

Triratna Buddhist Order

Ordination Training For Men In North America

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Basic text by Viradhamma, Dhammarati, the Padmaloka Team, and the North American Men's Ordination Team

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Introduction

We are very pleased that you are interested in Going for Refuge in the tradition of the Triratna Buddhist Order.

In this booklet we will try to describe how you can deepen your spiritual practice and training, and prepare for ordination as part of our North American sangha.

The best approach to ordination training is to think of it less in terms of "getting ordained" and more in terms of continuing to deepen your Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. Going for Refuge is a process that gradually deepens to the point of Enlightenment itself. The Zen tradition speaks of the importance of "Beginner's Mind" The same applies to one's ordination training. Whether we are training for ordination, or whether we are Order Members of many years standing, the training never ceases. There is always more to learn, more dimensions of Going for Refuge to discover, to manifest.

Spiritual practice is an individual thing, and individual circumstances will vary. In principle we would like to take as flexible an approach to training as possible, but for most people the best and most accessible training for ordination will be through the Going for Refuge retreats here in North America and at other retreat centers like Padmaloka in the UK.

This booklet is organized into two sections as follows:

- Part I gives an overview of the **essential elements of training** and the teachings ideas that are central to the tradition of the Triratna Buddhist Order.
- Part II describes the overall program of **retreats, activities and resources** in the North American region.

Part I - Essential Elements of Training

Readiness for ordination cannot be reduced to a set of external criteria. Nonetheless, there is an essential set of elements that are central to ordination training. Our ordination ceremony has three main stages, expressing three important aspects of spiritual practice:

1. Going For Refuge
2. The Ten Precepts
3. The Four Acceptance Verses

The following pages give a brief outline of the meaning of these three topics and provides some questions that might help you in your practice. These topics will guide many of the retreats and study courses in North America. By the time someone is ready to be ordained we would expect them to be well established in these.

It is important to keep in mind that training in these elements does not end at ordination, since you will continue to deepen your experience of them for the rest of your life.

1. Going for Refuge

Ordination into the Triratna Buddhist Order consists, essentially, in Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The ceremony of ordination consists in the witnessing of your "Effective Going for Refuge" by senior members of the Order. Your entire ordination training will be orientated towards deepening your Going for Refuge to the point where Order Members can say that it is "Effective." Much could be said about the term "Effective Going for Refuge." Put simply, it means that you are Going for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, in all aspects of your life. We also want to be as sure as we can that your Going for Refuge will be sustained for the rest of your life. Someone training for ordination will be dedicated to understanding the nature of Going for Refuge and living it out in their lives as fully as possible.

- As you are training, you may want to reflect on the meaning of the Three Jewels in your life. In what aspects of your life are you Going for Refuge?
- What factors in your life are holding you back from a more wholehearted Going for Refuge?

2. The Ten Precepts

One of the most important formulations of the Buddhist path is the Threefold Path of Ethics, Meditation and Wisdom. The Ten Precepts are the core of the path of Ethics.

Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Kamesu micchachara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Pharusavacaya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Samphappalapa veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Pisunavacaya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Abhijjhaya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Byapada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Micchaditthiya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body.
With openhanded generosity, I purify my body.
With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body.
With truthful communication, I purify my speech.
With words kindly and gracious, I purify my speech.
With utterance helpful and harmonious, I purify my speech.
Abandoning covetousness for tranquility, I purify my mind.
Changing hatred into compassion, I purify my mind.
Transforming ignorance into wisdom, I purify my mind.

The importance of ethics in the spiritual life is stressed throughout the training for ordination. At the time of ordination you will take the Ten Dharmachari(ni) Precepts. These precepts are what Sangharakshita has termed "the Mula Pratimoksha" - the basic ethical code. These Ten Precepts are what a Dharmachari lives by. They represent the living out of Going for Refuge in all aspects of your life. Your training in ethics will consist in developing an understanding of the Ten Precepts and imbibing their spirit. Practicing ethics also involves such things as the cultivation of mindfulness of body, speech and mind, as well as such things as confession of faults and the making of resolutions.

A true ethical life grows from an ethical sensibility, and this is cultivated through developing sensitivity to oneself and others by reflection and open communication. Training in Buddhist ethics has a contemplative and meditative dimension. We need to know our mind and our mental states.

- As you are practicing, you may want to reflect on each of the Ten Precepts in turn. In what ways have you undertaken the training principal expressed in the "negative" form of the precept? How have you actually developed and expressed the positive expression of the precept?

3. The Four Acceptance Verses

The third element of the ordination ceremony involves the Four Acceptances.

*For the attainment of Enlightenment, I accept this ordination
For the benefit of all beings, I accept this ordination
With loyalty to my teachers, I accept this ordination
In harmony with friends and brethren, I accept this ordination*

These four verses can inspire us with the profound purpose and meaning of ordination and the altruistic and collective nature of Buddhist practice.

Verse 1 – For the attainment of enlightenment...

As noted above, the Ten Precepts represent the first stage of the Threefold Path outlined by the Buddha. The first verse of the Four Acceptances encompasses the second and third stages of *Meditation* and *Wisdom*. In addition, this verse reminds us of the *faith and imagination* that are a vital part of our practice.

Meditation

Meditation is the direct way to transform the mind. It helps us to cultivate the flow of positive mental states, and to cultivate new, more positive ways of being. With discipline and patience these calm and focused states of mind can deepen into profoundly tranquil and clear states, and a direct seeing into the nature of things.

For most people, the regular and effective practice of sitting meditation is essential to ordination training. By the time you are ordained we would like you to have a well-established daily meditation practice.

We would like you to have a clear understanding of meditation and how it works in Sangharakshita's System of Practice. This system involves experience of the following meditation practices.

1. *Awareness and Integration* – This first stage uses the Mindfulness of Breathing.

2. *Positive Emotion* – The second stage uses the mettabhavana, karunabhavana, muditabhavana and upekkhabhavana.
3. *Spiritual Death* – At this level the practices are the Six Element Practice, the Recollection of Impermanence, the Recollection of Death, the Contemplation of Conditionality (the 24 nidana chain) and Reflection on Sunyata.
4. *Spiritual Rebirth* – The last stage uses visualization and mantra practices.
5. *Just Sitting* – In this practice we have no object to focus on except our experience of the present moment. It can be used as a practice itself or as preparation before another practice or reflection after meditation.

In order to establish an effective meditation practice it is difficult to overstate the importance of retreats, including solitary retreats, meditation intensives and study retreats.

As part of your training for ordination you will be doing the *Going for Refuge and Prostration Practice* on the GFR retreats. This rich practice involves the visualization of a great tree, the Tree of Refuge and Respect. It is based on the refuge tree practices of the Indo-Tibetan schools. This particular form, created by Bhante and senior members of the Order, represents the prominent teachers of various Buddhist traditions who have made significant contributions to the development of Buddhist life in their time. At its center is the Buddha Shakyamuni along with the Buddha of the past and of the future, encircled by archetypal bodhisattvas, disciples of the Buddha, and great teachers of the past and the present.

Some people find this a very effective practice, and it is possible to take up the practice in consultation with a member of the Ordination Team.

- Do you have a regular daily meditation practice?
- In what ways are you able to work effectively with each of the basic meditation practices such as Mindfulness of Breathing, Metta, Just Sitting, the Six Element Practice, and the Going For Refuge and Prostration Practice?
- What retreats have you attended?
- Have you done a solitary retreat and/or an intensive meditation retreat?

Wisdom

Going for Refuge involves a good understanding of the teachings of the Buddha, in particular the basic Buddhist doctrines and teachings such as conditioned co-production, the three marks of conditioned existence, the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path and so on. It is also important to know the distinctive emphases that Sangharakshita has enunciated which find expression within our Order.

Understanding the Dharma will involve having a regular study practice, both individual and collective. It also involves reflecting on what you have studied and learning to make it a living experience. In this way we develop the three kinds of wisdom: of learning, reflection and meditation.

- Do you have a good understanding and experience of the Dharma?
- Do you understand Bhante's particular elucidation of Buddhist teachings?
- Are you familiar with the basic principles of the order and movement?

Faith and Imagination

The Buddhist Path cannot be reduced to set of concepts and ideas, it involves the activation of an intensely positive emotional response to the infinitely varied manifestations of the Three Jewels. This emotional response is called in Buddhist tradition faith (shraddha). Faith involves a clear and lucid response to the qualities of the Three Jewels, as well as a felt sense of the meaning of the Dharma. It also has the quality of longing for the beauty and meaning of Enlightenment. Faith has been described as the reflection of Enlightenment within the heart. It is the driving force to one's Going for Refuge. This faith also has the quality of Imagination, because it sees the manifestations of the Dharma as myth, symbol and image. Through training in faith and imagination we enter the rich, colorful and mysterious realm of 'undefined meanings.' This aspect of one's training is of great importance, because when you are ordained you are introduced to a meditation on a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

- What part do faith and imagination play in your practice?
- What is your relationship to Buddhist myth and ritual?

Verse 2 – For the benefit of all beings...

The teachings associated with the Path of the Bodhisattva make it clear that the attainment of Enlightenment is not a purely individual attainment. Enlightenment is the transcending of the distinction between self and other. So, our Going for Refuge is directed to gaining Enlightenment for the benefit of all. From its inception the Order has been inspired by the Path of the Bodhisattva. Indeed, Sangharakshita sees the Order as an attempt to manifest Bodhicitta - the essence of wisdom and compassion. Ordination training involves contemplating the profundity of Bodhicitta, cultivating the altruistic intention and doing what you can with others to help with the expression of the Dharma in the world.

- How is the altruistic element of practice expressed in your life?
- What is your understanding of Bodhicitta?

Verse 3 – With loyalty to my teachers...

We are able to practice the Dharma because of the generosity and wisdom of the men and women who have preceded us in time, reaching back through history to the Buddha himself. We are especially indebted to people who have acted as teachers and guides.

The Triratna Buddhist Order was founded by Urgyen Sangharakshita, and his insight and vision are a central element in the spiritual life of the Order. He in turn benefited from his Tibetan, Indian and Chinese teachers, including some of the most respected scholars and practitioners of the 20th century.

It is important for us to be familiar with Bhante's teachings and his role as the founder of the Order.

- Are you comfortable with Bhante's place on the Refuge Tree and as founder of the Order and as translator of the Dharma?
- Do you have a good understanding of Bhante's teaching and the history of the Order?

Verse 4 – In harmony with friends and brethren...

In asking for ordination you have asked to enter a Spiritual Community. The Spiritual Community consists of those who are deeply committed to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. As part of that commitment they are dedicated to being in the deepest possible harmony with one another, while at the same time deepening their distinctive individual qualities. Such a community comes about through the cultivation of spiritual friendships. The Order, in fact, from a certain point of view, is nothing other than a network of spiritual friendships.

This means that a key part of one's training will involve the cultivation of such virtues as friendliness, generosity, patience, forgiveness, kindness, empathy and so on. It will also involve getting to know others in the Sangha in different contexts. Some of them you will get to know closely.

Friendship and community are an important source of spiritual support and inspiration. They are also the best context in which to study and practice, and can lead to the development of wisdom itself. Within the context of serious spiritual commitment, meditation and study, our interaction with others can lead us beyond our sense of separate selfhood. Sangharakshita, in fact, sees the Spiritual Community as an environment in which the Bodhicitta can arise.

- Do you have good and close relationships with some members of the Order and with peers who are practicing in this tradition?
- In what ways will you make a contribution to the Order?
- Will you engage in the common field of endeavor to benefit others?
- How do you feel about the institutions of the Order and the movement?
- Do you have experience of the breadth and diversity of the Order, for example by visiting other centers?
- Do you have unresolved issues in communication with Order Members, Mitras, and Friends?

Part II

Retreats, Activities and Resources in North America

The Triratna Buddhist Community and the Order have been active in North America since the early 1980's, and our Centers and Order Members are dispersed over a large geographical area. This presents somewhat of a challenge compared to the situation in the UK and other areas where there are many more centers and resources available for people who are training for ordination.

As noted in the Introduction, Mitras are welcome to take advantage of the long-established retreat centers and other resources in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and India. In fact, it is strongly recommended that Mitras do retreats at Padmaloka or other centers in the UK that focus on training for ordination.

For those people whose practice is based primarily in North America there are a number of retreats and activities that can provide the support needed to be ordained into the tradition of the Triratna Buddhist Order.

The following section describes in outline form the activities and resources that you should consider participating in.

North American Region Going for Refuge Retreats

Once or twice a year we host a retreat that focus on essential elements of the ordination training. We have a program of Eight Retreats that are offered in a repeating multi-year cycle.

1. System of Practice
2. Mythic Context
3. Ten Pillars (Living Ethically)
4. Transcendental Principle
5. What is the Order (Vision of the Order)
6. Bodhisattva Path / Bodhisattva Ideal
7. Going for Refuge
8. Spiritual Friendship

The aim of these retreats is to explore a particular element of the training in depth and detail. The form of the retreats will vary. Some of them involve quite a bit of group study and personal reflection. Other retreats are more meditative, while others have a more of a flavor of faith and devotion. You will also find that all of the retreats will include reference to all the elements of ordination training, with one of them predominating.

Keep in mind that thorough preparation will make the retreat more rewarding for all of the participants. The topics and readings will be announced well in advance.

The regional retreats are important events that people should make an effort to attend. It is an opportunity to bring together men from all over the United States and Canada, and Public and Private Preceptors will be in attendance.

The Team will also try to make elements of these retreats available to people who for various reasons are unable to travel.

Training At Your Center Or Region

Although attending national retreats and gatherings are of great importance, most of your training will take place in your local situation. This means sustaining your individual Buddhist practice in whatever circumstances you are in. It also involves maintaining and deepening your daily practice of meditation, ethics, and reflection on the Dharma. Although external supportive conditions are crucial to any course of spiritual training, you will also need to cultivate a strong sense of personal endeavor. One aspect of the ordination ceremony is the private ordination, which symbolizes your willingness to follow the Buddhist path *alone* if necessary.

The North American region is very large, and not all mitras have the advantage of living close to a center. It is especially true that "out-lying" mitras will have to take considerable responsibility for their training and travel when appropriate to experience sangha at centers.

Getting To Know Order Members

As well as having an effective personal practice, becoming part of the Triratna Buddhist Order involves cultivating friendly connections with Order Members, especially the Order Members at your local center. Ordination is the witnessing of your Going for Refuge and for that to be possible you need to get to know members of the Order and they need to get to know you. Getting to know Order Members comes about in a variety of ways: through meditating with them, studying the Dharma with them, going on retreat with them, through personal conversation, through working along side them, and in many other ways. Essentially, through your connections with Order Members you are entering the life of the spiritual community. Out of this, ordination into the Triratna Buddhist Order emerges.

Center and Local Retreats

During the course of each year the different centers will organize activities for men in their area. Larger centers will have one or two weekend retreats that are coordinated with the training program and the topics of the regional retreats.

Solitary Retreats

Mitras should make a point of going on solitary retreats as they prepare for ordination. Solitary practice is very important in the Buddhist tradition and gives people a chance to deepen their meditation and reflect on their practice without any distractions. Of course solitaries can be challenging so Mitras are encouraged to talk to their KM's or experienced Order Members about how to get the most out of the experience.

Going For Refuge Groups

Another aspect of one's local training that we are keen to encourage is participation in what have come to be known as "Going for Refuge Groups." These are groups of men who have asked for ordination who meet regularly (usually once a week) to explore different aspects of Going for Refuge and ordination training. They are also a very good way of forming friendships with other men who have asked for ordination. They can be a great source of support and inspiration. They are also a very good preparation for the regular weekly chapter meetings that you will attend after ordination. Like the chapter meetings, the Going for Refuge groups aspire to be what Sangharakshita called "an ongoing spiritual workshop with a strong confessional element." If you would like to join or form such a group, you can speak to men who have asked for ordination around your center. Out-lying Mitras can explore conference call meetings with a GFR group at a center or establish consistent communication with a few mitra friends.

Study

Most centers offer regular study for Mitras. At present this consists of a **Four-Year Mitra Course**. We recommend that you ask the local Mitra Convenor or Chairperson about the study facilities offered at your center. Mitra study offers an excellent opportunity to study and explore the Dharma and is an invaluable element in your training for ordination.

The Order now provides a number of resources on-line to help guide individual and/or group study. For example, there is an excellent set of readings and questions for the Mitra Course at <http://fwbo-centre-support.org/mitra-course/foundation-course/>

Kula System

In recent years a Kula System has been introduced through which a Mitra who has asked for ordination may take the initiative to invite up to five Order Members to form a kula that will provide support for their training. Mitras are free to choose whether they want to form a kula. It is suggested that Mitras wait for a year or two after requesting ordination to establish a kula, and ask a local Mitra Convenor or a member of the Mens Ordination Team about the process of inviting Order Members. A kula should meet as a group with and without the Mitra once each year to discuss the Mitra's practice and provide feedback.

Kalyana Mitras

Mitras are encouraged to establish formal Kalyana Mitra relationships with two Order Members with whom they have a close friendship. Local Mitra Convenors can provide advice about how to take this step.

Your Role

In many ways it is the responsibility of Mitras to plan their practice, stay in touch with Order Members and friends, go on retreats, study and consciously prepare for the step of taking ordination. It is important that each Mitra keep good records of the retreats and courses that they have participated in and the books and lectures that they have read or listened to. This information is very helpful to the Private Preceptor and Public Preceptor.

Dialogue About Your Training

As you get deeper into your training and as you get to know Order Members well, you will begin to get into dialogue with Order Members about your training. As time goes on you will want to know what you need to work on in order to be ready for ordination. At some point the Order Members who know you well will need to discuss your readiness for ordination. Different centers approach dialogue and discussion about ordination in different ways. We recommend that you speak to your men's Mitra Convenor or the Chairperson to find out how your local center approaches this important area.

If you wish, you may write a review of your practice once or twice each year to share with your Private Preceptor and Kula. For those who are new to the training, you may want to wait a year or two before you do this. You can use the questions posed in this document or the Rough Guide or the Six Guidelines (see appendices) as a format for your report if you wish. Also you can request that Practice Reviews be written by kula members and other Order members who know you well. These Reviews are sent to the Mens Ordination Team.

Approaching Ordination

The Private Preceptor

The Private Preceptor is a senior Order Member who can see that you are effectively Going for Refuge and he knows you well enough to be able to affirm and confirm that. He will also be someone who you know quite well and towards whom you have natural feelings of respect.

You can ask any male Order Member of ten or more years in the Order to act as your Private Preceptor. Having said that, it is important that it is someone you know well, who you have real feelings for, and who is willing to be your Private Preceptor. The Order Member himself must also have the confidence of the Order to be a Private Preceptor. If the Order Member you ask is not already a Private Preceptor, his appointment will have to be agreed by the Order. This involves consulting the Order. Sometimes this process can take some time. We recommend that before you ask an Order Member to be your Private Preceptor that you talk things over with another senior Order Member. Your relationship with the Private Preceptor is of very great importance. It is he who sees, affirms and keeps faith with your individual commitment to the Three Jewels, so it's essential that great care is taken over who you choose.

Choosing a Private Preceptor is not something to be concerned about early on in one's ordination training. The important thing, first of all, is to engage with the ordination training as fully as possible. Out of that you will discover the most appropriate person to be your Private Preceptor.

A private preceptor may also be one of your Kalyana Mitras. Whether or not you choose one of your KMs to be your preceptor is entirely up to you and the Order Member involved but many people prefer to have a separate Preceptor so that three people are supporting them in their training process and after ordination as well. Also some order members prefer to not be both KM and preceptor as the roles are a bit different.

The Private Ordination

The ordination ceremony has two aspects. The first aspect is what we have come to call the private ordination, which is performed by one's Private Preceptor. In this ceremony you go alone to a specially prepared shrine and the

Private Preceptor witnesses your Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. He will also introduce you to your personal meditation practice, which usually takes the form of a visualization and mantra recitation practice associated with a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. The private ordination ceremony symbolizes your willingness to Go for Refuge and to keep Going for Refuge alone if necessary. The ceremony symbolizes that you are individually committed to the Buddhist path, regardless of what others might do or what they might think about you.

The Public Ordination

The public ordination symbolizes the fact that although you are willing to go it alone if necessary, you see that there are others who share your deepest spiritual values and who are committed to those values as you are. There is, in other words, a spiritual community that you want to be a part of and whose "members" want to receive you into their midst. The person who performs the public ordination is called the Public Preceptor.

The Public Preceptor receives you into the order. In order to be able to do that he has to be sure that you are Going for Refuge as other Order Members are Going for Refuge. It is unlikely that you will have a close personal relationship with your Public Preceptor. Nonetheless, it is a very important relationship because, in the end, it is the Public Preceptor who makes the final decision regarding your readiness for ordination. He has to be confident that you have been thoroughly trained. He will be confident in the recommendations of your Private Preceptor and all the Order Members who know you. There is no need to find someone to be your Public Preceptor. The best thing to do is to engage as fully as you can in ordination training and the Public Preceptors, in dialogue with others, will work out the best person to publicly ordain you.

The Ordination Retreat

Every year we hold a three-month long ordination retreat at Guhyaloka, our retreat center in Spain. The Order has been holding long ordination courses since the early nineteen eighties. This intensive ordination course is of very great importance. It gives you an opportunity to concentrate wholeheartedly and without any other distractions on Going For Refuge to the Three Jewels. Your ordination takes place, therefore, in the best possible spiritual conditions. As well as being able to concentrate on the Dharma intensively, you will also form strong spiritual bonds with the other men on the course, thus intensifying your

experience of spiritual community. As we would like everybody who is ordained to attend these retreats, it is important that you start thinking about how you can best arrange to attend such a course.

There are also shorter ordination retreats for those who are unable to attend the four-month course due to health, age or family commitments.

The Decision about Ordination

When your Order Kula thinks that you are effectively Going for Refuge, your Private Preceptor will consult with local order members and the Mens Ordination Team to get their input. When this consultation process is complete your Private Preceptor will write, in conjunction with a Public Preceptor, a letter of recommendation that will be submitted to the Kula of Public Preceptors. They may have questions for the Private Preceptor or the Mitra or anyone involved. When they are satisfied that the Mitra is effectively Going for Refuge, the Public Preceptor who initiated the recommendation will write a letter to the Mitra inviting him to be ordained.

Post-Ordination Resources

The Mens Ordination Team is interested in supporting new Order Members in the first few years after ordination. New Order Members should participate in the annual GFR retreats and stay in close contact with the members of their Kula, their Private Preceptor and KMs. We suggest that you call together your Kula at least once a year to review how your practice and order life are going or at least maintain individual contact with them.

The North American Ordination Team

A number of the more experienced Order Members in North America and England have made a commitment to support men who are training for Ordination. They have made a commitment to come on the annual Going for Refuge retreat, and the team members who are based in North America will participate in center and regional retreats also.

Public Preceptors

Dhammarati – England

Nagabodhi – England

Viradhamma – San Francisco

Current Private Preceptors

Bodhipaksa – Aryaloka

Shantinayaka – Vancouver

Suddhayu - Portsmouth

Vajramati – New York City

Viradhamma – San Francisco

Future Private Preceptors

Ananta – New York

Danadasa – San Francisco

Narottama – New England

Prasadachitta – San Francisco

Viradhamma is the Chairman of the Ordination Team, so if you have any questions about the ordination training process or retreats please contact him at viradhamma@gmail.com or call him at (510) 526 5906.

In addition to the Public and Private Preceptors, a number of Order Members have made a commitment to assist Mitras in their areas and participate in the annual National Retreat. Please consult with the Team if you are looking for someone to contact in your area.

Reading List

There is an enormous amount of written material on Buddhism available to us, including material being produced within the Triratna Buddhist Community, and to some extent we can follow our inspiration when we read the Dharma. But it is important to be familiar with the Buddhist scriptures, especially the *sutta pitaka* of the Pali Canon.

We also ask you to be familiar with the writings of Sangharakshita, the founder of the Order and whose approach to the Dharma our Order is based on. Some people systematically work through the writings and audio material of Sangharakshita which is available on freebuddhistaudio.com.

In particular, we recommend the following texts by Sangharakshita.

- A Survey of Buddhism
- The Three Jewels
- Who is the Buddha
- What is the Dharma
- What is the Sangha
- Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism
- The Ten Pillars of Buddhism
- The History of My Going for Refuge

Bhante has also suggested that it would be good if people were familiar with his memoirs to get some idea of him personally.

Reading List, continued

In recent years some important documents have been written that express the main points of Sangharakshita's teachings. It is especially important that you read and discuss these papers.

- What is the Triratna Buddhist Order
- Revering and Relying on the Dharma
- Reimagining the Buddha
- Buddhophany
- Initiation into a New Life
- A Supra-Personal Force – the Triratna Buddhist Community and the Stream of the Dharma
- A Buddhist Manifesto
- Commonality of Practice

For an excellent introduction to the different aspects of Sangharakshita's Dharma teaching we recommend *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition* by Subhuti.

The following is a reading list associated with particular aspects of ordination training. All titles are by Sangharakshita, unless the author's name is given:

Going for Refuge:

- The History of My Going for Refuge
- Going for Refuge
- My Relation To The Order
- Teachers of Enlightenment (Kulananda)

Spiritual Friendship and Spiritual Community

- What is the Sangha
- My Relation to the Order
- Buddhism and Friendship (Subhuti)

Reading List, continued

Ethics .

- Ten Pillars of Buddhism
- Know Your Mind
- Patterns of Buddhist Morality
- Remorse and Confession in the Spiritual Community (Subhuti)

Meditation .

- Living With Kindness
- Living With Awareness
- Meditation - Kamalashila
- A System of Meditation - Audio CD 135
- A System of Meditation - Cittapala

Wisdom .

- A Survey of Buddhism (Chapter 1)
- What is the Dharma?
- Vision and Transformation - the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path
- The Buddhist Vision (Subhuti)

The Bodhisattva Path .

- The Bodhisattva Ideal
- The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa (trans Thurman)
- Wisdom Beyond Words
- The Drama of Cosmic Enlightenment
- Transforming Self and World
- The Bodhicaryavatara (trans Skilton and Crosby)

Faith and Imagination .

- The Journey to Il Convento, from *The Priceless Jewel*
- St. Jerome Revisited, from *The Priceless Jewel*
- Creative Symbols of Tantric Buddhism .
- The Mythic Context (Subhuti, Padmaloka publications)
- Teachers of Enlightenment (Kulananda)
- Meeting the Buddhas (Vessantara)

Appendix 1 - Eight Guidelines - 2021

These guidelines offer a framework to reflect on your going for refuge in relation to joining the Triratna Buddhist Order. They are designed to be explored within the context of kalyana mitrata; in dialog with your preceptor, kula and/or kalyana mitras. It is important to note that this framework is not the only means by which you can review your practice. There is no 'check-list'. While your process will share many features with all who join the Order it is also individual to you and, ultimately, something quite mysterious. You can use these guidelines for preparing self-reports on your practice

1. Going for refuge to the Three Jewels

Am I going for refuge sincerely?

To what extent do I understand the meaning of going for refuge?

What is my understanding of and attitude towards the Three Jewels?

What false refuges impede my going for refuge to the Three Jewels?

Are other motives confused with my request for ordination, such as looking for approval, joining a group or seeking status?

Am I going for refuge effectively?

How do I create and sustain conditions that support my going for refuge under most circumstances?

In what ways have I sustained my commitment to the Three Jewels over time and across a range of contexts (e.g. on retreat; in daily life)?

In what ways am I going forth?

What still holds me back? For instance: cultural conditioning, psychological factors, objective circumstances, limited refuges, wrong views, ethics?

2. Ethical Practice

How are the precepts alive in my daily life?

Do I understand the basis of Buddhist ethics and the principle of karma?

Do I have the capacity to recognize my unskillful behavior/mental states and to make appropriate changes?

How am I cultivating the positive speech precepts in my daily life including in online communication?

Are there any significant ethical breaches that I have not confessed or resolved?

What is my understanding and experience of confession practice? Do I apologize and make amends where necessary? Am I capable of forgiving others?

3. Meditation and mind training

Is my meditation practice effective?

Have I attended meditation retreats? Done any solitary retreats?

How do I work with my mind inside and outside meditation, including the cultivation of mindfulness and metta?

Do I have an understanding of shamatha and vipashyana?

Do I effectively identify and transform afflictive emotions and thoughts?

Do I effectively identify and transform afflictive emotions and thoughts?

4. Grasp of the Dharma as taught by Urgyen Sangharakshita

Am I participating in (or completed) the Mitra Study Course?

Have I studied Bhante's main teachings/writings?

Do I understand 'Basic Buddhism' (as described by Sangharakshita in Chapter 1 of *A Survey of Buddhism*)?

Do I have a grasp of conditionality (pratitya samutpada) and how it informs my life (e.g. through karma and the Four Noble Truths)

Do I have an appreciation of the unity and diversity of Buddhism? Am I able to identify and transform wrongviews?

5. The Mythic Context

What is my relationship to myth, images and symbols?

What is my sense of and connection with the transcendental? How does this manifest? For example, do I connect with a Buddha or bodhisattva as a transcendent force?

To what extent do I feel reverence for and receptivity to the Three Jewels?

Do I practice devotion and ritual, for instance, pujas and the prostration practice?

6. Kalyana mitrata and sangha

Do I have meaningful friendships with OM's? Connections with OM's outside my local Centre? KMs? or OM's I look up to? Do I have peer friendships?

How do I engage with kalyana mitrata as a path of transformation?

What are my patterns around conflict? Do I have a willingness to resolve conflicts when they arise?

Am I fully transparent with my KM's and Preceptor? Do I have 'no-go' areas – things like sex, addictive tendencies, money, family...?

Do I have an appreciation of the significance of Urgyen Sangharakshita and the Triratna lineage? Do I have any unresolved issues with Bhante as a teacher and a man? If so, am I in dialogue with kalyana mitras or other Order Members about these?

Do I participate in sangha activities, including festivals and mitra activities? Why/why not?

7. Understanding the principles of the Triratna Order and Community

What is my understanding of the vision of the Triratna Buddhist Order and of its place in the Buddhist tradition?

To what extent do I understand the Triratna System of Practice? How am I applying it in my life? Do I understand the significance of Urgyen Sangharakshita within the Order?

Do I identify with Triratna as a whole, beyond my local context? What other Triratna contexts have I visited?

Do I have an awareness of Triratna as an international community, including Triratna in India and the importance of Dr Ambedkar?

8. Altruistic Dimension of practice

What is my understanding of, and response to, the Bodhisattva Ideal and its importance to the Triratna vision?

In what ways do I show an open-handed attitude to others (dana)? Am I cultivating an open-hearted attitude to life?

How do I give expression to the altruistic aspect of practice in my life?

In what ways do I practice Dharma service?

In what ways am I helping Order members, my local center, or other Triratna projects?

Appendix 2

THE ROUGH GUIDE FOR GOING FOR REFUGE IN THE TRIRATNA BUDDHIST ORDER

[You can use these guidelines to evaluate your effectiveness and preparation for ordination.]

A. For the sake of Enlightenment . . .

- ❖ Knowledge and understanding of the dharma
 - Mitra study groups covering broad range of dharma topics
 - Individual study and reflection
 - Gfr retreats
 - Study retreats
- ❖ Meditation
 - Individual daily practice
 - Meditation retreats
 - Weeklong retreats if possible
 - Solitary retreats
 - Knowledge of system of meditation

B. In harmony with friends and brethren . . .

- ❖ Friendship
 - Communication with friends about your going for refuge
 - GFR groups
 - Getting to know Order members
 - Kalyana mitrata
 - Private preceptor

C. For the sake of all beings . . .

- ❖ Altruistic practice
 - Getting a feeling for the spirit of the Bodhisattva Ideal
 - Becoming a hand of Avalokiteshvara
 - Contributing to the life of the Order and Movement

D. With loyalty to my teachers . . .

- ❖ Understanding and knowledge of the principles of the Order and Movement
 - Study and reading about the order and movement
 - Visiting centers in other cities and countries
 - Retreats in other places
 - Meeting with visiting Order members
 - Knowledge of Bhante and the history of Triratna

- Reflect on the place of the Order in one's life

E. Precepts

❖ Ethics

- Practice of 5 precepts in your life
- Reflection on 10 precepts
- Confession
- Resolution of disharmony with others

F. Going for Refuge

❖ Understanding GFR and Ordination

- What does your commitment mean to you?
- A long-term view of spiritual progress – stream entry and arising of the Bodhicitta
- Going forth and renunciation
- Communication with the ordination team and local chapters
- The Order as practice
- Reflect on the 4 ordination vows
- Loving the practice and the spiritual life – process, not goal orientation