

The One True Refuge

A reflection on the early Buddhist teachings

[The balance between self-reliance and spiritual community]

Pali passages selected and translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta [D 16], which details the demise of the Buddha, the Buddha advised the monks to take the Dhamma-Vinaya as their Teacher after He passed away. This is a very important statement the significance of which has been overlooked by many Buddhists. Because many Buddhists have not heard this advice or grasped its significance, they search far and wide for a teacher; a teacher they can be proud of and brag about his attainments, etc. Some even travel halfway [a]round the world or more in such a search.

These people create personality cults based on the teacher's perceived goodness rather than on the Dhamma-Vinaya itself. In some cases, after many years, the followers have not made much progress and have failed to taste the essence of the Dhamma. They would feel empty. As such, we must always remember that the Dhamma-Vinaya is our Teacher.

(Dhammavuddho Thera, "Liberation: Relevance of Sutta-Vinaya," 1999:3)

In this three-part study series, we shall here look at the early teachings of the Buddha on taking the self as refuge. In the first two suttas—the **Madhurā Sutta** (M 84) and the **Ghoṭamukha Sutta** (M 94)—both recording events after the Buddha's Parinirvana, their protagonists, the arhat elders Mahā Kaccāna and Udena respectively declare that the Buddha is their refuge not themselves. This, **Dhammavuddho** points out, is a reminder that *even arhats do not regard themselves as "refuge"* though they collectively (with the streamwinners, once-returns and non-returns), form the third refuge.

As such, a "fourth refuge" contradicts the Buddha's Teachings (Dhammavuddho 1999:4). In Tibetan Buddhism, the living teacher (*lama*) is taken as the very first refuge. The rationale is that he is like a parent who is the first Dharma teacher, one who initiates the pupil into the Teaching.¹ However, a more practical explanation is that from the 11th century onwards, when the monks began to take over the rule of the country, and the rise of various powerful Tibetan sects, there was a serious need for complete loyalty to one's teacher and sect. In other words, this is a cultural development, relevant only to Tibetan Buddhism.²

1 To whom do we go to refuge?

1.1 MADHURĀ SUTTA (M 84.10 f/2:89 f)

10 When this was said, king Avantīputta of Madhurā said to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna:

"Excellent, master Kaccāna! Excellent, master Kaccāna! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made clear by master Kaccāna.

I go to the master Kaccāna for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the master Kaccāna remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth, for life."

"Do not go to me for refuge, maharajah. Go for refuge to that same Blessed One to whom I have gone for refuge."

"Where is he living now, master Kaccāna, that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one?"

"That Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one, has entered nirvana, maharajah." [90]

¹ See also P Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1990: 179.

² See also **Rule by Incarnation** = SD 36.16.

11 “If we heard that the Blessed One was within ten leagues, we would go ten leagues in order to see that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one. If we heard that the Blessed One was within twenty leagues, . . . thirty leagues, . . . forty leagues, . . . fifty leagues, . . . a hundred leagues, we would go a hundred leagues in order to see that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one. Even though the Blessed One has entered Nirvana, I go to that Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the master Kaccāna remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth, for life.”

1.2 GHOṬA, MUKHA SUTTA (M 94.31-33/2:162 f)

31 When this was said, the brahmin Ghoṭa, mukha said to the venerable Udena:

“Excellent, master Udena! Excellent, master Udena! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, in numerous ways, the Dharma has been made clear by the Blessed One.

I go to the master Udena for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the master Udena remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth, for life.”

“Do not go to me for refuge, maharajah. Go for refuge to that same Blessed One to whom I have gone for refuge.”

“Where is he living now, master Udena, that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one?”

“That Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one, has entered nirvana, great king.”

32 “If we heard that the Blessed One was within ten leagues, we would go ten leagues in order to see that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one. If we heard that the Blessed One was within twenty leagues, . . . thirty leagues, . . . forty leagues, . . . fifty leagues, . . . a hundred leagues, [163] we would go a hundred leagues in order to see that Blessed One, accomplished, fully self-awakened one. Even though the Blessed One has entered nirvana, I go to that Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the master Udena remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth, for life.

33 Now, master Udena, *the king of Aṅga gives me a regular donation.*³ Let me give master Udena one regular donation from that.”

“What kind of regular donation does the king of Aṅga give you, brahmin?”

“Five hundred gold coins (*kaḥāpaṇa*), master Udena.”

“**It is not allowable for us to accept gold and silver,**⁴ brahmin.”

“If it is not allowable for master Udena to accept gold and silver, I will have a monastery built for master Udena.”

“Brahmin, if you desire to build a monastery for me, then *have an assembly hall*⁵ *built for the Sangha at Pāṭali,putta.*”⁶

“I am still more pleased and delighted that master Udena has me undertake a gift to the Sangha. So with this regular donation (offered to the master Udena) and another regular donation, I shall have an assembly hall built for the Sangha at Pāṭali,putta.”

Then with that regular donation and another regular donation, the brahmin Ghoṭamukha had an assembly hall built for the Sangha at Pāṭaliputta. And that is now known as the Ghoṭa, mukhī.

³ “Regular donation,” *nicca, bhikkha*, lit “permanent alms,” could be daily, but certainly at regular interval.

⁴ See Nissaggiya 18 (V 3:236 ff). *Jātarūpa, rajata*. While the Vinaya’s own Old Commentary defines *jāta, rūpa* as “gold” (that is “the colour of the teacher,” V 3:238), *rajata* is defined as “*kaḥāpaṇa* and *māsaka* of copper, wood, or lac, accepted as common currency” (id). For a fuller discussion, see “Money and Monastics” in the Sutta Discovery series 2003.

⁵ “Assembly hall,” *upaṭṭhāna, sāla*.

⁶ Pāṭali,putta. In the Buddha’s time, it was a village known as Pāṭali, gāma. The Mahā Parinibbāna S (D 16) records the Buddha’s prophecy of its illustrious future (D 16.1.28/3:87). It grew to become the capital of Māgadha and then the capital of Asoka’s empire. Today it is called Patna, the capital of Bihar state.

2 Even famous teachers can have wrong views

2.1 (AHITĀYA) THERA SUTTA (A 5.88). An elder monk who has these five qualities is not beneficial to the many, not for the happiness of the many, not for the good of the masses; but for the loss and pain of gods and humans, that is to say:

(1) The elder is of long standing, long gone forth.

He is well known, famous, with a following of great crowds of householders and renunciants.

He is a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodging, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

He is deeply learned, an expert, a store of learning.

Those teachings that are good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and the letter [both in meaning and phrasing], that affirms the holy life fully complete and pure—such teachings he has learned much, remembered, recited verbally, investigated with the mind, and penetrated well by view.⁷

But he is of wrong view and deviant vision.⁸

Having made the masses turn away from true Dharma, he establishes them in what is not true Dharma.

(2) Thinking, “The elder monk is of long standing, long gone forth,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

(3) Thinking, “The elder monk is well known, famous, with a great following of householders and renunciants,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

(4) Thinking, “The elder monk is a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodging and medicine and medication,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

(5) Thinking, “The elder monk is learned, an expert, a store of learning,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

Bhikshus, the conduct [the way] of an elder, accomplished in these five qualities, is not beneficial for the many, not for the good of the many, not for the happiness of the many: it is for the loss and suffering of gods and humans.

Such an elder *with right view*, on the contrary, benefits the masses, both the gods and humans.

(A 5.88/3:114) = SD 40.16.

2.2 MAHĀPADESA SUTTA (D 2.4.7-11/2:123).⁹ At **Bhoga,nagara**, the Buddha discourses on **the four great references** (*mahāpadesa*) which serve as the criteria for the true teaching. The term *apadesa* means “designation, pointing out; reference; witness, authority” (DP). However, in this context, it is best rendered as “reference” since we actually have only two final “authorities,” that is, the Dharma (the Sutras or Discourses) and the Vinaya (the Discipline). The four great references are as follows:

(1) **The Buddha.** Suppose a monk were to say: “Friends, I heard and received this teaching from the Blessed One’s own mouth: This is the Dharma, this is the Discipline, this is the Master’s Teaching.” Then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove of his words...

(2) **The Order.** Suppose a monk were to say: “In such and such a place, there is a community (saṅgha) with elders and distinguished teachers. I heard and received this teaching from that community: This is the Dharma, this is the Discipline, this is the Master’s Teaching.” Then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove of his words...

(3) **Elders.** Suppose a monk were to say: “In such and such a place, there are many elders (thera) who are learned, masters of scripture (āgat’āgama), Dharma-experts, Vinaya-experts, experts in the Summaries (*māṭikā*): This is the Dharma, this is the Discipline, this is the Master’s Teaching.” Then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove of his words...

(4) **An elder.** Suppose a monk were to say: “In such and such a place, there is an elder who is learned, bearer of tradition, Dharma-expert, Vinaya-expert, expert in the Summaries (*māṭikā*):

⁷ That is, by his wisdom. Cf **Gopaka Moggallāna S** (M 108.15/3:11) = SD 33.5; **(Ahitāya) Thera S** (A 5.88/3:114-116) = SD 40.16.

⁸ *Micchā,dīṭṭhiko hoti viparīta,dassano.*

⁹ = A 4.180/167-170 = Vism 1.88.

This is the Dharma, this is the Discipline, this is the Master’s Teaching.” Then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove of his words...

Neither approving nor disapproving, his words and expressions should be carefully noted and compared with the Suttas and reviewed in the light of the Discipline. If they, on such comparison and review, are found not to conform to the Suttas or the Discipline, the conclusion must be: “Surely, this is not Buddha Word. It has been wrongly understood by this monk,” and the matter is to be rejected. But where on such comparison and review they are found to conform to the Sutras and the Discipline, the conclusion must be: “Surely, this is Buddha Word. It has been rightly understood by this monk.” (D 2:123 ff = A 2:167-170)

3 The one refuge

3.1 THE BUDDHA’S LAST RAINS RETREAT. After staying on in Ambapālī’s mango grove for some time, the Buddha leaves for the village of Beluva (also Veḷuva or Bilva), near Vesālī. As it is the month of Āsāḷha (June-July), with the rains approaching, the Buddha and the Order enter the rains retreat (his last) at Beluva. The Buddha instructs the monks to spend retreat in groups in different places all around Vesālī.

According to the Sarvāstivāda version, this is in response to a bad famine that has occurred there. The Pali version, however, makes no mention of any famine. The Commentary simply states that the small village where the Buddha spends retreat is neither able to accommodate nor feed so many monks. (DA 2:546)

During the retreat, the Buddha has a severe illness, accompanied by deadly pains [Tan 2002, 7:22]. This is his first attack of bodily pains recorded in **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta**:

...the Blessed One was attacked by a severe sickness, with sharp pains as if he were about to die. But he endured all this mindfully, clearly aware and without complaining. He thought: “*It is not fitting that I should attain final Nirvana without addressing my followers and taking leave of the Order of Monks. I must hold this disease in check by energy and apply myself to the force of life.*” He did so and the disease abated. (D 16.2.23/2:99)

3.2 SELF AS REFUGE. Ānanda is greatly alarmed by the Buddha’s illness. “Blessed One, I have seen the Blessed One in comfort, and I have seen the Blessed One’s patient enduring. And, Blessed One, my body is like a drunkard’s. I’ve lost my bearings and things are unclear to me because of the Blessed One’s sickness. The only thing that is some comfort to me is the thought: ‘The Blessed One will not attain the final Nirvana until he has made some statement about the Order of Monks.’” The Buddha consoles him by explaining that he has no secret teachings nor regards himself as the leader of the Order, how he overcomes his bodily pains and that his followers should be self-reliant:

But Ānanda, what does the Order of monks expect of me? I have taught the Dharma, Ānanda, making no “inner” and “outer”: the Tathāgata has no “teacher’s fist”¹⁰ in respect of doctrines. If there is anyone who thinks: “I shall take charge of the Order,”¹¹ or “The Order should refer to me,”¹² let him make some statement about the Order, but the Tathāgata does not think in such terms. So why should the Tathāgata make a statement about the Order?

Ānanda, I am now old, worn out, elderly, my time has gone, I have reached the term of my life, which is eighty. Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the Tathāgata’s body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the Tathāgata withdraws his attention from outward signs, and by the cessation of certain feelings, enters into the signless concentration of mind, that this body knows comfort.

¹⁰ *nāsti ācārya, muṣṭi/n’atthi ācariya, muṭṭhi.*

¹¹ *saṅghaṃ pariharissāmi.*

¹² *mam’uddisako bhikkhu, saṅgho.*

Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves,¹³ being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dharma as an island,¹⁴ with the Dharma as your refuge, with no other refuge.

And how does a monk live as an island unto himself...with no other refuge?

Here, Ānanda, a monk,¹⁵ having put away longing and displeasure for the world,¹⁶
contemplating the body in the body,
contemplating feelings in feelings,
contemplating the mind in the mind,
contemplating mind-objects in mind-objects.

That, monks, is how a monk lives as an island unto himself...with no other refuge.

And those who now in my time or afterwards live thus, they will become the highest,¹⁷ but they must be anxious to learn. (D 16.2.26/2:100 f = 26.1/3:58, 26.27/77; S 3:42, 5:154, 163, 164)

3.3 ISLAND OR LAMP? In early Buddhism, the path leading to arhathood is sometimes presented as one of self-reliance (*atta, vihāra*), that is, the building up of an “inner centre of calm,”¹⁸ as seen in this quote from the opening of **the Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta** (D 26) and **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16):

Monks, be an island unto yourselves; be a refuge unto yourselves, with no other refuge. Here, monks, a monk, having put away longing and displeasure for the world, dwells contemplating the body in the body...feelings in feelings...mind in mind...mind-objects in mind-objects,¹⁹ ardent, fully aware and mindful.²⁰ Thus, monks, a monk lives as an island unto himself; as a refuge unto himself, with no other refuge.

Keep to your own pastures, monks, keep to the resort of your own fathers.²¹ If you do so, then Māra will not find a chance, he will not find an opportunity (for an attack). This is the reason, monks, for the undertaking of the wholesome states: it builds up merit.²²

¹³ “As islands unto yourselves,” Skt *ātma, dvīpa*; P *atta, dīpa*.

¹⁴ “With Dharma as an island,” Skt *dharmā, dvīpa*; P *dhammā, dīpa*.

¹⁵ DA says that “monk” (*bhikkhu*) here indicates “whoever undertakes that practice...is here included under the term *bhikkhu*.” See Dh 142; also Dh 362, 260-270. Cf *Bhikkhu Vagga* (ch 25) and *Brāhmaṇa Vagga* (ch 26) of Dh.

¹⁶ “World” (*loka*). The *Vibhaṅga* says: “This very body is the world, and the five aggregates of clinging (i.e. form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) are the world—this is called the world.” (Vbh 195). However, in his amplified tr at Vibh 105, U Thittila has “world (i.e., in ideational objects)” (*dhammā*, mental objects) (Vibh:T 139).

¹⁷ *Tamatagge*. On this difficult term, see Vajira & Story (tr *Mahā Parinibbāna S*), 1998 n20.

¹⁸ See for example Harvey 1995:54-63.

¹⁹ “Contemplating the body as body,” “contemplating feelings as feelings,” “contemplating mind as mind, and “contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects.” These are the 4 focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)! In each case, they are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso’ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self” (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhi*) (**Anattā, lakkhaṇa S**, S 3:68). These three are also known as “latent tendencies to ‘I’-making, ‘mine’-making and conceit” (*ahaṇi, kāra; mamaṇi, kāra; mānānusaya*) (M 22.15, 72.15, 112.11 20, S 2:75, 3:236, 4:41, A 1:132, 133). They are called the three obsessions (*gāha*) and are the main factors behind conception (M 1) and mental proliferation (M 18). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Bodhi 1980:8-11; Harvey 1995:32 f.

²⁰ This sentence is as at **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.1/2:290) & **Satitpaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.3/1:56). “Fully aware and mindful” *sampajāno satimā*: Vism 163 = 4.172 explains that full awareness (*sampajāñña=paññā*) has the characteristic of non-confusion; its function is to investigate and manifested as scrutiny. Mindfulness (*sati*) has the characteristic of remembering. Its function is not to forget and is manifested as guarding. *Sampajāno* is also tr as “fully understanding,” “clearly comprehending” (see Ñānamoli & Bodhi 2001 n147; also Prayudh 2001: 265).

²¹ “The resort of your own fathers,” *sake pettike visaye* (D 3:58; S 5:146; J 2:59, 6:193). alt trs “the way of your ancestors,” “your own home-ground” (PED), “in your own native beat” (Harvey 1995:54). **The Sakuṇagghi S** (S 47.6/5:147 f) explains this expression: “Not one’s own pasture...the domain of others” refers to the five strands of sense-pleasures (*pañca kāma, guṇa*), namely, the sense-objects, that is, one should not be distracted by pleasurable

(D 26.1/3:58 = 16.2.26/2:101)

The existence of two ancient Buddhist languages, Pali and Sanskrit, provides a dynamic stereoscopic panorama of Buddhism. It helps us to clear up a problem in the interpretation of this passage from the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta:

*Tasmā-t-ih'Ānanda **atta,dīpā** viharatha **atta,saraṇā anañña,saraṇā, dhamma,dīpā** dhamma,-saraṇā anañña,saraṇā.*²³

Therefore, Ānanda, live as an island unto yourself, with self as refuge, with no other refuge, the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

(D 16.2.26/2:100 f = 26.1/3:58, 26.27/77; S 3:42, 5:154, 163, 164)

Some scholars have rendered the term *dīpa* here as “light”—Rhys Davids (D:R 2:110); Fausböll (Sn:F 501)—or as “lamp” (Adikaram; Childers), probably because they are influenced by the Western saying “No man is an island” and its negative connotation. **Buddhaghosa** comments on the term *atta,-dīpa*, “with self as an island”: “What is meant by ‘self’? The mundane and supramundane Dhamma.” Therefore he says next, “with the Dhamma as an island,” etc. **Bhikkhu Bodhi** notes here that “This comment overlooks the obvious point that the Buddha is inculcating self-reliance.” (S:B 1:1055 n53).

3.3.1 Sanskrit. The Sanskrit words *dīpa* (light, lamp) and *dvīpa* (island, continent) are both rendered as *dīpa* in Pali. The Sanskritized passage of the Buddha’s last words (D 2:100) are found in the Mahāvastu, giving *dvīpa*:

ātma,dvīpa bhikṣavo viharatha ananya,dvīpāḥ ātmaśaraṇāḥ ananya,śaraṇāḥ

(Senart, *Le Mahavastu* 1: 334)

The same Sanskrit word is found in the Turfan version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra (Waldschmidt 1950-51:200).

The **Gāndhārī Dharmapada** also renders the term *dīpa* as “island” (Brough 209 f.). **The Tibetan translation** also uses “island” (*glin*), and not “a light of lamp” (*mar me*).

3.3.2 Chinese mistranslation. Zhi Fanian (Former Chin 351-394): “a light” (T 1.15b). Saṅghadeva (Later Chin 384-417) rendered it as “a lamp-light” in the Mādhy’āgama: “Make yourself a lamp-light” (T 1.645c). The Chinese Dharmapada (25, 238) also uses “light” (pointed out by PV Bapat).

However, **Guṇabhadra** (Liu Sung dynasty 420-479) rendered *dīpa* as “island” in his translation of the same passage in the Saṃyukt’āgama (T 2.8a).²⁴

3.4 THE ONLY WAY. In declaring that after his passing, **only the Dharma should be one’s refuge**,²⁵ the Buddha effectively and radically shifts the focus from the Three Refuges to **the One Refuge**—the Dharma—that is, one’s practice of the four focusses of mindfulness (*sati’paṭṭhāna*) that he often discourses on.²⁶ In this sense, it becomes clear why in the Maha Sati’paṭṭhāna Sutta (D 22), for example, the Buddha declares it to be “the only way” (*ekāyana,magga*) “for the purification of beings.”²⁷

It is important here to understand that the Buddha is referring to mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*). For mental cultivation to progress, one needs to be strongly grounded in moral virtue (*sīla*), so that such a

sense-objects. “Your own pastures...the resort of your own fathers” refers to the Stations of Mindfulness (as defined in the sutta passage here).

²² “Merit” *puñña*, “goodness-power” (Harvey 1995:54).

²³ Cf. *yo kho Vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati*, etc. S 3:120.

²⁴ G.H. Sasaki, *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought*. Delhi: MLBD, 1986: 58-63.

²⁵ *Skt dharma,śaraṇa, P dhamma.saraṇa*.

²⁶ See Piya Tan “**Was the Buddha Poisoned?**” (Lecture 10 of “The Buddha and His Disciples”), 2002 §§7b, 10b; also SD 9 Intro 13a.

²⁷ D 2:290 = 315 = M 1:55 = 63 = S 5:141 = 167 f. = 185 f. = Kvu 158 = Vism 3.

mental cultivation would lead to wisdom (*paññā*) and spiritual liberation (*vimutti*) (M 1:195-197). As such, the “only way” here does not refer to a particular “method” of meditation, whether it is called “Vipassanā” or “Satipaṭṭhāna.” The “only way” here refers to the noble eightfold path, which is clear from the Dhammapada (as Ajahn Brahmavaṃso points out):

*Maggān’atṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho
saccānaṃ caturo padā
virāgo seṭṭho dhammānaṃ
dīpadānañ ca cakkhumā.*

The best of paths is the eightfold path.
The best of truths are the four sayings [the Noble Truths].
Non-attachment is the best of states.
The best of the two-legged is the Seeing One.

*Eso’va maggo natth’añño
dassanassa visuddhiyā
etaṃhi tumhe paṭipajjatha
Mārass’etaṃ pamohanaṃ*

This indeed is the only way,
There is none other for the purity of vision:
Follow then this path:
This is the bewilderment of Māra [the Evil One].
(Dh 273 f.) [Tan 2002:19b]

It does not refer to “Vipassanā” meditation (if there is such a meditation) or one school of Buddhism to the exclusion of others. This *ekāyana* statement should be understood in the context of the Buddha’s final instruction here—and the Buddha’s prophecies of what is popularly known as **the “Dharma-ending age”** [Tan 2002, 6:21]. After the Buddha’s passing, he is no more the practitioner’s refuge as it were (not in person, anyway). As for the Saṅgha, its gradual laicization and degradation increases as the number of those who transgress the Vinaya increases and the number of arhats and Saints decrease. (Piya Tan 2002: 19b)²⁸

3.5 THE ONE REFUGE. The One Refuge—the Dharma as one’s practice—is the “one and only way.” As we have seen here the “one and only way” is the noble eightfold path, which is a statement of the four focusses of mindfulness in terms of total practice: on the interpersonal and social level (virtue), the personal level (mind or concentration), and the spiritual level (wisdom and liberation).

The “Three Refuges” of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are here conflated into the barest minimum: **oneself and Dharma**; in other words, the truth is not out there, but deep within oneself. Matthew Dillon, in his remarkable comparative study of the last days of Socrates and the Buddha in “Dialogues with Death,” remarks: “However much support may be offered by teacher and community, it all comes down to you and the Truth” (2000:547). The Buddha is dead, long live the Dharma!

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²⁸ See also **Money and Monastics** = SD 4.19-23.

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