

## Precepts and Refuges of the Mahajrya Buddhist Tradition

The Precepts constitute the basic Buddhist code of ethics, undertaken by lay followers and Priest of the Buddha Gautama in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. The Precepts are commitments to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication. Undertaking the precepts is part of both lay Buddhist initiation and regular lay Buddhist devotional practices.

The Buddha is said to have taught the precepts out of compassion, and for the betterment of society. Thus they are to be undertaken voluntarily rather than as commandments from a god. The precepts are intended to help a Buddhist live free from remorse, so that they can progress more easily on the Path.

The 5 first precepts are to be undertaken by any Buddhist follower. From the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> precepts are for Priests.

- 1) I vow to refrain from destroying living creatures.
- 2) I vow to refrain from taking that which is not given.
- 3) I vow to refrain from sexual misconduct.
- 4) I vow to refrain from incorrect speech.
- 5) I vow to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.
- 6) I vow to be conscious at all times
- 7) I vow to respect the progress rate and the chosen path of each
- 8) I vow to acquire skillful and varied means of teaching the Dharma
- 9) I vow to be in the service of humanity
- 10) I vow to constantly act with virtue

## Refuges

"Taking refuge" makes the difference between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. It is not even necessary to take refuge in a formal session with a teacher, but it may help to clarify your choice and to remember your commitment. The idea behind taking refuge is that when it starts to rain, we like to find a shelter. The Buddhist shelter from the rain of problems and pain of life is threefold: the Buddha, his teachings (the Dharma) and the spiritual community (the Sangha). Taking refuge means that we have some understanding about suffering, and we have confidence that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the "Three Jewels") can help us.

### The Three Refuges

I go to the Buddha for refuge

I go to the Dharma for refuge

I go to the Sangha for refuge

Renewing the vows in the Precepts and the Refuges is a part of our daily practice.

