



### Key facts:

**THE THREE JEWELS OF REFUGE** or 'The Triple Gem' are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Buddhists have a short Refuge Ceremony as babies if their family is Buddhist or when they want to make their own commitment. It means they will rely on the Three Jewels for guidance and will not harm living beings, especially human beings.

**THE BUDDHA:** It is said there have been and will be many enlightened beings but BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI was born 2500 years ago in Northern India as Prince Siddhartha ('Shakya' means born in the Shakya clan, 'Muni' means 'Wise One'). His life story shows the Buddhist path from RENUNCIATION (giving up what doesn't actually make us happy) to ENLIGHTENMENT (awakening from ignorance). The Jataka Stories tell how the Buddha took birth many times in the past as different kinds of SENTIENT BEING to show how to cherish and protect others.

**THE DHARMA** is the good advice of the Buddha. He taught **The Four Noble Truths** which are (1) suffering and (2) its cause, self-cherishing (3) liberation and (4) its cause, freedom from self-cherishing. So the purpose of the Dharma is to calm the wild mind which causes its own suffering and that of other sentient beings.

**The Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind to Dharma** are also a set of instructions shared by all Buddhists. These are: (1) Precious Human Birth (2) Impermanence (3) Karma, Cause and Effect and (4) Suffering. To understand the Dharma, Buddhists hear the teachings, think about them and meditate on them (on their Teacher's advice) and then put them into practice in everyday life situations. This creates confidence instead of blind faith. Buddhist teachings are authenticated as genuine by being passed on from a master who has truly understood their meaning to his or her student in an unbroken lineage right from the Buddha to the present day.

**THE SANGHA** are people who have TAKEN REFUGE in the Three Jewels. They may be monks and nuns or householders. Buddhists adopt the lifestyle that best suits their character and circumstances. The monastic and lay (householder) sangha support each-other to practice the THREE TRAININGS of morality, meditation and wisdom.

**THE FIVE PRECEPTS** are the simple rules for life that ordinary householder Buddhists follow. They are not to kill or harm; not to lie or deceive for one's own benefit; not to steal or take what doesn't belong to you (including shared resources); not to abuse and exploit your partner; not to get intoxicated (with drink or drugs especially).

**THE MIDDLE WAY VIEW:** Buddha taught **DEPENDENT ORIGATION** which means that everybody is connected and inter-dependent and EVERYONE MATTERS. He taught **MORALITY** - e.g. the Five Precepts - so people would create good connections (**GOOD KARMA or MERIT**) and combine **COMPASSION** and **WISDOM** in their actions. His first advice to everyone was to practice **GIVING** to those who need help and **OFFERING** to those who help us.

### Key vocabulary:

**THE THREE JEWELS OF REFUGE** (or **The Triple Gem**) are the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as below:

**THE BUDDHA:** Generally refers to the BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI. whose life is an example for all Buddhists and who taught the Dharma to liberate others

**THE DHARMA:** Buddha's teachings or 'good advice'

**THE SANGHA:** The community of all Buddhists

**MASTER, GURU, LAMA, SPIRITUAL FRIEND:** different words for Buddhist teachers who can be either male or female, monk or nun, householder or hermit

**SENTIENT BEING:** any being with a mind

**THE WHEEL OF DHARMA** means the teachings given by the Buddha to reverse **THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH** (also known as **the WHEEL OF SUFFERING**).

One of the oldest visual aids known is called **THE WHEEL OF LIFE**. It shows how the agitated and self-cherishing mind becomes re-born in states of suffering. A set of four instructions that also explains this is called **THE FOUR THOUGHTS THAT TURN THE MIND TO DHARMA**

**DEPENDENT ORIGATION:** means that everything is interconnected and no-one possesses an independent self. Therefore self-cherishing is based on ignorance.

**KARMA** is cause and effect as it applies to sentient beings. All actions have consequences, depending on whether they are based on ignorance or wisdom

**THE FIVE PRECEPTS** are the simple rules for life that ordinary householder Buddhists follow

**THE THREE TRAININGS:** Buddhists follow the path by practising **MORALITY, MEDITATION** and **WISDOM**. these work together, not independently, to develop a deep understanding of the Buddha's teachings.