

Chapter 1

Tiratana (The Triple Gem)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is an introduction of Buddhism in English to the students about the Triple Gem. Students will be expected to be able to use English to explain the meaning, the virtues of the Triple Gem, and the right way for Buddhists to take refuge in the Triple Gem.

1.2 What is the Triple Gem?

A pāli word “Tiratana” “Phraratanatrai (พระรัตนตรัย) in Thai” is a Buddhist term which is generally rendered as “the Triple Gem”, “the Three Jewel”, or “Three Treasures” in English. The Triple Gem or the Three Jewels are the three things in which the Buddhists take refuge, and look towards for guidance, in the process known as ‘taking refuge’. The Triple Gem generally implies the formula of *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha*. Collectively, the Buddha the Dhamma and the Saṅgha are also *Tiratana* in Pāli, or the “Three Refuges” in English.

1.2.1 Buddha

The Buddha means the Enlighten One or A wakened One having realized the Noble Truths. He is the founder of the unexcelled Buddhism, being perfect in the threefold virtue. The Buddha is the Compassionated One, the Wise Guide, the Torch Bearer, the Teacher who clearly shows the way to those who are

willing to follow the advice. He is a Noble Sage, a Noble Saint an *Arahant*. He is a perfectly Enlighten One. He had perfection both in wisdom (*vijjā*) and conduct (*carāṇa*) He has been successful in achieving a good destiny. Because of this quality, the Buddha is very Fortunate Being

1.2.2 Dhamma

The word Dhamma (in Sanskrit, Dharma) is often used to refer to the Buddha's teaching but it also means the eternal truth which the Buddha's teaching to us. Dhamma is threefold :- the Dhamma that we study, the Dhamma that we practice, and the Dhamma of Realization. Having been enlightened of the so-called 84,000 Dhamma-khandha (Aggregates or items of Dhamma), the Buddha shouldered the task of disseminating part of the Dhamma of his discovery that would be conducive to the beings' happiness, progress, peace and security. As his teaching based on the listeners' tendency and maturity. He knew how to teach them the part of Dhammas that are suitable for their capacity to practice them. By this way, they could be blessed with peace, progress and prosperity for their lives.

The Dhamma contains the truth or the solution which the Buddha discovered for the problems faced by somebody. It is out of compassion for the people in the world that the Buddha preached this *Dhamma*. This well preached Dhamma is pleasant in the beginning, pleasant in the middle and pleasant in the end. *Dhamma* brings about immediate results for those who practice

it diligently. This *Dhamma* is open to all and invites you to ‘*come and see*’. It certainly protects those who diligently follow it. It leads one to the noblest goal, to *Nibbāna*. To reach this goal, the wise people have to realize this Dhamma by themselves.

The Dhamma taught by the Buddha has been organized into three groups called *Pitakas* or baskets. This work had been completed by the *Arahats* who lived in the ancient time. The three divisions are *Vinaya*, *Sutanta* and *Abhidhamma*.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains the rules and regulations of disciplines for the monks and the nuns to follow. The *Sutannta Piṭaka* consists mostly of discourses on *Dhamma* delivered by the Buddha at various times. The *Abhidhamma* is the highest exposition of *Dhamma* in final analysis.

1.2.3 Saṅgha

Saṅgha literally means “community”¹ or “assembly”. This word has two meanings in proper Buddhist usage namely: - the community of disciples who have gained the realization of any of the stages of awakening; and the community of the ordained disciples, *bhikkhus* (monks) and *bhikkhunīs* (nuns). The former implies those disciples who have, through their earnest practice, realized any of the four Grades of Path and Fruition called *Sotāpanna* (Stream-enterer), *Sakadāgāmi* (Once-returner), *Anāgāmi* (Non-returner), and *Arahanta* (Fully

¹ T.W. Rhys Davids, and William Stede, Pali-English Dictionary, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997). P. 667.

Liberated One). These are called Ariya Sanghas (Noble Disciples). The latter implies the community of the ordained disciples who have not yet attained any of the Four Grades of Path and Fruition. They are called *Sammatisaṅgha*. In Thailand, the Saṅgha implies only the community of the ordained disciples-*bhikkhus* (monks)

The members of the *Saṅgha* are the heirs to *Dhamma*. They are the treasures, the teachers and the propagators of *Dhamma*. The monks are the best example of those who closely and truly follow the *Dhamma*. They are well established in the correct path. They deserve honor, respect a veneration.

Vocabulary

ภาษาอังกฤษ	คำแปล
Triple Game	พระรัตนตรัย
Three Treasures	สิ่งประเสริฐสามประการ
Three Refuges	ที่พึ่งสามประการ
Awakened One	ผู้ตื่น
Noble Truth	อริยสัจ
Unexcelled	ไม่มีสิ่งเหนือกว่า
Compassionate	มีความเมตตา
Advice	คำแนะนำ
To be conducive	นำไปสู่
Path and Fruition	มรรคและผล

Three Jewels	แก้วสามประการ
Buddhist term	คำศัพท์ทางพระพุทธศาสนา
Taking Refuge	ไตรสรณคมน์
Enlighten One	ผู้ตรัสรู้, พระพุทธเจ้า
Threefold Virtue	คุณความดีสามประการ
Torch Bearer	ผู้ส่องประทีป
Destiny	จุดหมายปลายทาง
Disseminating	การเผยแผ่
Compassion	ความกรุณา
Ordain	บวช

Activity

Match the correct word in Colum A and Column B

Column A	Column B
.....1. Tirataṇa	A. Advice
.....2. Vijjā	B. Nuns
.....3. Carāṇa	C. Steam-enterer
.....4. Bhikkhus	D. Fully Liberated One
.....5. Bhikkhunīs	E. Wisdom
.....6. Sotāpanna	F. Triple Gem
.....7. Sakadāgāmi	G. Ordain

.....8. Anāgāmi	H. Once-returner
.....9. Arahanta	I. Non-returner
.....10. Ariya Sīghas	J. Noble Disciples
	K. Torch Bearer
	L. To be conductive
	M. Noble Truth
	N. conduct
	O. monks

Reference

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Four. Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2006.

T.W. Rhy Davids, and William Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary,*

(Delhi: MotolalBanarsidass Publisers, 1997).