameless, praised by the wise; carried out and undertaken, these things lead to benefit and happiness*—then, Kālāmas, you should live, having fulfilled them.”

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Published for free distribution by
Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary
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First printing, April 2014: 10,000 copies

© Aggacitta Bhikkhu, April 2014

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Cover design *Hor Tuck Loon*

Printed by *Majujaya Indah, Ampang, Selangor.*

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Aggacitta Bhikkhu, 1954-

Do We Go to the Triple Gem for Refuge? / Aggacitta Bhikkhu.

Bibliography: page 52

1. Meditation--Buddhism. I.Title.

294.3444

*For those willing to change
when they discover that the Truth
is not what they thought it to be*

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Preface

Buddhists are often told to take refuge in the Triple Gem, and many believe that they actually do. For over 30 years, I was guilty of both believing in it and telling others to do so. In order to compensate for this orthodox misinformation, I have taken much pains to produce this booklet.

The idea that Triple Gem = Triple Refuge (or the objects of the Triple Refuge) is long-standing and pervasive among practically all existing Buddhist traditions. To propose otherwise would require solid evidence and a sound argument. I have therefore done extensive primary research based on the Pāli scriptures and consulted learned monastics on the soundness of my findings.

Although this booklet may look like a thesis or academic paper, it was never my intention to publish it in an academic journal and confine my findings to a select minority of specialists. My main concern is to disseminate this discovery among practising Buddhists so that they can be rightly informed and brought closer to the reality of what the Pāli Canon says. I also hope that this astonishing discovery will alert practising Buddhists to be more cautious in their acceptance and practice of what is claimed to be the Buddha's Teaching.

The controversial nature of the topic demands that I target an audience ranging from ordinary, practising Buddhists to knowledgeable Dhamma teachers. After all, ordinary Buddhists who are doubtful will naturally ask their Dhamma teachers for clarification—so I might as well facilitate their task by providing accurate, authoritative information.

This becomes a challenge because I have to write in a style that is informal enough to retain the interest of the ordinary Buddhist, and yet include authoritative references to convince learned, especially

orthodox, Dhamma teachers. I have therefore tried to put most technical information and academic arguments in the footnotes. Nonetheless, a few discussions may still be found in the main body because I felt they would fit in better with the flow of the content. But if you think they are too intellectual or technical for you, do skip them.

Many people helped to produce this booklet. Āyasmā Ariyadhammika and Āyasmā Kumāra were especially thorough in their critique of my first complete draft, and the latter continued to fine-tune my writing style even until v6.0. Āyasmā Yuttadhammo pointed out instances of inelegant English usage, while Āyasmā Anālayo gave profound comments on interpretation and terminology. Sāmaṇerī Dhammadinnā offered her English translation of a parallel passage from the Chinese Āgama about how Ugga went for refuge. Āyasmā Sujāto got Roderick S. Bucknell to check and amend the punctuation of the Chinese passage that was copied from the CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association) edition.

Special thanks also go to Looi Sow Fei, my long-time English editor, and to my sister, Leong Liew Geok, who gave prompt editorial advice when I consulted her. I am grateful to Hor Tuck Loon for the handsome cover design and to all those who helped but whose names are not mentioned above.

Sādhu, everyone, sādhu. Your valuable contributions have indeed enhanced the content and quality of this booklet. Any imperfections or errors left undetected are most likely due to my own ignorance and negligence.

Unless otherwise stated, the English translations in this booklet are mine. I finalised them after carefully checking with those by Āyasmā Bhikkhu Bodhi and Āyasmā Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu in the sources listed in the Bibliography.

Aggacitta Bhikkhu

April 2014

Do We Go to the Triple Gem for Refuge?

Most Buddhists would probably answer, “Of course,” and some may even add, “What a funny question!” Or perhaps you might be astonished that a knowledgeable senior monk would ask such a funny question and exclaim, “Don’t we?”

Actually, I love asking ‘funny’ questions in order to shake people—including me—from the complacency of our unquestioned beliefs and assumptions, which have long been taken for granted. I believe that in doing so, some useful purpose can be effected, such as (1) straighten mistaken views which would otherwise remain unnoticed, and (2) stimulate the intellect by providing needful exercise for inactive brain cells, thus perhaps preventing, or at least delaying, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

Now, if the answer to that elementary question were a simple yes (as any Sunday Dhamma School kid should be able to answer in a jiffy), I would not be writing this booklet. But because—at least according to the Pāli suttas—the answer is *no*, I’m sure you must be curious to know more. Read on and you will not be disappointed.

Are the Triple Refuge and the Triple Gem the Same?

From the time I became a so-called Theravāda Buddhist some 35 years ago, I was under the impression that the Triple Refuge (*Tisarāṇa*) and the Triple Gem (*Tiratana*) are identical. Only recently, in November 2012, did I discover that they are not quite the same. So, I had long been leading my congregation to “go to the Triple Gem for refuge”.

To get to the bottom of this surprising discovery, we need to ask two fundamental questions: (1) *What does the Triple Gem refer to?* and (2) *How was the Triple Refuge taken during the Buddha’s time?*

What is the Triple Gem (Tiratana)?

An electronic search of the Pāli Canon in *Chattha Sangayana Tipitaka (CST) 4.0*¹ showed that the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are related to gems or jewels (*ratanaṇi*) *only* in Ratana Sutta of the Minor Collection (Khuddaka Nikāya).²

The references are as follows: three verses (3, 12, 13) on the Buddha, two (4, 5) on the Dhamma and seven (6 – 11, 14) on the Saṅgha. Please refer to the full Pāli-English translation in Appendix 1.

When you look closely at those verses, you will notice that the penultimate line of each reads: *This, too, in the Buddha (or Dhamma or Saṅgha) is an exquisite gem.* Now you may wonder: *Isn't the Buddha the exquisite gem? What is this thing in the Buddha that is the exquisite gem?* The exquisite gem is the quality found in the Buddha—not the Buddha himself.³ This principle also applies to the Dhamma and Saṅgha. All this will become clear as I discuss the implications of those verses.

Verse 3 merely states that there is no wealth—here or beyond—or exquisite gem in the heavens, that is equal to the Thus-gone (*Tathāgata*, an epithet of the Buddha). Verse 12 states that he taught the excellent Dhamma leading to nibbāna for the highest benefit, and Verse 13 that being excellent, a knower of the excellent, a giver of the

1 *Chattha-saṅgāyana* literally means “Sixth Choral Chanting” which was held in Rangoon, Burma, 1954 – 56, in order to compile, collate and edit the various versions of the Pāli scriptures and chant the finalised version of the Pāli Canon in chorus. The finalised version was originally digitalised by the Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, India, but now many digital copies based on it are also available. Āyasmā Yuttadhammo, the creator of *Digital Pali Reader*, however, notes: “There is controversy over whether the VRI Tipiṭaka is actually Sixth Council at all; I was under the impression that it was still mostly Fifth Council mistakenly taken to be Sixth.”

2 The same Sutta can be found in Khuddaka Pāṭha and Suttanipāta, both included in the Khuddaka Nikāya.

3 I am grateful to Āysamā Kumāra for highlighting this to me when he vetted my first draft.

excellent and a bringer of the excellent, he taught the unexcelled Dhamma. These verses are essentially about the *qualities* found in a Buddha and need not apply *only* to Gotama Buddha.

Verse 4 describes the unequalled qualities found in the Dhamma in terms of synonyms of nibbāna and Verse 5 in terms of the composure (*samādhi*) of arahantship. These qualities point to the *ultimate goal* of the Buddha's Teaching rather than the means to reach the goal. Verse 12 mentions the Buddha teaching "the excellent Dhamma leading to nibbāna" and Verse 13 "the excellent Dhamma", but these are not the qualities of the Dhamma regarded as exquisite gems. Rather, they are part of the qualities found in the Buddha, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Verses 6 – 11 and Verse 14 describe the various qualities found in the four pairs of individuals who are disciples (*sāvaka*) of the Buddha and worthy of offerings—now popularly known as noble ones (*ariyā*), following the commentarial terminology.⁴ Verse 6 is about the four pairs in general, Verses 7 and 14 are about the arahant, while the rest are about the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). So, the exquisite gem in the Saṅgha clearly refers to the qualities of the Community of noble ones

4 An electronic search of CST 4.0 showed the following results. No words containing *ariyasāvakaṣaṅgh* can be found in the entire Pāli Canon. For words containing *ariya-saṅgh*, there is *one* occurrence of *ariyaṣaṅghassa* in the summary verses appended to Dhammika Sutta (AN 6.54), which were most likely composed and inserted by the later collators of the scriptures, and *one* occurrence of *ariyaṣaṅgho* and another of *ariyaṣaṅghassa* in Nettipakaraṇa, a late Canonical text of the Khuddaka Nikāya. In contrast, there are 33 occurrences of words containing *ariyaṣaṅgh* in 21 commentarial books. Even more contrasting is the staggering figure of 971 occurrences of words containing *ariyasāvaka* in 70 Canonical books. While in the contexts of most of these latter occurrences, *ariyasāvaka* can be interpreted to refer to a disciple who is already awakened or destined to be awakened, there are also contexts where it obviously refers to "a disciple of the noble ones" who neither has attained any of the stages of awakening, nor is destined to be awakened. A thorough listing of such contexts, however, is not within the scope of this booklet.

(*ariya-Saṅgha*), made up of the entire four assemblies (*parisā*)—monks, nuns, male lay followers and female lay followers (*bhikkhū*, *bhikkhunī*, *upāsakā*, *upāsikā*).

However, it can be argued that the qualities mentioned in Verses 3 and 12 *do* refer only to Gotama Buddha because of the occurrences of “Sakyan Sage” (*Sakyamunī*) in Verse 4 and “in Gotama’s Dispensation” (*Gotama-sāsanamhi*) in Verse 7. On closer scrutiny though, we notice that Verses 4 and 7 are not about the Buddha but about the Dhamma and Saṅgha respectively. If the logic of this argument is reversed, then *only* the nibbāna attained by Gotama Buddha—not by anyone else—has the unequalled quality that is an exquisite gem. Similarly, *only* the disciples of Gotama Buddha who are liberated from defilements—not of any other Buddha—can freely experience the peace of the Deathless. Of course this line of reasoning doesn’t make sense because these qualities that are exquisite gems can be found in any Buddha, in the Dhamma attained by him and in his Saṅgha of noble ones, regardless of time and place.

This definition of the Triple Gem in Ratana Sutta reminds me of the popular chanting passages beginning with *Itipi so bhagavā...*, *Svākkhāto bhagavatā Dhammo...*, and *Suppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho...*⁵, in which the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha of noble ones are also enumerated, but in different ways. Please see Appendix 2 for the complete Pāli text and English translation.

These stock passages appear repeatedly in the early suttas throughout the five Nikāyas,⁶ but *none* in the context of ratana—not even when the Buddha instructed monks who were overcome by fear

5 Note that this *Suppaṭipanno* stock passage refers *only* to the Community of noble ones, and *not* to the Community of monks or nuns which includes persons who are neither awakened, nor destined to be so.

6 According to the search engine of *CST 4.0*: *itipi so* – 155 times in 22 books; *svākkhāto* – 69 in 17; *suppaṭipanno* – 59 in 16. Note that this count excludes elisions that usually follow the first few words of a stock passage.

to think of him, the Dhamma, or the Saṅgha by recollecting these qualities.⁷

On the other hand, one could also argue that it is unnecessary to split hairs between an object and its qualities because any object is identifiable only by its qualities, as can be seen in this (Dhajagga) Sutta where the Buddha instructed the monks to *think of him, the Dhamma, or the Saṅgha by recollecting these very qualities*. True, but the qualities mentioned in Ratana Sutta are more restricted and not as comprehensive as those in the stock passages of *Itipi so bhagavā*, etc. Nonetheless, if we follow this argument⁸ we can say that the Triple Gem comprises any Buddha, the supramundane (*lokuttara*) Dhamma and the Community of noble ones.

To summarise, the answer to our first fundamental question is quite straightforward: according to a literal reading of the Pāli in Ratana Sutta, **Buddha·ratana** refers to *some specific qualities of a Buddha*, **Dhamma·ratana** to the *unequalled qualities of nibbāna* and of *the samādhi of arahantship*, and **Saṅgha·ratana** to *some of the qualities of the Community of noble ones (ariya·Saṅgha)*.

How Was the Triple Refuge (*Tisarāṇa*) Taken During the Buddha's time?

Now we come to the second fundamental question, which requires a more complicated answer because the taking of the Three Refuges occurs in three different contexts: (1) profession of faith, (2) monastic ordination and (3) miscellaneous references to the going-for-refuge.

7 Dhajagga Sutta (SN 11.3).

8 I personally think this is a more tenable argument than the simplistic logic in the Commentary to Ratana Sutta of the Khuddaka Nikāya, which can be paraphrased “what contains a gem is also called a gem”. (*na hi yattha ratanaṃ atthi, taṃ ratanaṃ'ti na sijjhati. yattha pana cittikatādiatthasāṅkhātāṃ yena vā tena vā vidhinā sambandhagataṃ ratanaṃ atthi, yasmā taṃ ratanattamupādāya ratanaṃ'ti paññāpiyati, tasmā tassa ratanassa atthitāya ratanaṃ'ti sijjhati.*)

Profession of Faith

There are many accounts in the Pāli suttas and Vinaya texts of people who were so inspired by a discourse of the Buddha that they professed their faith at the end of it. Some of them attained the Dhamma while listening to the discourse and requested ordination after that; while others—whether they attained the Dhamma or not—merely professed their faith and declared themselves as lay followers. The stock passage leading to such a profession and declaration is as follows:

[Then he/she] said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama / Bhante! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama / the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. *I go to Master Gotama / the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma and to the Community of monks. May Master Gotama / the Blessed One remember me as a male / female lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forward, for life.*”⁹

An electronic search in CST 4.0 showed that this stock phrase occurs 140 times in 25 books¹⁰ of the Pāli Canon, throughout the five Nikāyas. Of these occurrences, in two cases the profession of faith was done after the Buddha’s demise, and in 16 cases those who professed

9 *Esāhaṃ bhavantāṃ gotamaṃ / bhante bhagavantāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi dhammañca bhikkhusaṅghañca. Upāsakaṃ / Upāsikaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ gotama / bhante bhagavā dhāretu ajjatagge pāṇupetaṃ saraṇaṃ gatan’ti.* Translation of above passage is based on that of Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu in <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>. This same stock passage is also used for profession of faith in a group, with a change from first person singular to plural.

10 This count, obtained by searching for *pāṇupetaṃ saraṇaṃ*, includes (1) occurrences in which only the beginning and end of the stock passage are shown while the rest are elided, (2) four occurrences in which the entire passage is elided and (3) two occurrences in Milindapañha, which is not universally accepted as Canonical.

their faith had just attained the Dhamma while listening to the discourse.

Let us now separately analyse the objects in which refuge was taken.

Going to the Buddha for Refuge

Notice that the first Refuge refers to a specific individual, i.e. Gotama the Blessed One, and not to the abstract qualities of a Buddha, nor to a transcendental Buddha. This becomes even clearer in the two cases in which the going-for-refuge took place after the Buddha's demise.

In Madhura Sutta (MN 84), King Avantiputta of Madhura became so impressed by his dialogue with Āyasmā Mahākaccāna that he professed faith in the latter's presence, saying:

“I go to Master Kaccāna for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Community of monks. May Master Kaccāna remember me as a male lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

Āyasmā Mahākaccāna asked the king not to go to him for refuge but to that same Blessed One whom he himself had gone to for refuge. When the king found out that the Buddha had already passed away, he said:

“If (the Buddha was still alive and) we heard that the Blessed One was even a hundred *yojanas*¹¹ away we would go (all the way) there to see him. But since the Blessed One has attained final nibbāna, we go to the Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Community of monks. May Master Kaccāna remember me as a male lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

The second case occurs in Ghoṭamukha Sutta (MN 94), in which the brahmin, Ghoṭamukha, was similarly impressed by his dialogue with Āyasmā Udena and professed faith in the latter's presence. Here we also find the whole sequence repeated as in the previous case, with appropriate changes to the names of the people involved.

11 One *yojana* is about seven miles, according to the Pāli-English Dictionary in DPR.

These two cases very clearly show that one goes to the *historical* Gotama Buddha for refuge—not to the abstract qualities of a Buddha, nor to a transcendental Buddha.

Going to the Dhamma for Refuge

As mentioned above, out of the 140 occurrences of profession of faith, only 16 cases had just attained the Dhamma while listening to a discourse of the Buddha. In other words, almost 89% professed faith without having first attained the Dhamma, i.e. they did not have a glimpse of nibbāna. This suggests that the vast majority were impressed by the *Teaching* of the Buddha, and took refuge in the *Teaching* (Dhamma) rather than in nibbāna (the highest Dhamma), the ultimate goal of the Teaching.

The phrase “in the same way has Master Gotama / the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear” indicates that even those who had attained the Dhamma, i.e. had had a glimpse of nibbāna, were also impressed by the Teaching and took refuge in it as well.

In summary, one goes to the Teaching (Dhamma) for refuge—not to nibbāna, the highest Dhamma, the ultimate goal of the Teaching.

Going to the Saṅgha for Refuge

Perhaps even more significant than the first two Refuges is the third Refuge, specifically stated as “the Community of monks (*bhikkhu-Saṅgha*)”, not just Saṅgha, *sāvaka-Saṅgha* (Community of disciples), or *ariya-Saṅgha* (Community of nobles ones). This means that the object of the third Refuge is the Community of monks, which now comprises—mostly(?)—persons who are not noble ones (*anariyā*), i.e. neither awakened, nor destined to be so. From the perspective of current Western cultural values, this might appear to be rather sexist, but my

understanding of records in the Pāli scriptures is that society at that time was patriarchal and its leading roles were male-dominated.¹²

To sum up, in practically all cases of professing faith recorded in the five Nikāyas, refuge was taken in the historical Gotama Buddha, in his Teaching (Dhamma) and in his Community of monks (*bhikkhu-Saṅgha*).

Monastic Ordination

As mentioned earlier, there are many accounts in the Pāli Canon, especially in the Vinaya texts, of people who were so inspired by a discourse given by the Buddha that they requested ordination. Some of them attained the Dhamma while listening to the discourse, whereas others didn't.

Ordination by the Ehi-bhikkhu Formula

The first men who made up the Community of monks (*bhikkhu-Saṅgha*) were personally ordained by the Buddha through the “Come, monk (*ehi bhikkhu*)” formula.

“Bhante, may I obtain the going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence; may I obtain the higher ordination.” “Come, monk,” said the Blessed One, “Well-expounded is the Dhamma; live the lofty life for making a complete end of suffering.”¹³

12 According to Āyasmā Anālayo, however, “In the early discourses, mention of the foremost member often includes others. Thus I think it does not do justice to the present passage to interpret it as referring only to male bhikkhus. I think it would include sāmaṇeras, bhikkhunīs, sikkhamānās and sāmaṇerīs as well. The point is that those who wear robes are outwardly recognisable as disciples of the Buddha; therefore they can become the object of taking refuge.” For details of his argument, see especially pp 117 – 118 in “Theories on the Foundation of the Nuns’ Order—A Critical Evaluation”, <http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/TheoriesFoundation.pdf>.

13 “*Labheyāhaṃ, bhante, bhagavato santike pabbajjāṃ, labheyāṃ upasampadan*”ti. “*Ehi bhikkhū*”ti bhagavā avoca—“*Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahmacariyaṃ sammā dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ*”ti. (e.g. in Vin Mv 18).

Later, after the Buddha dispatched the first 60 monks who had attained full awakening, in separate directions to propagate the Dhamma, more and more men were inspired to renounce. So the monks had to admit to the Buddha's presence those candidates from all over in order to receive the *ehi bhikkhu* ordination from him.

Ordination by the Triple Refuge Formula

This, of course, was very troublesome for everybody concerned, so the Buddha decided to delegate ordination to the monks as well, using the simple Triple Refuge formula that is now popularly recited by lay Buddhists.

Monks, I allow you all [to] give the going-forth and higher ordination in these or those quarters or provinces. And monks, this is how the going-forth and higher ordination are to be given—First, having shaved his head hair and beard, robed him with dyed cloth, and made him put his upper robe over one shoulder, pay respects to the feet of the monks, squat on his haunches and raise his hands in salutation, he is to be told, “Say this: ‘I go to the Buddha for refuge, I go to the Dhamma for refuge, I go to the Saṅgha for refuge; for the second time I go to the Buddha for refuge, for the second time I go to the Dhamma for refuge, for the second time I go to the Saṅgha for refuge; for the third time I go to the Buddha for refuge, for the third time I go to the Dhamma for refuge, for the third time I go to the Saṅgha for refuge.’” Monks, I allow going-forth and higher ordination with these three Goings-for-Refuge.¹⁴

14 “...Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, tumheva dāni tāsu tāsu disāsu tesu tesu janapadesu pabbājetha upasampādetha. Evañca pana, bhikkhave, pabbājetabbo upasampādetabbo—paṭhamañ kesamassuñ ohārāpetvā, kāśāyāni vatthāni acchādāpetvā, ekamañ uttarāsaṅgañ kārāpetvā, bhikkhūnañ pāde vandāpetvā, ukkuṭikañ nisidāpetvā, añjalim paggaṅhāpetvā, evañ vadehīti vattabbo—buddhañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dhammañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi; dutiyampi buddhañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dutiyampi dhammañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dutiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi; tatiyampi buddhañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, tatiyampi dhammañ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, tatiyampi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi”ti. (Vin Mv 34).

Ordination by Saṅgha·kamma

This new procedure was in effect for some time until the Buddha decided to revoke the three Goings-for-Refuge formula for higher ordination and replace it with our current practice involving a Community procedure (*Saṅgha·kamma*) within a valid boundary (*sīmā*).

Monks, the higher ordination with the three Goings-for-Refuge that was allowed by me—that I revoke from today onwards. Monks, I allow you to ordain with the Procedure involving a motion and ending with a decision on the fourth proclamation.¹⁵

Going-forth of Probationers by the Triple Refuge Formula

However, the allowance for going-forth with the three Goings-for-Refuge was not revoked, so the Buddha used the same procedure to admit a candidate from a different religion or belief-system for monkhood into the Saṅgha by putting him on a four-month probation.¹⁶ Note that this applies to candidates over 20 years old who are therefore not “novices (*sāmaṇerā*)”, but “probationers (*pārivāsikā*)”.

Going-forth of Novices by the Triple Refuge Formula

On a later occasion, when the Buddha asked Āyasmā Sāriputta to ordain his son Rāhula (who was then probably about seven years old), he specifically made another allowance for males under 20 years old:

Monks, I allow *sāmaṇera* going-forth with the three Goings-for-Refuge. And monks, this is how he is made to go forth—First, having shaved his

15 *Yā sā, bhikkhave, mayā tīhi saraṇagamanehi upasampadā anuññātā, taṃ ajjatagge paṭikkhipāmi. Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, ñatticatutthena kammena upasampādetuṃ.* (Vin Mv 69).

16 The Buddha, however, made two exceptions to this rule: (1) if the candidate already believed in the Law of Kamma or (2) if he was a Sakyan clansman of the Buddha, he would not need to undergo probation. The circumstances that prompted the Buddha to lay down this rule as well as the details of the probation are recorded in Vin Mv 86.

head hair and beard ... [as in above passage] ... Monks, I allow *sāmaṇera* going-forth with these three Goings-for-Refuge.¹⁷

So, to this day, the Triple Refuge formula is still used in the ordination of a novice (*sāmaṇera*) who is not qualified for higher ordination because he is less than 20 years old, or for other reasons (e.g. having committed a grave offence as a *bhikkhu*).¹⁸

What does the Triple Refuge Refer to in Monastic Ordination?

Buddha: That the first Refuge refers to the historical Gotama Buddha can be clearly inferred from the circumstances that prompted the Buddha to allow the monks to give the going-forth and higher ordination with the Triple Refuge formula. We also noted in the earlier section that even after the Buddha's demise, *Āyasmā Mahākaccāna* and *Āyasmā Udena* (in MN 84 and 94 respectively) explicitly said that they took refuge in Gotama the Blessed One.

Dhamma: The second Refuge refers to the Buddha's Teaching, as can be seen from the stock phrase in the *ehi bhikkhu* formula: "Come, monk," said the Blessed One, "*Well-expounded is the Dhamma*; live the lofty life for making a complete end of suffering." In addition, before the Buddha passed away he exhorted *Āyasmā Ānanda*:

Perhaps, *Ānanda*, it may occur to some of you—"The Teaching is without the Teacher; we no longer have a Teacher." But *Ānanda*, it is not to be regarded in that way. The Dhamma and the Vinaya that have been discoursed upon and laid down by me for you— that shall be your Teacher after my demise.¹⁹

17 "*Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, tīhi saraṇagamanehi sāmaṇerapabbajjāṃ. Evañca pana, bhikkhave, pabbājetabbo—paṭhamaṃ kesamassuṃ ohārāpetvā ... Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, imehi tīhi saraṇagamanehi sāmaṇerapabbajjan*"ti. (Vin Mv 105).

18 While it is not uncommon to have overage *sāmaṇeras* in Sri Lanka, they are generally regarded with suspicion or condescension in Myanmar and Thailand. Some sayadaws in Myanmar even label them as "destroyers of the Buddha's Dispensation (*sāsanadūsakā*)".

19 "*Siyā kho paṇānanda, tumhākaṃ evamassa—'atītasatthukaṃ pāvacaṇaṃ, natthi no satthā'ti. Na kho panetaṃ, ānanda, evaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ. Yo vo, ānanda, mayā dhammo*

Earlier on in the same Sutta, the Buddha had also exhorted him to “dwell with oneself as an island, with oneself as refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as refuge, with no other refuge,” which he defined as the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhānā*).²⁰

These references clearly show that the second Refuge refers to the Teaching or the means, rather than the end—which is nibbāna, the highest Dhamma.

Saṅgha: In the Vinaya Piṭaka, the term “Saṅgha” is used exclusively to refer to the Community of monks (*bhikkhu-Saṅgha*) unless qualified by the adjectives *sāvaka-* or *bhikkhuni-*, or by context²¹. As the Triple Refuge formula for monastic ordination is mentioned only in the Vinaya Piṭaka, we can be quite certain that “Saṅgha” here, too, refers to the Community of monks.

Miscellaneous References to the Going-for-Refuge

So far, the distinction between the Triple Gem and the Triple Refuge has been quite neatly presented. However there are some places in the Pāli Canon where references to the going-for-refuge appear to be rather ambiguous because “bhikkhu-Saṅgha” is not specifically stated.

In the suttas and Vinaya Piṭaka, references to the going-for-refuge specify “bhikkhu-Saṅgha” as the third object of refuge *only* in an actual profession of faith and declaration of a lay follower. This

ca vinayo ca desito paññatto, so vo mamaccayena satthā....” (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta DN 16).

20 *Tasmātihānanda, attadīpā viharatha attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā, dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā. Kathañcānanda, bhikkhu attadīpo viharati attasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo, dhammadīpo dhammasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo? Idhānanda, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ. Vedanāsu ... citte ... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati atāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ. Evaṃ kho, ānanda, bhikkhu attadīpo viharati attasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo, dhammadīpo dhammasaraṇo anaññasaraṇo.* (Ibid).

21 E.g. when the bhikkhunis are in the process of performing a formal act of the bhikkhuni-Saṅgha, they begin with the motion: “Ayye, let the Saṅgha listen to me...”

should be narrated in prose and direct speech, in the first person, using the simple present tense.²² Otherwise, as in the following citations, the third object of refuge is stated simply as “Saṅgha”.

Why there is such an inconsistency in specifying the third object of refuge, we can only speculate. But at least we can safely conclude, as far as references to the going-for-refuge in prose are concerned, that this is a peculiarity of the oral tradition. As for references to the going-for-refuge in verse (*gāthā*), we can understand the use of poetic licence, particularly the need for brevity to meet the demands of metrical considerations. For this reason, I shall confine my investigation, of cases where the third object of refuge is stated simply as “Saṅgha”, to *only* those in prose.

1. Narration of How One Went for Refuge

This is found in two concurrent Suttas about an extraordinary lay follower named Uggā. The Uggā in the first Sutta was from Vesālī and the other in the second from Hatthigāma.²³ Briefly, the Suttas say that both were filled with abundant faith the first time they met the Buddha; Uggā of Hatthigāma was dead drunk then, but his drunkenness completely vanished the moment he saw the Buddha. In both cases, the Buddha delivered a progressive discourse beginning with giving (*dāna*) and ending in the Four Noble Truths, and both Uggas attained the Dhamma. Later on, both of them narrated:

“There and then I went to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha for refuge, and undertook the training rules with the lofty practice (celibacy) as

22 Doing an electronic search in *CST 4.0* and *DPR 4.3* so far, I did not come across any references in prose, in indirect speech, that specify “bhikkhu-Saṅgha” as the third object of refuge. However, strangely enough, I came across one reference in *Chattamaṇavakavimānavatthu* (KN 6.53) in verse and direct speech, but in the second person imperative, followed by an acknowledgement in the first person, in the past tense.

23 Paṭhama-ugga Sutta (AN 8.21) and Duttiya-ugga Sutta (AN 8.22). Āyasmā Kumāra opines that perhaps there was only one Uggā, but the monks remembered the details differently; thus, two versions were recorded in the oral tradition.

the fifth (rule). This, Bhante, is the second wonderful and marvellous thing found in me.”²⁴

The Buddha praised both of them for eight wonderful and marvellous qualities which are summarised below:

1. great faith in the Buddha at first sight
2. attainment of the Dhamma-Eye while listening to a discourse for the first time, then going to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha for refuge, followed by undertaking the training rules with celibacy as the fifth rule
3. announcement of the vow of celibacy to his four young wives, and giving the eldest away to another man of her choice without any mental alteration
4. generous in sharing wealth unreservedly with virtuous people of good character
5. attendance on a monk respectfully, not disrespectfully
6. respectful attention to the Dhamma being taught by a monk, or teaching him the Dhamma if the monk doesn't do so
7. no mental exultation arising because devas come to him or because he converses with them
8. making an indirect claim to being a non-returner (*anāgāmi*).

In the above narration, the third object of refuge is obviously different from that in the profession of faith we established earlier. Why did they go to the Saṅgha instead of the bhikkhu-Saṅgha for refuge? Is it because they themselves were already part of the Community of noble ones (*ariya-Saṅgha*)? But this cannot be, because (1) as mentioned earlier, there are 16 other cases in which those who went to the bhikkhu-Saṅgha for refuge were also noble ones, and (2) both of these extraordinary householders possessed the quality of humility towards monks (#5 and #6 in the list above). Uggā of Hatthigāma is

24 *Tattheva buddhañca dhammañca saṅghañca saraṇaṃ agamāsīm, brahmacariya-pāñcamāni ca sikkhāpadāni samādiyīm. Ayaṃ kho me, bhante, dutiyo acchariyo abbhuto dhammo samvijjati.*

probably the same Uggata of Hatthigāma who was praised by the Buddha as the foremost among his disciples who attended to the Saṅgha²⁵. The Commentary actually identifies him as the one whose drunkenness completely vanished the moment he saw the Buddha and who subsequently became a non-returner after listening to the Buddha's discourse then.

So, could this apparent anomaly just be an oversight in the oral transmission of the Pāli Nikāyas? Or, as noted above, are these two significant cases which substantiate my observation that references in the suttas to the going-for-refuge do not specify “bhikkhu:Saṅgha” as the third object of refuge unless they are narratives in prose describing the actual profession of faith and declaration of a lay-follower (in first person direct speech, in the present tense)? Note that the above narration, although in first person direct speech, is *not* an actual profession of faith in the present tense; rather, it is a *recounting in the past tense* of how Uggata went for refuge.

A comparison with a parallel passage in the Chinese Āgama²⁶ lends support to the second possibility because the passage is an actual profession of faith and declaration of a lay-follower in first person direct speech, in the present tense:

World-Honoured One, I herewith go for refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma, and in the Saṅgha of Monks. May the World-Honoured One accept me as a lay follower. From this day onwards, I go for refuge until the end of my life. World-Honoured One, from this day onwards, for my entire life I shall follow the World-Honoured One and, with the pure conduct (i.e. celibacy) as priority, undertake the five precepts.²⁷

25 In AN 1.254.

26 MĀ 38, T 26 at T I 480c8–480c11. I am grateful to Āyasmā Ariyadhammika for his initiative in making this comparison with the assistance of Sāmanerī Dhamma-dinnā.

27 Translation by Sāmanerī Dhammadinnā of 世尊, 我今自歸於佛, 法, 及比丘眾。唯願世尊受我為優婆塞。從今日始終身自歸乃至命盡。世尊, 我從今日從世尊自盡形壽, 梵行為首, 受持五戒。

2. Definition of a Lay Follower (Upāsaka)

On two separate occasions, Mahānāma the Sakyan and Jīvaka the physician, approached the Buddha and asked him how one became a lay follower. The Buddha answered:

Because, Mahānāma / Jīvaka, one has gone to the Buddha for refuge, has gone to the Dhamma for refuge, has gone to the Saṅgha for refuge; therefore, Mahānāma / Jīvaka, one becomes a lay follower.²⁸

3. Going for Refuge Is More Meritorious than Dāna

In Velāma Sutta (AN 9.20), the Buddha listed a spectrum of merits in ascending order of greatness.

1. It is more meritorious to give a meal to
 - a) a stream-enterer as compared to the magnificent dāna of the brahmin Velāma.
 - b) a once-returned than to 100 stream-enterers.
 - c) an non-returned than to 100 once-returned.
 - d) an arahant than to 100 non-returned.
 - e) a Pacceka-buddha than to 100 arahants.
 - f) a Sammāsambuddha than to 100 Pacceka-buddhas.
 - g) the bhikkhu-Saṅgha headed by the Sammāsambuddha than to one Sammāsambuddha.
2. Having a dwelling made for the Saṅgha from the four directions²⁹ is more meritorious than giving a meal to the bhikkhu-Saṅgha headed by the Sammāsambuddha.

28 “*yato kho, mahānāma / jīvaka, buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti; ettāvata kho, mahānāma, upāsako hoti*”ti. Mahānāma Sutta (AN 8.25) / Jīvaka Sutta (AN 8.26).

29 “The Saṅgha from the four directions (*cātuddisa saṅgha*)” is the ideal Community of monks who have come or shall come from any direction—represented here by the four cardinal directions. A monastery dedicated and donated in this way is to be used according to monastic protocol by all genuine bhikkhus, regardless of sect, denomination, or tradition, for all time.

3. Surpassing the above is the going to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha for refuge of one with a clear mind.³⁰
4. Higher than that is observing the five precepts with a clear mind.³¹
5. Developing loving-kindness even for just a few moments is more meritorious.
6. Finally, the highest merits are made when one is able to develop the perception of impermanence, even if it is only for the period required to snap one's fingers.

In the above list, it is significant that the third Refuge was simply “Saṅgha” while the preceding sentence mentions “giving a meal to the *bhikkhu-Saṅgha* headed by the *Sammāsambuddha*”.

The Commentary explains that the greater merits obtained by going for refuge refers to the irrevocable refuge acquired through the supra-mundane Path, i.e. the permanent going-for-refuge of an awakened disciple. This interpretation is plausible because the above going-for-refuge is qualified by the phrase “with a clear mind” (*pasanna-citta*), which could be identified with the confirmed experiential faith (*avec-cappasāda*)³² of an awakened disciple (to be explained in the next section). The Commentary applies the same interpretation to the rationale of getting greater merits by observing the five precepts.

The notion that going for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha is more meritorious than having a dwelling made for the Saṅgha from the four directions is also found in *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (DN 5).

4. One Gone for Refuge Would Not Go to the Nether World

In two Suttas about *Saraṇāni* the Sakyan (SN 55.24, 25), the Buddha assured his cousin, *Mahānāma*, that a lay follower who had gone for

30 *Yo ca pasannacitto buddhañca dhammañca saṅghañca saraṇaṃ gaccheyya.*

31 *Yo ca pasannacitto sikkhāpadāni samādiyeyya—pāṇātipātā veramaṇiṃ ... surāmerayamajjapamādatṭhānā veramaṇiṃ.*

32 *Pasanna* is the participle, and *pasāda* the noun of the verb *pasīdati* (to be clear; to be pleased with; to have faith / confidence in).

refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha for a long time would not go to the nether world.³³

In the first Sutta, he went on to list other individuals who would not go to the nether worlds, beginning with the first four types of awakened disciples (arahant to stream-enterer) who all possessed confirmed experiential faith (*aveccappasāda*) in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. This is followed by two others who did not have confirmed experiential faith but had the five spiritual faculties.³⁴ One had an intellectual acceptance of the Buddha's Teaching³⁵ and the other mere belief in and love for the Buddha.³⁶

In the second Sutta, the same types of individuals are listed but instead of having confirmed experiential faith, they are described as having ultimate supreme faith (*ekantagata abhippasanna*) in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, or the lack of it.

There is a similar general reference to this notion that one who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha will not go to the nether world, in Cundī Sutta (AN 5.32). Princess Cundī approached the Buddha and informed him of what her brother Prince Cunda had claimed: *Whenever anyone has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha and observed the five precepts, one will be reborn only in a good destination, not a bad one.* She then asked the Buddha what sort of teacher, Dhamma and Saṅgha one must have faith in, and what sort of precepts one must fulfil in order to be reborn only in a good destination, not a bad one. The Buddha did not answer her question directly, but instead

33 *Yo so, mahānāma, dīgharattaṃ upāsako buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gato saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gato, so kathaṃ vinipātaṃ gaccheyya!*

34 The five spiritual faculties (*indriyāni*) are belief, energy, mindfulness, composure and wisdom.

35 *Tathāgatappaveditā cassa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti.* This seems to indicate a Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusārī*) although the term is not specified.

36 *Tathāgate cassa saddhāmattaṃ hoti pemamattaṃ.* This seems to indicate a belief-follower (*saddhānusārī*) although the term is not specified.

declared that the foremost result (*agga vipāka*) will accrue to those who have faith in and fulfil the foremost (*agga*), which he listed as:

1. the Sammāsambuddha (foremost among all beings)
2. the noble eightfold path (foremost among all conditioned things)
3. nibbāna (foremost among all conditioned and unconditioned things)
4. the Buddha's sāvaka-Saṅgha (foremost among all communities and groups)
5. the precepts cherished by the ariyas which are freeing, praised by the wise, not grasped at and lead to composure (foremost among all precepts).

5. Those with Triple Refuge and Moral Precepts Are Reborn in Heaven

On one occasion, the Brahmā Sanañkumāra appeared among the devas in the Heaven of the Thirty-three (*Tāvātimsa*) and extolled the Blessed One in various ways. One of them is that those who have gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and are accomplished in moral precepts will be reborn among the devas in any of the six heavenly realms; the lowest rebirth being among the Gandhabbas.³⁷

6. One Who Introduces Another to Go for Refuge Is Not Easy to Repay

In Bahukāra Sutta (AN 3.24) the Buddha listed three types of benefactors whom one would find difficulty in repaying—in terms of paying due respect to them, and presenting them with clothing, food, lodging,

³⁷ *'...Ye hi keci, bho, buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gatā dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gatā saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gatā sīlesu paripūrakārino te kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā appekacce paranimmitavasavattīnaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjanti, appekacce nimmānaratīnaṃ ... appekacce tusitānaṃ ... appekacce yāmānaṃ ... appekacce tāva-tiṃsānaṃ ... appekacce cātumahārājikānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjanti. Ye sabbanihīnaṃ kāyaṃ paripūrenti, te gandhabbakāyaṃ paripūrenti'*ti. Janavasabha Sutta (DN 18).

and medicines. They are those who have caused one to achieve any one of the following: (1) to go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, (2) to realise the Four Noble Truths and (3) to attain arahantship. The first type of benefactor is also found in another list in *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* (MN 142).³⁸

7. The Fragrance of One Who Has Gone for Refuge Goes Against the Wind

The Buddha said that the fragrance of roots, heartwood and flowers spreads only with the wind and not against it, but the fragrance of one who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and who is of virtuous conduct and is generous, spreads with the wind, against it, and both with and against it.³⁹

8. Going for Refuge Is Heavenly and Leads to Welfare and Happiness

Among the eight streams of merit that are heavenly, lead to heaven and to what is wished for, to welfare and happiness—going for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, constitute the first three.⁴⁰

9. Going for Refuge Is a Condition for a Woman to Be Reborn As a Lovely Devī

On three separate occasions the Buddha told Āyasmā Anuruddha, Visākhā and Nakulamātā⁴¹ about the eight conditions required for a

38 *yaṃ hānanda, puggalo puggalaṃ āgamma buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti, imassānanda, puggalassa iminā puggalena na suppatikāraṃ vadāmi, yadidaṃ—abhivādanapaccuṭṭhānāñjalikammaśāmicikammacivarapiṇḍapātasenāsanagilānappaccayabhesajjaparikkhārānuppadānena.*

39 *Gandhajāta Sutta* (AN 3.80).

40 *Idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gato hoti. Ayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭhamo puññābhisando kusalābhisando sukhaśāhāro sovaḅgiko sukhavipāko saggasaṃvattaniko, iṭṭhāya kantāya manāpāya hitāya sukhāya saṃvattati...* *Abhisanda Sutta* (AN 8.39).

41 *Anuruddha Sutta* (AN 8.46), *Dutiyavisākhā Sutta* (AN 8.47), *Nakulamātā Sutta* (AN 8.48).

woman to be reborn in the company of the devīs of lovely form; one of them is to be a lay-follower who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha.

10. Children and Going for Refuge

Children are classified into three types by the Buddha according to whether or not they go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and whether or not they are of good conduct. The child of outstanding birth (*atijāta*) goes for refuge and is of good conduct, being established in the five precepts, although the parents are not. The child of comparable birth (*anujāta*) follows after the parents who have gone for refuge and are of good conduct, being established in the five precepts. The lowborn (*avajāta*) child does not go for refuge and is of evil conduct, not keeping the five precepts, although the parents are the opposite.⁴²

11. Miscellaneous References to Those Who Have Gone for Refuge

There are a few more references to people who have gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. One of them refers to Mahā-pajāpati Gotamī, and the other to Ghaṭikāra, the chief lay attendant of Kassapa Buddha, both of which will be elaborated on in the next section. The others are not significant enough to warrant investigation.

In all the above cases, although the third Refuge was not specified as “bhikkhu-Saṅgha”, I am of the opinion that it is implied. But before I can give a comprehensive explanation of how I arrived at such a conclusion, I need to first discuss the inseparable relationship between faith and going for refuge.

Faith and Going for Refuge

Obviously, one needs to have enough faith in order to go for refuge. Apart from the basic faith that motivates the going-for-refuge, there

⁴² Putta Sutta (KN 4.74 It).

are two other important types of faith that significantly influence the going-for-refuge: (1) confirmed experiential faith (*aveccappasāda*) and (2) the spiritual faculty of belief (*saddhindriya*). I shall now elaborate on them to show their distinction.

Aveccappasāda: Confirmed Experiential Faith

Aveccappasāda can be analysed such: *avecca* (having known) + *pasāda* (clarity, being pleased with, faith, confidence). Having known the Dhamma through personal experience and verification, the awakened disciples have irrevocable faith and confidence in the efficacy of the Dhamma Teaching, the Teacher who discovered and taught it and his community of awakened disciples, of which they are members.

This confirmed experiential faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha is common to all awakened disciples and constitutes the first three of the four factors of stream-entry.⁴³ It is invariably qualified by the currently popular chanting passages beginning with *Itipi so bhagavā...*, *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo...*, and *Suppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakaṅgho...*, in which the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha of noble ones are enumerated.⁴⁴

That the going-for-refuge and *aveccappasāda* are not the same can be seen in *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* (MN 142) and *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* (MN 81), where they are separately mentioned. In the former, Āyasmā Ānanda listed the reasons why the Buddha had been very helpful to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī:

Due to the Blessed One, Bhante, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Due to the Blessed One, Bhante, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has abstained from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false

43 The fourth is possessing the impeccable precepts cherished by the noble ones (*ariyā*) which are freeing, praised by the wise, not grasped at, and lead to composure. These are often mentioned in the suttas, e.g. *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), *Paṭhamagiṇṇakāvāsatha Sutta* (SN 55.8) and *Tatiyagiṇṇakāvāsatha Sutta* (SN 55.10).

44 See Appendix 2 for the complete Pāli text and English translation.

speech, and from wine, liquor and intoxicants which are the cause of negligence. Due to the Blessed One, Bhante, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī is possessed of confirmed experiential faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and is possessed of the precepts cherished by the noble ones.⁴⁵

In Ghaṭikāra Sutta (MN 81), our Gotama Buddha related how Kasapa Buddha explained to King Kikī of Kāsi, in almost exactly the same words as above, why Ghaṭikāra was a better attendant because of his exceptional qualities, which includes having gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and being established in the five precepts, etc.:

Great King, Ghaṭikāra the potter has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Great King, Ghaṭikāra the potter has abstained from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, and from wine, liquor and intoxicants, which are the cause of negligence. Great King, Ghaṭikāra the potter is possessed of confirmed experiential faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and is possessed of the precepts cherished by the noble ones.

The difference between the going-for-refuge of an awakened disciple and that of an unawakened Buddhist—except for those already destined to be awakened, as shall be explained soon—is that it is impossible for the former to go for refuge elsewhere other than to Gotama Buddha, his Dhamma Teaching and the bhikkhu-Saṅgha, whereas the latter can still do so.

Saddhindriya: The Spiritual Faculty of Belief

How fast one progresses along the path to liberation depends on the prominence of the five spiritual faculties of belief (*saddhā*), energy

⁴⁵ *Bhagavantam, bhante, āgamma mahāpajāpati gotamī buddham saraṇam gatā, dhammam saraṇam gatā, saṅgham saraṇam gatā. Bhagavantam, bhante, āgamma mahāpajāpati gotamī pāṇātipātā paṭiviratā adinnādānā paṭiviratā kāmesumicchācārā paṭiviratā musāvādā paṭiviratā surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā paṭiviratā. Bhagavantam, bhante, āgamma mahāpajāpati gotamī buddhe aveccappasādena samannāgatā, dhamme aveccappasādena samannāgatā, saṅghe aveccappasādena samannāgatā ariyakantehi sīlehi samannāgatā.*

(*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), composure (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).⁴⁶ The verb of *saddhā* is *saddahati* (to believe), so *saddhā* can be literally rendered as “belief”, to distinguish it from *pasāda*, which is rendered as “faith”.⁴⁷ However, the usage of *saddhā* in the Pāli Canon ranges from basic belief to strong faith acquired through experiential verification or other ways. As a spiritual faculty, *saddhā* is often defined in terms of the *Itipi so bhagavā* stock passage only, without including the corresponding ones for the Dhamma and Saṅgha:

And monks, what is the spiritual faculty of belief? Here, monks, a disciple of the noble ones has belief; he believes in the awakening of the Thus-gone: *Itipi so bhagavā*...⁴⁸

However, *saddhindriya* is not confined only to this narrow definition; it has a wider range. For example, when the bodhisatta Gotama was deliberating on practice under the guidance of his first spiritual teacher Ālāra Kālāma, he thought:

Not only does Ālāra Kālāma have belief, so do I; not only does Ālāra Kālāma have energy, so do I; not only does Ālāra Kālāma have mindfulness, so do I; not only does Ālāra Kālāma have composure, so do I; not only does Ālāra Kālāma have wisdom, so do I.⁴⁹

46 According to Vitthāra Sutta (AN 4.162).

47 The verb of *saddhā*, *saddahati*, has only one meaning: “to believe, to have faith”, while the verb of *pasāda*, *pasīdati*, has several: “to become bright, to brighten up; to be purified, reconciled or pleased; to be clear and calm, to become of peaceful heart; to find one's satisfaction in (loc.), to have faith”. (Meanings taken from *The Pali English Dictionary (PTS)* in DPR.) For this reason, I prefer to render *saddhā* as “belief” with an extended meaning as explained above.

48 *Katamañca, bhikkhave, saddhindriyaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako saddho hoti, saddahati tathāgatassa bodhiṃ: ‘itipi so bhagavā...’* e.g. in Paṭhama-vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 48.9), Dutīya-vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 48.10) and Paṭilābha Sutta (SN 48.11).

49 *‘Na kho ālārasseva kālāmassa atthi saddhā, mayhaṃpatthi saddhā; na kho ālārasseva kālāmassa atthi vīriyaṃ, mayhaṃpatthi vīriyaṃ; na kho ālārasseva kālāmassa atthi sati, mayhaṃpatthi sati; na kho ālārasseva kālāmassa atthi samādhi, mayhaṃpatthi samādhi; na kho ālārasseva kālāmassa atthi paññā, mayhaṃpatthi paññā ...’* Pāsārāsī Sutta (MN 26).

Although the term *saddhindriya* is not used in this passage, we can identify the set of five mental qualities as spiritual faculties. And obviously, “belief” here does not refer to the *Itipi so bhagavā* stock passage, but to belief in one’s own capability and the efficacy of the practice.

A basic belief in the Buddha’s awakening, oneself and the practice is the cause and condition for spiritual development that culminates in experientially verified faith, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

... The disciple of the noble ones who has belief, Sāriputta, having again and again strived in such a way, again and again recollected in such a way, again and again composed [his mind] in such a way, again and again understood [with wisdom] in such a way, absolutely believes thus: “As to these things that previously I had only heard about, now I live having contacted them personally and, having penetrated them with wisdom, I see.” Indeed, Sāriputta, that belief of his—that is his faculty of belief.⁵⁰

Several passages show that *saddhindriya* can also cover *aveccappasāda* for the awakened disciples, e.g.

1. Daṭṭhabba Sutta (SN 48.8) says that the faculty of belief is to be seen in the four factors of stream-entry.⁵¹
2. Duttiya-saṅkhitta Sutta (SN 48.13) says that with the completion and fulfilment of the five spiritual faculties, one becomes an arahant; but if they are developed in lesser degrees, then accordingly one becomes a non-returner, once-returner, stream-enterer,

50 “...*saddho so, sāriputta, ariyasāvako evaṃ padahitvā padahitvā evaṃ saritvā saritvā evaṃ samādahitvā samādahitvā evaṃ pajānitvā pajānitvā evaṃ abhisaddahati: ‘ime kho te dhammā ye me pubbe sutāva ahesuṃ. tenāhaṃ etarahi kāyena ca phusitvā viharāmi, paññāya ca ativijja passāmi’ti. yā hissa, sāriputta, saddhā tadassa saddhindriya*”ti. Āpaṇa Sutta (SN 48.50).

51 *Kattha ca, bhikkhave, saddhindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbam? catūsu sotāpattiyāgesu—ettha saddhindriyaṃ daṭṭhabbam.*

Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusārī*), or belief-follower (*saddhānusārī*).^{52 53}

3. Paṭipanna Sutta (SN 48.18) says basically the same thing but grades the degrees of development in a different order: that of an arahant, a practitioner for the realisation of the fruit of arahantship; a non-returner, a practitioner for the realisation of the fruit of non-return; a once-returner, a practitioner for the realisation of the fruit of once-return; a stream-enterer, a practitioner for the realisation of the fruit of stream-entry. It concludes with the Buddha's declaration that one who absolutely does not have these five spiritual faculties is an outsider standing on the side of the worldlings.⁵⁴

Here I would like to make an interesting digression by explaining about the Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusārī*) and belief-follower (*saddhānusārī*) because it may be applicable to some of us. In comparison with a stream-enterer—who knows and sees that the eye, etc. are impermanent, changing, undergoing alteration—the Dhamma-follower and belief-follower do not have this experiential knowledge. They accept the same teachings based on intellectual wisdom and belief respectively. But both of them have “entered the certainty of

52 *Imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ samattā paripūrattā arahāṃ hoti, tato mudutarehi anāgāmī hoti, tato mudutarehi sakadāgāmī hoti, tato mudutarehi sotāpanno hoti, tato mudutarehi dhammānusārī hoti, tato mudutarehi saddhānusārī hoti.*

53 The last two individuals don't have confirmed experiential faith according to the two Saraṇāni-Sakya Suttas (SN 55.24, 25), Cakkhu Sutta (SN 25.1) and the nine Suttas that follow (SN 25:2 – 10).

54 *“...Imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ samattā paripūrattā arahāṃ hoti, tato mudutarehi arahattaphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi anāgāmī hoti, tato mudutarehi anāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sakadāgāmī hoti, tato mudutarehi sakadāgāmiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sotāpanno hoti, tato mudutarehi sotāpattiphalasacchikiriyāya paṭipanno hoti. Yassa kho, bhikkhave, imāni pañcindriyāni sabbena sabbāṃ sabbathā sabbāṃ natthi, tamahaṃ 'bāhiro puthujanapakke ṭhito'ti vadāmi”ti.*

rightness” (*okkantā sammatta-niyāmaṃ*), i.e. they will eventually be possessed of the noble eightfold path. They have transcended the plane of the worldlings, i.e. they are ariyas. They have not realised stream-entry yet, but are incapable of performing any deed that will cause them to be reborn in the nether worlds and are destined to realise the fruit of stream-entry before they die.⁵⁵ In other words, they can be considered to be practising for the fruit of stream-entry. Therefore, they should also belong to the eight types of ariyas alluded to in the *suppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho* stock passage.

In summary, the spiritual faculty of belief may begin with a very basic belief in one’s own capability, the teacher’s competence and the efficacy of his teaching, later deepen to include belief in the genuine awakening of the Buddha and culminate in the confirmed experiential faith of the fully awakened disciple.

Differences between the Objects of Faith and of Going-for-Refuge

By definition, a refuge is “something or someone turned to for assistance or security”⁵⁶. And once one has been motivated by faith—which could be anything within the whole range of *saddhindriya*—to go for refuge, then that refuge has to be identifiable and accessible; otherwise how can one get assistance or security when in need?

An electronic search of the Pāli Canon in *DPR* showed that, with one single exception,⁵⁷ the faith that moved people to go for refuge during the Buddha’s time was based on the inspiration gained by direct contact with the Buddha’s teaching either via the Buddha himself, or his

55 Based on Cakkhu Sutta (SN 25.1): *...okkanto sammattaniyāmaṃ, sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto, vītivatto puthujjanabhūmiṃ; abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ, yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayaniraṃ vā pettivisayaṃ vā upapajjeyya; abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpattiphalaṃ sacchikaroti...*

56 The second meaning in WordWeb Pro 7.01

57 In *Kāraṇapāli Sutta* (AN 5.194), where the brahmin, *Kāraṇapāli*, made his profession of faith and declaration of a lay follower in the presence of another brahmin, *Piṅgiyāni*.

monk disciples.⁵⁸ Therefore, in both the profession of faith and monastic ordination, the Triple Refuge was plainly Gotama Buddha, his Dhamma Teaching and his Community of monks. Although this is no longer true for the first Refuge,⁵⁹ the Buddha's Dhamma Teaching continues to be available in many formats and translations, and his monk disciples are still identifiable.

One should also bear in mind that the availability of the Dhamma Teaching today is primarily due to the dedicated and unbroken transmission by the bhikkhu-Saṅgha ever since the Buddha's time.⁶⁰ Presently, however, the ancient patriarchal and male-dominated influence on the roles in society have changed quite drastically, not only in the secular world but also in the Buddhist monastic order, especially in the Mahāyāna tradition. So now there may be suitably learned, well-disciplined and respectable nuns who can also function effectively as the third Refuge. These reasons should more than suffice to show why the Triple Refuge refers to tangible, accessible and identifiable objects rather than to abstract ideal qualities.

Certainly, the abstract ideal qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and ariya-Saṅgha can be effective sources of inspiration, faith and confidence, and should be reflected upon and contemplated, being one of the many types of Buddhist spiritual cultivation found in the suttas.⁶¹ In fact, many suttas extol the great benefits and fruits of having such

58 While it is possible that bhikkhunis, other monastics and the laity might also have converted others during the Buddha's time, I could not find, by electronic search in *DPR*, any such record available in the Pāli Canon apart from AN 5.194 stated above.

59 This is only so from the perspective of apparent conventional reality. According to Vakkali Sutta (SN 22.87), however, the Buddha said: "For, Vakkali, one who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma." (*Dhammañhi, vakkali, passanto maṃ passati; maṃ passanto dhammaṃ passati.*)

60 This is recorded in the Pāli literature comprising the Canon, its exegetical works and the ancient chronicles of Sri Laṅkā. I think I can safely assume that other ancient non-Pāli Buddhist traditions would also have done the same due to the male-dominated influence of the past.

faith, ranging from rebirth in a good destination to liberation from the round of births and deaths (*saṃsāra*).

But how can an unawakened Buddhist who has taken refuge in the Triple Gem turn to the Dhamma-ratana (= the unequalled quality of nibbāna and the composure of an arahant's awakening) for assistance or security in times of dire need? How can she tell who has the qualities of a member of the ariya-Saṅgha (= Saṅgha-ratana), i.e. is genuinely awakened or destined to be so, in order to clarify doubts about Buddhist teachings or to seek assistance?

Is it not more practical to read the Buddhist scriptures or reliable translations of them or to consult easily identifiable Buddhist monastics who are suitably learned, well-disciplined and respectable? Is it not even more practical to take refuge in the Dhamma that one has practised and realised (though not necessarily to the extent of being awakened as an ariya) after having learnt how to do so from reliable sources? The Buddha said that one should have oneself and the Dhamma as refuge by practising the four establishments of mindfulness, remember? Note also that out of the six attributes of the Dhamma in the *svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo* stock passage, only the first one, “well-expounded” (*svākkhāto*), is related to the doctrinal aspect of the Dhamma Teaching while the rest are experiential. No doubt we take refuge in the Dhamma Teaching, but it is the personally and experientially verified teaching that is the real, efficacious refuge.

In summary, there are two formulas for the going-for-refuge in the Pāli Canon that carry the same meaning: a detailed one that specifies “Gotama” and “bhikkhu-Saṅgha” as the first and third Refuge respectively, and a brief one that does not. It is most probable that during

61 E.g. *DutiyaMahānāma Sutta* (AN 11.12) where the Buddha urged Mahānāma to practise six recollections, the first three of which are about the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha expressed in the stock passages of *Itipi so bhagavā*, etc.; and *Dhajagga Sutta* (SN 11.3) where the Buddha instructed the monks that if they were overcome by fear they should think of him, the Dhamma, or the Saṅgha by recollecting these qualities.

the period when the Buddha's teaching was being compiled everyone understood that both had similar meanings. As Buddhism evolved through the ages, more Buddhas, including transcendental ones, were introduced. For this reason, the implications of the Triple Refuge among Buddhists today would have departed from what can be found in the Pāli Canon.

Summary and Conclusion

We have come a long way from my original, apparently simple question: *Do we go to the Triple Gem for refuge?* Isn't it just a simple question that requires either a *yes* or *no* for an answer? If you are a Sunday Dhamma School teacher, how will you rate such a question? Elementary, right?

However, because I answered *no*, contrary to what most Buddhists would respond with, I have had to substantiate it with relevant references from the Pāli suttas and arguments from several perspectives. I hope this exposition has not further bewildered you but rather clarified a long misunderstood belief. Here's a summary of the main differences between the Triple Gem and the Triple Refuge:

	Triple Gem	Triple Refuge
Buddha	The quality of being (1) an unequalled gem in this world, in heaven, now, or hereafter, (2) an unexcelled teacher of the excellent Dhamma leading to nibbāna, (3) excellent, a knower of the excellent, giver of the excellent and bringer of the excellent.	Gotama Buddha.
Dhamma	The unequalled quality of (1) nibbāna, (2) the samādhi of arahantship.	The Teaching of Gotama Buddha.

Saṅgha	Some specific qualities of the Community of noble ones (<i>sāvaka-Saṅgha</i> or <i>ariya-Saṅgha</i>).	The Community of monks (<i>bhikkhu-Saṅgha</i>).
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The next table shows the difference between the objects of confirmed experiential faith (*aveccappasāda*) and those of the spiritual faculty of belief (*saddhindriya*).

	Aveccappasāda	Saddhindriya
Teacher	The Buddha who is (1) an arahant, (2) perfectly self-awakened, (3) accomplished in knowledge and conduct, (4) well-gone, (5) knower of the world, (6) unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, (7) teacher of deities and humans, (8) awakened and (9) blessed.	Ranges from a teacher believed to be competent to the Buddha as in <i>aveccappasāda</i> .
Dhamma	The Dhamma Teaching that is (1) well-expounded by the Blessed One, (2) directly visible, (3) immediate, (4) inviting one to come and see, (5) inward-bound, (6) to be personally experienced by the wise.	Ranges from a teaching believed to be efficacious to the Dhamma as in <i>aveccappasāda</i> .
Saṅgha	The Buddha's Community of noble ones (<i>sāvaka-Saṅgha</i> or <i>ariya-Saṅgha</i>) which is (1) well-practised, (2) straightly-practised, (3) truly-practised, (4) propely-practised, (5) worthy of gifts, (6) worthy of hospitality, (7) worthy of offerings, (8) worthy of reverential salutation, (9) the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.	Ranges from the above-mentioned teacher's community of staunch followers to the Saṅgha as in <i>aveccappasāda</i> .

At this point, you might wonder: *This exposition sounds clear enough. But in the first place, how come we've been taking refuge in the Triple Gem all along?* The answer is quite simple: *Because we've not really questioned the rationale of this practice and have been content to just accept hearsay instead of investigating its authenticity.* So, I hope this booklet will alert all practising Buddhists to the need to be more cautious in their acceptance and practice of what is claimed to be the Buddha's Teaching.

In conclusion, the objects of belief and faith could be tangible or abstract and ideal, but those that one goes to for refuge must necessarily be tangible, accessible and identifiable for practical reasons. So the next time you take the Triple Refuge, be clear about what you are doing and, perhaps more importantly, be careful about what you teach others, especially Sunday School Dhamma students and their parents.

May you strengthen your belief in the Triple Gem, acquire confirmed experiential faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and sāvaka-Saṅgha, and be faithful to the Triple Refuge.

Appendix 1

RATANA SUTTA (KN 1.6)

- 1 Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,
bhum māni vā yāni va antalikkhe;
Sabbeva bhūtā sumanā bhavantu,
athopi sakkacca suṇantu bhāsitaṃ.
- 2 Tasmā hi bhūtā nisāmetha sabbe,
mettaṃ karotha mānusiya pajāya;
Divā ca ratto ca haranti ye balim,
tasmā hi ne rakkhatha appamattā.
- 3 Yaṃ kiñci vittaṃ idha vā huram vā,
saggesu vā yaṃ ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ;
Na no samaṃ atthi Tathāgatena,
Idampi Buddhē ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ;
Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 4 Khayaṃ virāgaṃ amataṃ paṇītaṃ,
yadajjhagā Sakyamunī samāhito;
Na tena dhammena samatthi kiñci,
Idampi Dhamme ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ;
Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

Gem Discourse

Whatever (non-human) beings have gathered here,
Terrestrial or in the sky—
May all beings be happy,
And listen carefully to what is said.

Therefore, be attentive, all you beings!
Have loving-kindness for the human race.
Day and night they bring offerings;
Therefore, being heedful, protect them.

Whatever wealth—here or beyond—
Or exquisite gem in the heavens,
There is none equal to the Thus-gone.
This, too, in the Buddha is an exquisite gem.
By this truth may there be well-being.

The Evaporation, Dispassion, Deathless, Exquisite,
Which the composed Sakyan Sage attained:
There is nothing equal to that Dhamma.
This, too, in the Dhamma is an exquisite gem.
By this truth may there be well-being.

- 5 Yam Buddha·seṭṭho parivaṇṇayī sucim,
 samādhi·mānantari·kañña·māhu;
 Samādhinā tena samo na vijjati,
 Idampi Dhamme ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ;
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
 What the excellent Awakened One extolled as pure,
 Called the uninterrupted composure of final knowledge:
 No equal to that composure exists.
 This, too, in the Dhamma is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.
- 6 Ye puggalā aṭṭha sataṃ pasatthā,
 cattāri etāni yugāni honti;
 Te dakkhiṇeyyā Sugatassa sāvakā,
 Etesu dinnāni mahapphalāni;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
 The eight persons praised by the good—
 These are the four pairs.
 They, disciples of the One Well-Gone, deserve offerings.
 [Offerings] given to them bear great fruits.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.
- 7 Ye suppayuttā manasā daḷhena,
 nikkāmino Gotama·sāsanamhi;
 Te pattipattā amataṃ vigayha,
 laddhā mudhā nibbutim bhuñjamānā;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
 They who, with a firm mind, are thoroughly engaged (and)
 Have exited (from defilements) in Gotama's Dispensation—
 They have attained the attainable, having plunged into the Deathless,
 Having freely obtained the peace they are experiencing.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.

- 8 Yathinda·khīlo pathavissito siyā,
 catubbhi vātehi asampakampiyo;
 Tathūpamaṃ sappurisaṃ vadāmi,
 yo ariya·saccāni avecca passati;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 9 Ye ariya·saccāni vibhāvayanti,
 Gambhīra·paññena sudesitāni;
 Kiñcāpi te honti bhusaṃ pamattā,
 na te bhavaṃ aṭṭhamaṃ mādiyanti;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu
- 10 Sahāvassa dassana·sampadāya,
 tayassu dhammā jahitā bhavanti:
 Sakkāya·diṭṭhī vicikicchitañca,
 sīlabbataṃ vāpi yadatthi kiñci;
 Catūhapāyehi ca vippamutto,
 cha chābhi·ṭhānāni abhabba kātum;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.

Just as a post anchored in the earth
 Would be unshakeable by the four winds,
 So do I say of a superior person
 Who, having comprehended, sees the Noble Truths.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.

They who illuminate the Noble Truths
 Well proclaimed by the Profound Sage—
 Although they [may] become very heedless
 They do not take an eighth existence.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.

With the accomplishment of his vision
 Three things become abandoned:
 Self-view, doubt and [Wrong grasping of]
 habits and practices; and also some other [defilements] that exist.
 And from the four woeful states he is totally free.
 Six sixfold possible gross [actions] he is incapable of doing.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.

- 11 Kiñcāpi so kamma karoti pāpakam,
 kāyena vācā uda cetasā vā;
 Abhabba so tassa paṭicchadāya,
 abhabbatā diṭṭha-padassa vuttā;
 Idampi Saṅghe ratanam paṇītam,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 12 Vanappagumbe yatha phussitagge,
 gimhāna-māse paṭhamasmim gimhe;
 Tathūpamam dhamma-varam adesayi,
 nibbāna-gāmiṃ paramam hitāya;
 Idampi Buddhhe ratanam paṇītam,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 13 Varo varaññū varado varāharo,
 anuttaro dhamma-varam adesayi;
 Idampi Buddhhe ratanam paṇītam,
 Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 14 Khīṇam purāṇam nava natthi sambhavam,
 viratta-cittāyatike bhavasmim;
 Te khīṇabījā avirūhi-chandā,
 nibbanti dhīrā yathāyam padīpo;
- Although he does an evil deed,
 By body, by speech, or by mind,
 Incapable is he of concealing it;
 The incapability of one who has seen the Path has been declared.
 This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.
- Like a forest grove with flowering tops
 In the summer month of the first [part of] summer,
 So is the excellent Dhamma he taught,
 Leading to nibbāna, for the highest benefit.
 This, too, in the Buddha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.
- Excellent, excellent-knower, excellent-giver, excellent-bringer,
 Unexcelled, he taught the excellent Dhamma.
 This, too, in the Buddha is an exquisite gem.
 By this truth may there be well-being.
- Evaporated is the old;* there is no new becoming.
 With minds disinterested in future existence,
 They, with seed evaporated, with no desire for growth—
 The wise—go out like this light.

* (rebirth-generating kamma)

- Idampi Saṅghe ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ,
Etena saccena suvatthi hotu.
- 15 Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,
bhum māni vā yāni va antalikkhe;
Tathāgataṃ deva·manussa·pūjitaṃ,
Buddhaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu.
- 16 Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,
bhum māni vā yāni va antalikkhe;
Tathāgataṃ deva·manussa·pūjitaṃ,
Dhammaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu.
- 17 Yānīdha bhūtāni samāgatāni,
bhum māni vā yāni va antalikkhe;
Tathāgataṃ deva·manussa·pūjitaṃ,
Saṅghaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotū'ti.
- This, too, in the Saṅgha is an exquisite gem.
By this truth may there be well-being.
- Whatever (non-human) beings have gathered here,
Terrestrial or in the sky—
To the Thus-gone worshipped by deities and humans,
To the Buddha let us pay homage; may there be well-being.
- Whatever (non-human) beings have gathered here,
Terrestrial or in the sky—
To the Thus-gone worshipped by deities and humans,
To the Dhamma let us pay homage; may there be well-being.
- Whatever (non-human) beings have gathered here,
Terrestrial or in the sky—
To the Thus-gone worshipped by deities and humans,
To the Saṅgha let us pay homage; may there be well-being.

Appendix 2

BUDDHA·GUṄA

Itipi so bhagavā araham̃
sammā·sambuddho
vijjā·caraṇa·sampanno sugato
lokavidū anuttaro purisa·damma·sārathi
satthā deva·manussānam̃
buddho bhagavā.

DHAMMA·GUṄA

Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo
sanditṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko
opaneyyiko paccattam̃ veditabbo viññūhi.

SAṄGHA·GUṄA

Suppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka·saṅgho,
ujuppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka·saṅgho,
ñāyappaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka·saṅgho,
sāmīcippaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka·saṅgho,

Virtues of the Buddha

Thus also is the Blessed One an arahant,
perfectly self-awakened,
accomplished in knowledge and conduct, well-gone,
knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed,
teacher of deities and humans,
awakened and blessed.

Virtues of the Dhamma

Well-expounded by the Blessed One is the Dhamma,
directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see,
inward-bound, to be personally experienced by the wise.

Virtues of the Saṅgha

Well-practised is the Blessed One's Community of disciples;
Straightly-practised is the Blessed One's Community of disciples;
Truly-practised is the Blessed One's Community of disciples;
Properly-practised is the Blessed One's Community of disciples;

yadidaṃ cattāri purisa-yugāni
 aṭṭha purisa-puggalā.
 Esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho
 āhuneyyo pāhuneyyo dakkhiṇeyyo
 añjali-karaṇīyo
 anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa.

that is, the four pairs of persons,
 the eight kinds of individuals.
 This is the Blessed One's Community of disciples;
 worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings,
 worthy of reverential salutation,
 the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.

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Abbreviations

	Text	Reference according to
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya	Book no. : Sutta no.
DN	Dīgha Nikāya	Sutta no.
KN	Khuddaka Nikāya	Book no. : Reading no. / Sutta no.
MN	Majjhima Nikāya	Sutta no.
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya	Saṃyutta no. : Sutta no.
Vin Mv	Vinaya Mahāvagga	Paragraph no.
It	Itivuttaka	Sutta no.
Khp	KhuddakaPāṭha	Reading no.
MĀ	Madhyama Āgama	Sūtra no.

All the references from the Pāli Canon are based on Āyasmā Yuttadhammo's *Digital Pali Reader (DPR) 4.3*, which uses Roman transliterations from the Burmese script in Vipassana Research Institute's *Chattha Sangayana CD v3.0*. Electronic searches of Pāli texts for this booklet, however, were made in both *DPR* and *Chattha Sangayana Tipitaka (CST) 4.0* based on Text copyright © 1995 Vipassana Research Institute.



Aggacitta Bhikkhu is a Malaysian Buddhist monk who received higher ordination from his preceptor (*upajjhāya*) Bhaddanta Mahasi Sayadaw in 1979. He trained under various teachers, notably Sayadaw U Paṇḍita, Sayadaw U Tissara (Yankin Forest Monastery), Sayadaw U Āciṇṇa (Pa Auk Forest Monastery) and Sayadaw U Tejaniya (Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Forest Centre).

Besides practising meditation, he studied advanced Pāli grammar under Sayadaw U Dhammananda at Wat Tamaoh, Lampang, Thailand, and the Pāli Tipiṭaka in Myanmar, and researched on its interpretation and practice until his return to Malaysia at the end of 1994.

After a four-year solitary meditation retreat in Sarawak, he returned to West Malaysia at the end of 1998 and since then has spent considerable time investigating popular interpretations and practices of Buddhism in the light of the Pāli scriptures, real life experiences and contemporary research findings. Using a critical yet constructive approach, he has been sharing his findings with interested parties in order to bring them closer to a practical reality they can more easily connect with. The titles of his published Dhamma resources can be viewed at <http://www.sasanarakkha.org/>.

In 2000 he founded Sāsanārakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS) nestled among secluded valleys and brooks near Taiping, Perak, Malaysia.

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.

The gift of the Dhamma surpasses all gifts.

– BUDDHA –

We offer a share of the merits accrued in the writing, editing and sponsorship of this gift of the Dhamma to all our deceased relatives from time immemorial and to all other beings.

May they appreciate and rejoice in this dana
and be happy, well and peaceful.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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Sāsanaṛakkha Buddhist Sanctuary Publication
ISBN 978-983-44484-7-9

ISBN 978-983-44484-7-9



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