

The Compassion Network

Buddhist Canonical Texts

The Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Merits of the Three Refuges, the Five Precepts, Loving-Kindness, and Detachment

Canonical Source: Taishō *Tripitaka*, Vol. 01, No. 0072

CBETA Reference: [T01n0072](#) 佛說三歸五戒慈心厭離功德經

Translator: Unknown; note appended from the Eastern Jin record

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was staying in the kingdom of Śrāvastī, at the Garden of Orphans and the Solitary.

The Buddha spoke to the elder Anāthapiṇḍada, saying:

In past times, there was a Brahmin named Velāma who gave immense gifts in charity. He bestowed 84,000 golden bowls filled with silver nuggets, and 84,000 silver bowls filled with golden nuggets. He also gave away 84,000 golden and silver bathing basins, as well as 84,000 oxen with horns caparisoned in gold and silver. He gave away 84,000 maidens adorned with fine ornaments, and 84,000 fine cushions and bedding covered with multi-colored ribbons. Likewise, he gave away 84,000 fine garments. Furthermore, he bestowed 84,000 elephants and stallions outfitted with gold and silver harness fittings, as well as 84,000 palatial mansions. Whatever possessions existed within his domain were left open for all people to take freely according to their desire. He further constructed and donated a monastery to the monastic community.

However, the merit derived from all those acts of vast charity is not equal to the merit of taking refuge in the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *Saṅgha*. One who receives the Three Refuges bestows fearlessness upon all sentient beings; thus, the merit of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *Saṅgha* is immeasurable and boundless.

Furthermore, the merit derived from all those acts of charity, combined with that of taking the Three Refuges, is not equal to the merit of receiving and observing the Five Precepts. The merit of receiving the Five Precepts is far superior.

Furthermore, the merit derived from all those acts of charity, taking the Three Refuges, and observing the Five Precepts combined is not equal to the merit of cultivating a mind of loving-kindness toward all beings, even for as brief a duration as a finger-snap.

Furthermore, the merit derived from all those acts of charity, taking the Three Refuges, observing the Five Precepts, and cultivating a mind of loving-kindness combined cannot compare to the merit of contemplating the world with weariness and detachment. Why is this so? Contemplating the absence of true delight in worldly existence enables the practitioner to permanently put an end to the suffering of cyclic existence and ultimately attain Buddhahood. Therefore, this supreme merit stands above all others.

When the elder Anāthapiṇḍada heard what the Buddha taught, he rejoiced and faithfully put it into practice.