

Triplegem of the North

Precepts Ceremony Guidelines Manual

Commitment to Your Spiritual Path



"To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's mind - this is the teaching of the Buddhas." - Dhammapada 183

www.triplegem.org

The Buddhist journey begins with accepting yourself the way you are, both good and bad. When you are able to accept yourself, you can trust and believe in yourself as a Dhamma agent for change. When you can trust yourself, then you can help yourself and wake yourself up. If you can wake yourself up, then you can help and wake up others.

In the process, you discover your Buddha nature and the Buddha nature of others, and realize that we are an interdependent and interrelated whole.

Buddhists (people who practice the way of the Buddha) are happy and peaceable beings because it is a joy to follow the path of non-violence and liberation. They are helpful and responsible because they practice Dhamma and observe precepts. They are called bodhisattvas, wisdom beings, because they cultivate a compassionate heart and serve people with a wisdom eye.

Throughout history, a small number of dedicated people have made a great difference in changing society and reshaping the world community. Although small in number, we Buddhists can make a world of difference and contribute to the creation of a society that would preserve the integrity of our universe.

The Three Refuges

1. I go for refuge to the Buddha and resolve that with all beings, I will realize The Great Way and develop a heart of enlightenment.
2. I go for refuge to the Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha) and resolve that with all beings I will penetrate the teachings and uncover wisdom as vast as the ocean.
3. I go for refuge to the Sangha (the collected people of Buddhism) and resolve that with all beings I will seek great peace and harmony, so that nothing will impede our progress towards enlightened society.

The Three Jewels offer us meaning and purpose. The first Jewel, Buddha, is one who is fully awake and wise, so we learn to direct ourselves to keeping a mindful attitude and being wise and compassionate in our everyday life. The second Jewel, Dhamma, is universal truth, teaching and discipline, so we learn to direct ourselves over and over toward what is true and right, and mold our life accordingly. The third Jewel, Sangha, is the community of ordained followers, who have taken up from the Buddha the responsibility of guiding others while guiding themselves in the path of liberation, if they are still unenlightened (*Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhuni* Sangha), the community of lay followers and non-followers and also the community of human beings and non-human beings (the universal sangha). We learn to live in peace and harmony with all beings and dedicate ourselves to extending loving kindness to all.

The Three Refuges and Five Precepts promote right livelihood and social responsibility. It is our aim to become living embodiments of the Three Jewels. To remind ourselves of this, we take the fourth refuge; I go to the Three Jewels within myself as my Refuge.

What are the precepts?

Five Precepts

1. Do not harm, but cherish all life.
2. Do not take what is not given, but respect the things of others.
3. Do not engage in sexual promiscuity, but practice purity of mind and self-restraint.
4. Do not lie, but only speak the truth.
5. Do not take part in the production and trading of firearms and chemical poisons that are injurious both to public health and safety, nor should you partake of drugs and liquors that confuse or weaken the mind.

Who can observe precepts in the Triplegem of the North?

Any friend in the “Triplegem of the North” who practices more than one year can take precepts. Those with less than one year of practice must have the approval of their Dharma teacher. Please talk with Venerable Bhante Sathi

Why take the precepts?

It is important for us to understand reality of the life. What is its meaning and purpose? What is our relationship to other living beings and the physical environment? Is there an individual self that survives through the cycle of successive lives? Peace, love and happiness form the basis for the true meaning of human life. Therefore, in order to make our lives meaningful and enriching we must discover peace, love and happiness in our everyday lives. The purpose of human life is to realize that all beings are an interconnected and interrelated whole, and to enter the non-dual gate of inconceivable liberation.

Traditional Buddhist practice points out a clear direction and provides guidance and support for those who set out on this journey of discovery. The Buddhist journey always begins by taking refuge in the Three Jewels and the Five Precepts. The Three Jewels (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) provide a spiritual focus while the Five Precepts furnish us with moral guidelines.

Most importantly, we need confidence. With practice we open our self to reality, then become inspired by our own understanding. This confidence spurs a deeper search for the truth and brings us to know Buddha and his Dhamma.

In Buddhism we believe that we are all endowed with Buddha-nature and therefore, despite our habits and defilements, our original mind is pure, untainted and completely free from duality. In other words, Enlightenment and Liberation are inherent in us all. For this reason alone, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas among us constantly urge us to discover our true nature Right Now.

It is the Buddhist belief that we can always help ourselves spiritually, no matter what our life is like. If we refuse to do so it is not because of past karmic hindrances, but lack of trust in ourselves. We do not believe that we are originally Buddhas. It is as though we question the existence of the sun on a cloudy day, because we cannot see the sunlight. Once the clouds scatter, we realize that the sunshine and Blue Mountains have always been there. Likewise, once we gain wisdom, we know that we have been Buddhas all along.

Often people do not take precepts because they may break them later. Nevertheless, Buddhist teachers urge them to take precepts. The reason is because there is a difference between people who commit wrongdoings after taking precepts and those who do so without taking precepts. People who commit wrongdoings after taking precepts are more aware of their mistakes and know to renew their precepts and start again. For those who commit wrongdoings without taking precepts there is no such awareness. Often they don't even think about their wrongdoings, and continue to harm themselves and others.

People who are afraid or reluctant to take five or eight precepts can take the first precept first. The first precept is Ahimsa or non-violence. You renounce violence and all harmful and abusive acts. If you adhere to the spirit of the first precept and learn to be skillful you will find that the rest of the five precepts are already present within the first precept in spirit. We must renounce violence in our life in order to build a peaceful and enlightened society.

This is from the Buddha

Morality currently tends to have a negative connotation - perhaps in a reaction to earlier repressive approaches. The popular inclination is usually toward minimizing restraints rather than deliberately taking them on and rules and regulations are best thought of as being avoided. To appreciate the usefulness of basic precepts try imagining a society without any rules at all.

How would it be if people drove on any side of the road they liked; stole what they could get away with; etc. Under what conditions might anarchy work?

- There are two main reasons for establishing precepts:
 - To provide a stable, habitable environment; this is social order.
 - To sustain a mind free from remorse; this is individual peace.

Venerable Ananda went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side and asked "What is the purpose of skillful virtues? What is their reward?"

Freedom from remorse, Ananda.

And of freedom from remorse?

Joy, Ananda.

And of joy?

Rapture, Ananda.

And rapture?

Tranquillity, Ananda.

And of tranquillity?

Happiness, Ananda.

And of happiness?

Concentration, Ananda.

And of concentration?

Knowledge & vision of things as they actually are, Ananda.

And of knowledge & vision of things as they actually are?
Disenchantment, turning away and detachment, Ananda.
And of disenchantment, turning away and detachment?
This has knowledge & vision of release as its purpose, its
reward. In this way, Ananda, skillful virtues lead step-by-step
to the consummation of enlightenment.

We can reflect here on the difference between guilt and
remorse.

Guilt is the feeling that one is responsible for committing an
offense, often connected with a sense of public wrong and
impending punishment [explore definitions of *sin*].

Remorse involves a sense of deep regret, often connected with
a personal sense of conscience, shame and sorrow. Guilt
invokes fear, remorse solicits repentance. Guilt has no part to
play in the Buddhist path.

Eight Lifetime precepts

For those who wish to increase their commitment to their
practice, we will be offering the Eight Lifetime Precepts at
several of the retreats this year. The precepts are as follows:

1. Abstain from killing
2. Abstain from stealing
3. Abstain from sexual misconduct
4. Abstain from false speech
5. Abstain from malicious speech
6. Abstain from harsh speech
7. Abstain from useless speech
8. Abstain from engaging in wrong livelihood

Before taking the precepts, participants will take the three refuges: refuge in the Buddha, refuge in the Dharma (the teachings), and refuge in the Sangha (those individuals who have attained enlightenment using these teachings). Traditionally this is considered the action that makes one officially a Buddhist practitioner.

We take precepts to make our lives happy, not miserable. People have unhappy lives because they are not observing any discipline; they aren't following the normal guidelines or principles for a happy life. Sooner or later they need to realize the importance of precepts.

Observing the precepts also improves meditation. When the mind is clear, the conscience is not pricking the mind, and there is no reason for remorse, concentration will be better. Taking the precepts is a reminder, a way of helping us to be mindful. When you begin an action that violates one of the precepts, your mind will say, "Stop! Remember?" and you will say, "Ah! I've vowed not to . . ."

The precept operates like the light touch of a whip that reminds the horse to stay on course, like the beep of a horn to remind a driver to stay in his lane. Some people say, "What good would this be to me? I don't like following these external rules. My life is all right the way it is." But their lives are not all right. If they were, they wouldn't need to engage in lying, stealing, gossiping, or speaking harshly. Instead of spending their energy breaking the precepts, they would be better off using it in wholesome activities.

If we habitually break the precepts, we will have great difficulty when we try to stop. We are addicted. We constantly get ourselves in trouble. Not just through stealing or sexual misconduct, but also by lying, participating in gossip, speaking harshly.

Here are some words from the Buddha that remind us of the importance of precepts.

Every fool who is born
Has an axe within his mouth
With which he cuts himself
When he uses wrong speech
Sn 657

One should utter only words
Which do no harm to oneself
And cause no harm for others
That is truly beautiful speech.
Sn. 451

Speak kind words, words
Rejoiced at and welcomed
Words that bear ill-will to none;
Always speak kindly to others.
Sn. 452

The worse of the two is he
Who, when abused retaliates.

One who does not retaliate
Wins a battle hard to win.

S. I. 162

The fool thinks he has won a battle
When he bullies with harsh speech
But knowing how to be forbearing
Alone makes one victorious.

S. I. 163

You shouldn't be afraid to make the commitment to keep the precepts. You should be happy that you have determined to take steps to make your life happy.

People addicted to alcohol or drugs or gambling or some other unwholesome activity-have a very hard time deciding to stop. They drag their feet and come up with many excuses. But once they have made the commitment to stop and have maintained that commitment for a period of time, suddenly they find they are thinking clearly, eating well, saving money, and developing good relations with their families and other people. Then they are grateful and congratulate themselves for taking this step.

Giving up an addiction is very difficult; a person may make many attempts that fall short of the goal. But if his aspiration remains strong, eventually he will succeed. In the same way, we may have difficulty making the commitment to abandon unwholesome behavior, but once we make the commitment and work at it consistently, we, too, will be very happy, very glad to have made a decision that brings such an improvement to our lives.

Who can take eight lifetime precepts?

People who took the five precepts earlier can have the eight lifetime precepts.

Dress code

White relax outfit will work. Men taking precepts are required to wear light pants and a white shirt. Women should wear the same unless they choose to wear a white dress or light skirt. Short pants and short skirts are not appropriate.

Syllabus for candidate

Please Read these books-

What the Buddha Taught by Wahpula Rahula

Chanting of the Three Refuges

Those taking the Precepts are required to recite the Three Refuges out loud in Pali. You have to have practiced it. (we will provide audio CD)Chanting the Three Refuges regularly with devotion will help you embrace the great tradition of the Three Jewels now taking root in the West and help you maintain calmness and peace and clarity in your everyday life.

Three Refuges (*Ti Sarana*)

(Pali) *Buddham Saranam Gacchami*
Dhammam Saranam Gacchami
Sangham Saranam Gacchami

Pali Five precepts

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up killing.

2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precepts to give up stealing.

3. *Kamesumicchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up sexual misconduct.

4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up lying.

5. *Surameraya majjapamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up drinking liquor and taking substances which lead to infatuation and carelessness

Pali Eight precepts

1) *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up killing.

2) *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precepts to give up stealing.

3) *Kamesumicchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up sexual misconduct.

4) *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

I take the precept to give up lying.

5) *Pisunavacha veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

Abstain from malicious speech

6) *Parusavacha veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

Abstain from harsh speech

7) *Sampapalapa vearamani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

Abstain from useless speech

8) *Michcha ajeevam veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

Abstain from engaging in wrong livelihood

Renewing the precepts

The precepts are not commandments but self-help rules and voluntary commitments. You are not expected, upon taking the precepts, to lead a perfect life. In the light of one's karma (the effect of past wrongful deeds) you are bound to repeat mistakes in spite of your good intentions and commitment. Nevertheless, undaunted, you renew yourself and rededicate yourself to the way of Buddha and the precepts over and over again, much like a person who, having stumbled on the road, gets up and moves forward again. There are no secrets and no easy solutions aside from your constant resolve. For this reason, Buddhists regularly renew their precepts to recommit themselves.

Dana (Offerings) Suggestions

Dana is a practice that Buddha highly encouraged. Monks practice *dana* by offering the teachings without a price tag. You can practice *dana* by making a donation of money, time and/or labor. Your donation allows us to continue offering the teachings to others and gives our monks to life support. Our organization is maintained only by the generosity of all of you who value the teachings.

Friends who observe precepts should make an offering to the TGN of \$50 or more. This serves to maintain the TGN activities and is also part of practice. *Dana* is a way of giving help, showing kindness, and practicing non-attachment. It is also a way of returning to the temple the good energy and direction that you have acquired.

Pali Buddhist Name and Certificate

All participants get a Pali name and certificate. A Pali name has a deep meaning, so you have to live according to your new name. It will become part of your daily practice.

Dhamma Gift

All participants get Dhamma gift after the ceremony.

For more information

Send e-mail info@triplegem.org or call TGN (612) 216 4854

May you be well, happy and peaceful!