Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels

Buddha nature as the ground of the path; the Three Jewels and the five factors of taking refuge in them; the three types of faith; and the pratimoksha vow that refuge qualifies one to take.

BUDDHA NATURE

The foundation of spiritual practice is the existence within all beings of buddha nature — the primordial purity of mind that motivates one to seek liberation and enlightenment.

- Maitreya teaches: without buddha nature there would be no discontent with suffering, nor desire, effort or aspiration for nirvana.
- Mind is presently veiled by two obscurations: disturbing emotions and nescience regarding ultimate reality.
- These obscurations are adventitious — they do not form part of mind's actual nature.
- When mind meets the skilful methods of the path, obscurations are stripped away and buddhahood results.

THE THREE JEWELS



1. **Buddha** — the supremely accomplished teacher, supreme among humans.
2. **Dharma** — the teachings; both scriptural tradition (vinaya, sutra, abhidharma) and the dharma of realisation.
3. **Sangha** — the community of practitioners; ordinary sangha and noble sangha.

- Called "jewels" because, like precious gems, they possess both rarity and sublimity (Maitreya).
- In the Great Vehicle, the Buddha is the definitive object of refuge because he possesses the dharmakaya.
- In the vajrayana, the lama is the embodiment of all Three Jewels.

FIVE FACTORS OF REFUGE

1. **Motivation** — fear of samsaric suffering, faith in the Three Jewels, compassion for all beings.
2. **Objects** — the Buddha, dharma and sangha as presented in both Lesser and Great Vehicles.
3. **Method** — the ceremony conducted by one's lama; ordinary refuge taken "until end of this life", extraordinary refuge "until enlightenment".
4. **Training** — avoid three negative actions contrary to the Three Jewels; practise hearing, reflecting and meditating on the dharma.
5. **Benefits** — temporary: protection from harm in this and future lives; ultimate: achievement of buddhahood.

THREE TYPES OF FAITH

1. **Clear faith** — inspiration experienced upon beholding representations of the Three Jewels or hearing of the Buddha's qualities.
2. **Longing faith** — the earnest desire to acquire the qualities of the Buddha and his teaching.
3. **Convinced faith** — certainty about the truth of karma, cause and effect, and the four noble truths.

THE PRATIMOKSHA VOW

Taking refuge qualifies one to adopt the pratimoksha ("individual liberation") vow — a pledge to engage in virtue for as long as one lives.

- Eight types: lay man, lay woman, female probationer, novice monk, novice nun, monk, nun, and the vow of temporary abstinence.
- Householders may hold the temporary abstinence vow and the lay vows; the other five pertain only to renunciates.
- Lay vow consists of five precepts: not killing, not stealing, not lying, abandoning sexual misconduct, abandoning intoxication.
- Core of the renunciate vow: commitment to avoid the four defeats (taking human life, theft, sexual intercourse, falsely claiming spiritual powers).
- The vinaya brought to Tibet was that of the Sarvastivada school, in three transmission lineages.

Generating Bodhichitta

What bodhichitta is, conventional and ultimate; the two lineages of the bodhisattva vow and its ritual; the four dark and four white actions; and the benefits of bodhichitta.

DEFINITION OF BODHICHITTA

Bodhichitta is the resolution to become a buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings. Its essence is emptiness endowed with compassion — the seed that germinates as the bodhisattva path and flowers in buddhahood.

- One becomes a follower of the Great Vehicle by generating bodhichitta.
- Chandrakirti: compassion, non-dual understanding and bodhichitta are the causes of bodhisattvas.

CONVENTIONAL & ULTIMATE BODHICHITTA

Conventional	Ultimate
The altruistic commitment, generated through the vow ceremony	Non-dual wisdom, arising on the path of insight

- **Conventional bodhichitta** — the altruistic commitment to become a buddha; generated through the bodhisattva vow ceremony. Twofold: aspiration and application.
- **Ultimate bodhichitta** — non-dual transcendental wisdom; direct perception of emptiness. Arises on the path of insight, not through ritual.
- Sakya Pandita: conventional bodhichitta is reliant upon others; ultimate bodhichitta is one's own realisation.

TWO LINEAGES OF THE VOW

Chittamatra	Madhyamaka
Maitreya → Asanga → Atisha	Manjushri → Nagarjuna → Shantideva

- **Chittamatra lineage** — from Maitreya through Asanga; spread in Tibet by Atisha (Kadam tradition). Candidates must possess one of seven pratimoksha vows.
- **Madhyamaka lineage** — from Manjushri through Nagarjuna and Shantideva; maintained by the Sakya tradition. No pratimoksha prerequisite required.
- Sakya Pandita: the Madhyamaka intent arises in all beings whether or not they are sinful, like barley growing in both hot and cold places.

THE RITUAL OF THE VOW

- Preliminary: extraordinary refuge — taking refuge in the Three Jewels until the achievement of enlightenment.
- Main part: generating aspiration bodhichitta (the wish to become a buddha for all beings) followed by application bodhichitta (the commitment to practise the path).
- Shantideva distinguishes these two as the difference between aspiring to go and actually going.
- Conclusion: rejoicing in the benefits that bodhichitta brings to oneself and others.
- Duration: until the achievement of buddhahood — unlike pratimoksha, the bodhisattva vow continues into future lives.

FOUR DARK & FOUR WHITE ACTIONS

FOUR DARK ACTIONS (DESTROY BODHICHITTA)

1. Deceiving one's lamas and holy people.
2. Making others ashamed for no reason.
3. Disrespecting those who have entered the Great Vehicle.
4. Falsely pretending to have bodhichitta while treating others badly.

FOUR WHITE ACTIONS (SUSTAIN BODHICHITTA)

1. Not telling lies.
2. Establishing all sentient beings in virtue.
3. Regarding all bodhisattvas as teachers and praising them.
4. Inducing those who are mature to strive for full enlightenment.

BENEFITS OF BODHICHITTA

- Superior to all other virtues — even offering all buddha-fields of jewels is surpassed by generating bodhichitta.
- The moment bodhichitta arises, one is called a "child of the Sugatas", honoured by humans and gods.
- Transforms even the most lowly into a bodhisattva; ordinary actions become the path to buddhahood.
- Endows one with infinite capacity to benefit self and others through the two bodies of a buddha.

Practising the Six Perfections

What makes a virtue a perfection; the six perfections one by one, each with the fault it remedies; and how they gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

PERFECTION VS ORDINARY VIRTUE

A "perfection" differs from ordinary virtue in that the three circles — agent, action and object — are recognised as empty of intrinsic nature and mutually interdependent.

- Chandrakirti: generosity empty of gift, giver and recipient is a transcendental perfection; with attachment to the three it is merely worldly.
- Ordinary virtue aims for personal benefit; perfections are motivated by the welfare of others.
- Each perfection remedies a particular defect, is endowed with non-conceptual wisdom, fulfils the wishes of beings, and ripens them to their appropriate vehicle.

THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Nagarjuna: giving is complete giving away of wealth; morality is benefiting others; patience is abandonment of anger; effort is upholding virtue; meditation is one-pointedness devoid of disturbing emotions; wisdom is ascertaining the meaning of truth.

REMEDIES

Giving	→ avarice
Moral Discipline	→ wrong behaviour
Patience	→ anger
Effort	→ laziness
Meditation	→ a wavering mind
Wisdom	→ ignorance

GIVING — 1 of 6

The antidote to avarice, which ripens in dissatisfaction, poverty and rebirth as a hungry ghost.

- **Material giving** — sharing wealth and simple things appropriate to one's situation.
- **Giving fearlessness** — bestowing protection upon those in peril, especially saving beings from death.
- **Giving dharma** — teaching the dharma when qualified, or reciting prayers and sutras.
- Shantideva: the perfection of generosity is the thought to give away everything, not the alleviation of all poverty.

MORAL DISCIPLINE — 2 of 6

The remedy to wrong behaviour. Without moral discipline, generosity can ripen as wealth in the lower realms (Chandrakirti).

- **Restraint** — maintaining one's vows (pratimoksha, bodhisattva, vidyadhara).
- **Gathering virtue** — seizing every opportunity for virtuous deeds through body, speech and mind.
- **Working for others** — in every situation, accomplishing what is genuinely beneficial for others.

PATIENCE — 3 of 6

The remedy to anger — the most disabling factor in the moral life. Shantideva: virtuous deeds amassed over a thousand aeons are destroyed in one moment of anger.

- **Bearing the burden of dharma** — viewing difficulties in practice as opportunities to follow the great masters.
- **In regard to the two truths** — conventionally, beings act from obscurations; ultimately, no truly existent aggressor, victim or aggression can be found.
- **In regard to enemies** — those who harm us are, in a sense, teachers and benefactors because they stimulate us to patience.

EFFORT — 4 of 6

The antidote to laziness. Shantideva identifies three types of laziness: sloth, attraction to what is bad, and self-deprecating despondency.

- **Armour of effort** — resolute and unflinching determination, recalling the exertion of buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- **Insatiable effort** — never thinking one has achieved enough virtue; always striving for more.
- **Effort in application** — constantly overcoming one's disturbing emotions and accomplishing others' benefit.

MEDITATION — 5 of 6

The antidote to wavering mind. One develops calm-abiding (shamatha) as the necessary foundation for insight (vipashyana).

- Essence of calm-abiding: resting the mind one-pointedly upon a virtuous object, free from conceptual and emotional turbulence.
- Five obstacles and eight remedies — examine the mind for obstacles and apply the appropriate antidote.
- Nine means of settling the mind — taught by Maitreya, the specific techniques for developing calm-abiding.
- Alternative method (Sakya Pandita): meditation on loving-kindness, compassion, equalising and exchanging self and others.

WISDOM — 6 of 6

The antidote to ignorance, the root cause of cyclic existence. Only wisdom correctly discriminates the actual nature of phenomena and frees one from the two obscurations.

- Recognising that the three circles (subject, object, action) of any virtuous activity are empty of intrinsic nature.
- All preceding perfections were taught for the sake of wisdom (Shantideva).
- Method: train in insight through the Madhyamaka techniques of analytical meditation on emptiness (see Chapter 4).

MERIT & WISDOM ACCUMULATIONS

MERIT	WISDOM
Giving	Meditation
Moral Discipline	Wisdom
Patience	

Effort *for both*

- Giving, moral discipline and patience lead to the accumulation of merit.
- Meditation and wisdom lead to the accumulation of transcendental wisdom.
- Effort is required for both accumulations.
- The first five perfections are skilful means; wisdom alone belongs to the category of wisdom.
- Without wisdom, the other perfections are "sightless" (Chandrakirti).

Viewing Emptiness

The four schools of tenets and the two truths; the selflessness of persons and of phenomena; the reasoning of the vajra slivers; and the Madhyamaka free of extremes upheld in the Sakya tradition.

FOUR SCHOOLS OF TENETS

1. **Vaibhashika** *Lesser Vehicle*
2. **Sautrantika** *Lesser Vehicle*
3. **Chittamatra** *Great Vehicle*
4. **Madhyamaka** *Supreme school*

- **Vaibhashika and Sautrantika** — Lesser Vehicle schools asserting truly existent irreducible particles and moments of consciousness.
- **Chittamatra** — Great Vehicle school positing a truly existent non-dual stream of consciousness.
- **Madhyamaka** — supreme school; all phenomena without exception are empty of intrinsic nature.
- Each succeeding school transcends its predecessors; Madhyamaka derives from the Second Turning discourses (Perfection of Wisdom).

TWO TRUTHS

Conventional truth	Ultimate truth
What non-analytic cognition perceives as existent	What analytic cognition does not find

- **Conventional truth** — that which is perceived as existent in non-analytic cognition (Sakya Pandita).
- **Ultimate truth** — the non-finding of any existent phenomena in analytic cognition.
- Conventional truth further divided into unmistaken (valid appearances capable of meaningful function) and mistaken (non-valid appearances like mirages).
- The ultimate is not an object of dualistic cognition (Shantideva) but is accessible to non-dual transcendental wisdom.
- Conventional and ultimate truth are a unity — emptiness and dependent arising share one reality.

PERSONAL SELFLESSNESS

One examines the five aggregates to see if a truly existent self — permanent, singular and autonomous — can be located, either identical to or distinct from them.

- The Twenty Vajra Bombs (Chandrakirti / Nagarjuna): form is not the self; self does not possess form; self is not in form; form is not in self — applied to all five aggregates = 20 aspects.
- The aggregates cannot serve as the self because each is multiple, impermanent and lacks autonomy.
- A self distinct from the aggregates would be merely an arbitrary designation, unrelated to actual experience.
- When belief in self is destroyed, the emotional turbulence of attachment and aversion loses its ground.

PHENOMENAL SELFLESSNESS

All phenomena, not just the individual self, lack intrinsic nature. Five logical arguments establish this:

1. Vajra Slivers — refuting four modes of origination.
2. Refuting production of existent or non-existent results.
3. Refuting origination from the four possibilities.
4. Freedom from singularity or multiplicity (neither one nor many).
5. The reasoning of dependence — phenomena arise only through dependent arising.

THE VAJRA SLIVERS IN DETAIL

If phenomena possess intrinsic nature, their mode of origination must fall into one of four alternatives — each is refuted:

ORIGINATION

× ~~from self~~	× ~~from other~~
× ~~from both~~	× ~~without cause~~

1. **Not from self** — origination from self would ensure endless reduplication, making cause and effect identical.
2. **Not from other** — if unrelated entities could produce one another, anything could arise from anything.
3. **Not from both** — incurs the combined faults of the first two.
4. **Not without cause** — causeless origination contradicts our empirical observation of how the world works.

Chandrakirti's conclusion: phenomena arise through dependence — from the nexus of interacting causes and conditions, none of which exist inherently.

MADHYAMAKA FREE OF EXTREMES

The definitive Madhyamaka upheld in the Sakya tradition: emptiness itself must not be clung to as a reality.

- If one clings to emptiness as truly existent, one falls into a subtle nihilism.
- Gorampa: the purpose of Madhyamaka is to abandon any kind of extremes — existence, non-existence, thing, no-thing.
- Non-affirming negation emptiness (absence of true existence) is a "conformative ultimate" — necessary but not the final realisation.
- The uncategorisable ultimate is free from all conceptual elaboration, realised definitively by bodhisattvas from the first level onwards.
- Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen: that which is free of extremes goes beyond the realm of speech — "Madhyamaka" itself is merely a conceptual label.

Entering Vajrayana

The 84,000 teachings and the place of tantra among them; the five major deity cycles in Sakya; how vajrayana differs from the causal vehicle; the four sets of tantras; initiation, the three vows and the fourteen root downfalls.

84,000 TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

ANTIDOTE TO	
Vinaya	→ attachment
Sutra	→ aversion
Abhidharma	→ ignorance
Tantra	→ all three

- **Vinaya (21,000 teachings)** — moral discipline, antidote to attachment.
- **Sutra (21,000 teachings)** — meditation, antidote to aversion.
- **Abhidharma (21,000 teachings)** — wisdom, antidote to ignorance.
- **Tantra (21,000 teachings)** — antidote to all three disturbing emotions simultaneously.

FIVE MAJOR DEITY CYCLES IN SAKYA

1. **Vajrakilaya** — from the lineage of siddha Padmasambhava; received in the 8th century by Lui Wangpo of the Khon clan (early transmission).
2. **Hevajra** — from the lineage of Virupa.
3. **Guhyasamaja** — from the lineage of Nagarjuna.
4. **Vajrayogini** — from the lineage of Narotapa.
5. **Mahakala** — from the lineage of Varendraruchi.

- The latter four received by Sachen Kunga Nyingpo in the 12th century (later transmission).

CAUSAL VS FRUITION VEHICLE

Paramitayana	Vajrayana
The causal vehicle: seeds gathered over three aeons	The fruition vehicle: buddhahood already present

- Paramitayana accumulates causal seeds over many lives (minimum three aeons) that ripen in buddhahood.
- Vajrayana recognises that the state of buddhahood is already present within one's stream of being.
- Same motivation (bodhichitta), same view (Madhyamaka), same goal (buddhahood) — but different modes of practice and duration.
- Hevajra Tantra: all beings are buddhas but temporarily obscured; when obscurations are removed, they are buddhas.

FOUR SUPERIORITIES OF VAJRAYANA

Tripitakamala: having the same aim but being free from confusion, rich in skilful means, without difficulties, and for those of sharp faculties.

1. **Unconfused view** — the view is the same Madhyamaka as paramitayana, but much easier to recognise directly through blessings at initiation.
2. **Rich in skilful means** — numerous methods for mundane siddhis (wealth, longevity deities) and the supreme techniques of developing and completion stages.
3. **Without difficulties** — sensory objects are transformed into aids to enlightenment through deity-yoga rather than being forcibly restrained.
4. **For sharp faculties** — practitioners can achieve buddhahood in one lifetime rather than over three aeons.

FOUR SETS OF TANTRAS

1. Kriya
2. Charya
3. Yoga
4. Anuttarayoga

1. **Kriya** — emphasis on ritual activity and purity; for the initial practitioner.
2. **Charya** — shares characteristics with both kriya and yoga tantras.
3. **Yoga** — oriented primarily towards meditation rather than external activities.
4. **Anuttarayoga** — possesses the supreme developing and completion stage techniques; buddhahood in one lifetime.

- Anuttarayoga further divided: mother line (wisdom emphasis, e.g. Chakrasamvara), father line (skilful means, e.g. Guhyasamaja), non-dual (equal emphasis, e.g. Hevajra, Kalachakra).

INITIATION AS GATEWAY

The sole means of entering vajrayana is through initiation from a qualified tantric master. Without it, practice leads only to the lower realms (Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen).

- Sakya Pandita: initiation plants the seeds of buddhahood within the aggregates, elements and sense-bases.
- Must be an authentic ritual derived from the tantras, not personal fantasy.
- The vajra-master must be stable, disciplined, intelligent, tolerant, truthful, learned, and possessing kind affection.
- After initiation one must also receive reading-transmission and practice instructions.

THREE VOWS

1. **Pratimoksha** *Lesser Vehicle*
2. **Bodhisattva** *Great Vehicle*
3. **Vidyadhara** *Vajrayana*

1. **Pratimoksha** — individual liberation vow of the Lesser Vehicle.
2. **Bodhisattva** — vow of altruistic intention in the Great Vehicle.
3. **Vidyadhara** — tantric pledges obtained at initiation in yoga or anuttarayoga tantra.

- At initiation: one reaffirms pratimoksha and bodhisattva vows in the preliminary, then acquires the vidyadhara vow.
- In kriya and charya tantras, only pratimoksha and bodhisattva vows are maintained.

14 ROOT DOWNFALLS

Key transgressions of the vidyadhara vow. If committed, they destroy any possibility of obtaining realisation until vows are restored by retaking initiation.

1. Despising the lama.
2. Contradicting the words of the Buddha.
3. Being angry with one's vajra brother or sister.
4. Abandoning love for sentient beings.
5. Abandoning bodhichitta.
6. Criticising one's own or another's school.
7. Revealing secrets to those not ripened by initiation.
8. Despising one's own body, which has the nature of the buddhas.
9. Doubting the perfect purity of all phenomena.
10. Showing love to harmful beings.
11. Grasping the limitlessness of dharmas as a limit.
12. Turning people away from their faith.
13. Refusing to rely on the pledge substances.
14. Despising women, whose nature is wisdom.

The first and gravest downfall is contempt for one's vajra-master; all other downfalls follow in its wake.