

Training in Ethical Discipline

The Five and The Eight Rules of Training for the Laity

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Introduction

Śīla (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *prajñā* (wisdom) are three aspects of the same process, namely *citta bhāvana*, the cultivation of the mind. Neglecting one of them is like having a tripod which lacks one leg: it will never be of any use. Moreover, of the three legs of a tripod, one cannot say which one is most essential; they simply rely on each other to perform the function of the tripod.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Going for Refuge, Taking the Precepts*¹:

The path of liberation that the Buddha points to is the threefold training in moral discipline (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). These three divisions of the path rise up each in dependence upon its predecessor - concentration upon moral discipline and wisdom upon concentration. The foundation for the entire path, it can be seen, is the training in moral discipline.

The precepts (or “bases of training” as they are more specifically called in the Vinaya) are like tools for transforming the mind, and should be used together with concentration and wisdom to conduce to the final goal, liberation from suffering.

In all the scriptures, no matter to which school they belong, we can read how the Buddha always emphasized the importance of morality in mind cultivation. Not only monastic disciples, but also the laity have been honoured with the blessing of receiving from the Buddha sets of precepts as guidelines along the path to liberation. By following these guidelines, one is sure not to get lost and to gain the spiritual support needed for accomplishing the task.

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* says, “*Śīla* is the root of the unsurpassed *bodhi*; one should keep the purity of *śīla* in its completeness. If one can keep the purity of *śīla* in its completeness, all the Tathāgatas will praise him.”²

A lay person cannot claim to be a true disciple of the Buddha, be one a follower of the path to Arahantship or a follower of the path of the Bodhisattva, if one neglects taking and keeping the precept. It means that one cannot fully appreciate the whole significance of the teaching of the Buddha.

There is the mistaken opinion that to tread the Bodhisattva path one need not observe any precept, or needs observe only the so-called Bodhisattva precepts. Waving aside the fact that even those who claim to keep exclusively the Bodhisattva precepts actually totally ignore their content, nor do they make any effort to understand really what they are all about, these do not substitute the sets of five and eight precept, but usually presuppose them. One who is unable to keep the five or eight precepts (or the monastic precepts if ordained) would be even more unfit to keep correctly the Bodhisattva precept. If one cannot control the gross actions of body and speech, how can he be expected to gain proficiency in the control of his mind?

¹ Digital file. See <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>

² T09, 278, p. 433 b 13-24.

The true Bodhisattva acts with restraint in reference to body, speech, and mind. His actions are blameless. Perfection of *śīla* is one of the steps to Buddhahood and one of the *pāramitā* (the virtues to be perfected by a Bodhisattva). Which kind of perfection can anyone reach without appropriate training?

Hence, whatever the practice one wants to follow, training in morality is an essential factor of the path. *Śīla* is found in the Noble Eightfold Path as the three factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Since the Noble Eightfold Path is the foundation of every Buddhist tradition, it should be clear that to reach the goal, namely to fulfill the Noble Eightfold Path up to its consummation, includes the practice of *śīla*.

The Sūtra of the Last Exhortation of the Buddha:

Śīla is the foundation for conforming correctly to (the Path to) liberation; hence the name of *Prātimokṣa*. By relying on this *śīla* as cause, one can realize all *samādhis* and the wisdom that extinguishes suffering.³

Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra:

As the great earth is the supporting ground on which all things of every kind dwell, so is it with morality: it is the supporting ground for all wholesome *dharmas*. Moreover, wishing to walk without feet, or wishing to fly without wings, or wishing to cross (a body of water) without a boat, are impossible things. Wishing to reach a wholesome goal without morality is the same....

The scent of flower or wood cannot be sensed very far away; the scent of keeping the precepts expands through the ten directions. One who keeps the precepts gains full happiness, his good reputation is heard far away, devas and man respect and love him...⁴

For a great pernicious disease

Śīla is the good medicine.

In the midst of great terror

Śīla is the protection.

In the darkness of death

Śīla is (like) a bright light.

On an evil path

Śīla is (like) a bridge.

In the ocean of death

Śīla is (like) a big boat.⁵

³ T12, 1111, a2.

⁴ T25, p. 153 b22.

⁵ T25, p. 153 c25.

Chapter 1 - Terminology

There are three terms that need to be explained in connection with our topic, namely Vinaya, śīla and Prātimokṣa.

1- Vinaya

Bhikkhu Sujato, *Bhikkhuni Vinaya Studies*, p. 3:

Etymologically the word stems from the prefix *vi-* (= English dis-, de-), here having a separative implication; and the stem *naya*, lead. This yields the meaning ‘leading away’. In this sense, it is frequently used in a simple ethical context: *rāgavinayo*, *dosavinayo*, *mohavinayo*; the ‘leading away of greed, hatred, and delusion’. More specifically, however, *vinaya* is used in the sense of ethics, where it carries the suggestion of that which ‘leads away’ from bad behavior. This may be applied in the context of lay ethics, such as the famous *gīhivinaya* of the *Sīgāla Sutta*⁶; but normally it is a shorthand term used for Buddhist monastic discipline. Generally, all matters pertaining to monastic deportment and behavior may be considered as *vinaya*.

Vinaya is also the specific texts that deal directly with monastic conduct. Within this more narrow meaning, there are a range of texts to consider. The Buddhist texts contain many discourses that speak in every-day terms of matters of monastic life, from inspiring verses such as the famous *Rhinoceros Sutta*, to prose passages such as the three sections on ethics found in the preliminary to the Gradual Training, especially in the *Sīlakhandha* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Several Suttas address more technical matters of monastic jurisprudence, such as the discussion of the seven ways of settling disputes found in the *Sāmagāma Sutta*⁷. Usually, however, *vinaya* refers to the Vinaya Piṭaka, that is, that section of the Buddhist canon that deals extensively and in detail with monastic conduct.

Although the term Vinaya refers most specifically to the rules for monastics contained in the Vinaya Piṭaka, we can also speak about a Vinaya for the laity, in the broad sense indicated by Bikkhu Sujato in the above passage.

The base for the study of the rules of training in Chinese Tradition is found in *The Sūtra on the Characteristics of the Five Precepts*⁸, probably belonging to the *Sarvāstivāda* school and included in the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

2- Śīla

It refers to morality in its aspect of practice and cultivation. The term is actually used both in the sense of moral behaviour in general and as a synonym with *śikṣapāda* (P.: *sikkhapāda*), “base for

⁶ *Dīgha Nikāya* 31. *Dīrga Agama* 16, T1, p. 70 a20.

⁷ *Majjhima Nikāya* 104, *Madhyama Agama* 196, T1, p. 752c11.

⁸ T24, p.939. See Appendix for an integral translation.

training”, “precept”. It can be used to indicate both the monastics precepts and the precepts for the laity, in which they also constitute a “base for training”. We can in fact find the term *pañca śīla* as synonym with the term *pañca śikṣapādāni* to indicate the five precepts.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Going for Refuge, Taking the Precepts*, p.22:

The Pāli word for moral discipline, *śīla*, has three levels of meaning: (1) inner virtue, i.e., endowment with such qualities as kindness, contentment, simplicity, truthfulness, patience, etc.; (2) virtuous actions of body and speech which express those inner virtues outwardly; and (3) rules of conduct governing actions of body and speech designed to bring them into accord with the ethical ideals. These three levels are closely intertwined and not always distinguishable in individual cases. But if we isolate them, *śīla* as inner virtue can be called the aim of the training in moral discipline, *śīla* as purified actions of body and speech the manifestation of that aim, and *śīla* as rules of conduct the systematic means of actualizing the aim. Thus *śīla* as inner virtue is established by bringing our bodily and verbal actions into accord with the ethical ideals, and this is done by following the rules of conduct intended to give these ideals concrete form.⁹

3- Prātimokṣa

It is the list of the rules for the bhikṣus and the bhikṣuṇīs which is recited every fortnight on the *poṣadha* (P.: *uposattha*) ceremony. The *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* lists 250 rules for bhikṣus and 348 for bhikṣuṇīs. Chapter 7 is devoted to explain the monastic rules which are of interest for the laity.

⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 2 - Receiving the precepts

1 - Introduction

When the resolve to take upon oneself the task of training in ethics as part of the path is firmly established, the next step is to take formally the precepts.

The five precepts are usually taken as a life-long commitment, although renouncing to them and take them again afterwards is always possible. It should be remarked that a layperson needs not take all the set of five precepts, but may choose to keep even only one of them. Even keeping one single precept brings infinite merits. On this account, it is important that the layperson understands clearly the content of the rules, so that the choice can be made out of wisdom and understanding.

In many countries, the tradition wants that laypeople take the five precepts together with the Three Refuges anytime they participate in a ceremony. Nevertheless, this is done as part of the whole procedure, without any special commitment on the side of the participants. It is better to arrange a special ceremony for taking formally the Three Refuges and the five precepts as result of the real determination of keeping them as purely as possible.

The eight precept are temporary precepts. They are called the precepts of one day and night, although one may decide to keep them for longer. They entail a monastic-like life style, with the inclusion of the prohibition of taking solid food after the noon and the vow of chastity. For this reason, one may choose to keep them when residing in a monastic setting or in a meditation center. Devoted laypersons keep the eight precepts during particular days every month. Unlikely the five precepts, one takes always the whole set of the eight precepts.

2 - The aspiration

Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā:

At the moment of taking the precepts, there is no limit as to the application of not killing, not stealing, not indulging in illicit sex, not lying. Henceforth, one obtains the precepts in relation to all sentient beings. At the moment of receiving the precepts, (the officiant) should explain the Dharma to guide and advice (the aspirant), leading him (her) to develop loving kindness and compassion towards all sentient beings. Having thus developed a heightened mind, one obtains the heightened precepts. After having obtained the precepts, one obtains four precepts¹⁰ in reference to every sentient being.¹¹

The depth and the strength of the precepts that one obtains depend from one's aspiration. Before

¹⁰ The first four. The fifth, the prohibition to take alcoholics, is waved aside in which it refers to a non-sentient phenomenon.

¹¹ T23, p. 507, a9

receiving the precepts one should cultivate an all-encompassing mind, including into one's range of compassion and loving kindness all sentient and insentient beings. At the moment in which the procedure starts, one should be single-mindedly concentrated, trying to wave aside any concern for other things and any irrelevant thought, and trying to expand the mind to encompass everything according to one's vow. After having received the precepts, one should practice accordingly for nurturing the seed put in one's consciousness, so that it can yield its fruit and transform the mind.

Since sentient beings are unlimited, the precepts either are unlimited. This means that the five precept (or any other set of precepts) are only a guideline from which we should extrapolate the principles to be used in any possible occasion we meet in our daily life.

When we use the term "obtaining the precepts" we do not really speak about something obtained from outside. The mind, nurtured by understanding and by the aspiration, and the object, namely the Dharma that one is about to receive, fuse together in the act of formally receiving the precepts. In this way, it is as a seed were planted in the consciousness, whose function is that of preventing unwholesome actions by body, speech or mind, paving the way for the arising of *samādhi* and insight wisdom. This seed is called the "essence of the precepts".

If one really cultivates one's mind according to the Dharma keeping purely the precepts one has received, the flavour of one's *śīla* will radiate outside in a natural way. This is the real practice of *śīla*.

Chapter 3 -The offences and their evaluation

1- Natural prohibitions and instituted prohibitions

The training rules may be divided into two broad categories, namely natural prohibitions and instituted prohibitions.

Natural prohibitions are defined as those actions which are intrinsically negative and will inevitably yield a negative karmic result. No matter whether a Buddha appears in the world or not, the actions considered as “natural prohibitions” are deemed blameworthy even from the point of view of the common sense, and may entail a penalty by the Criminal or Civil Law.

By contrast, instituted prohibitions refer to those training rules that sanction actions that are blameworthy only in the context of the practice of the Dharma, but may be regarded as normal behaviour by common people. For example, drinking wine in reasonable amounts is usually considered socially acceptable and may even develop into a professional skill, but in the context of practice even a single drop of an alcoholic substance is considered the base for an offence. The reason is that alcohol compromises the ability of the mind to develop wisdom and may lead to uncontrolled behaviour.

One should not fall into the wrong view of considering natural prohibitions as “important”, while neglecting the practice of instituted prohibition as something accessory to the main practice. Instituted prohibitions deal quite often with more subtle defilements than natural prohibitions. This is more evident for the monastic precepts, but even a lay person who keeps the eight precepts for a period of time can appreciate a real change in one’s behaviour, which becomes more refined and mindful.

2- The offences

While fully-fledged monastics¹² have numerous categories of offences, each entailing different procedures for making amends, for lay people we can speak of only one category of offence, called wrong-doing, which can be divided into three levels of gravity, namely upper, middle and lower. Offences of the upper level are called ‘non-amendable’, while middle and lower level offences are called ‘amendable’. An offence at the upper level, as, for example, killing a human being, is the gravest.

In order to know exactly how to keep a rule of training, we have to understand what are called its characteristics. What makes up the characteristics of a precept? There are fundamentally four aspects to take into consideration:

1. The object of the transgression. As we will see more clearly when we proceed with examining the rules of training one by one, the object of the transgression is usually pivotal

¹² Sk: bhikṣu, bhikṣuṇī. P: bhikkhu, bhikkhunī.

in establishing the gravity of an offence. It is important on this regard to establish clearly the intention of the offender. If we consider as example the abstention from killing a sentient being, the offence will be different according to the intention in reference to a human being, a non-human being or an animal.

2. The steps that lead to the full offence. Any action is brought to its fulfillment through a series of preliminary stages, each constituting an offence. If the action stops before reaching the goal, the transgression will be lighter. If the goal is fulfilled, the offences at the preliminary stages are no more reckoned and one makes amends only for the root offence. Offences at the preliminary stages are divided into two levels, initial and proximate. The initial preliminary stage includes the intention of acting improperly and all the steps through which the offender starts to act bodily or verbally in order to fulfill the goal. When the intention of acting improperly appears, the offender, applying unwise attention, does not get rid of the unwholesome thoughts, but lets them proliferate and increase, up to the point when one starts to plot one's action, and starts putting in practice his project. This may involve some arrangements, like buying a weapon, or scheming the best method of stealing something, etc. The proximate preliminary stage is fulfilled when the offender is about to reach the goal. This way of analyzing the stages leading to the full offence will become clearer later.
3. The fulfillment of the goal: When the offender fulfils his goal, he commits the full offence under the precept he has transgressed.
4. The exceptions. For any rules of training there are exceptions, namely situations in which, although the result may be unwholesome, there is no transgression.

Resultant and causal offences

A resultant offence is the offence which results from fulfilling the goal, while a causal offence is an offence at the preliminary stage, which is so called because it constitutes the causal ground for fulfilling the goal.

For the same rule of training, we may have different resultant offences depending on the goal one wants to fulfill. All resultant offences have preliminary stages. An example will help clarify this topic. The first rule prohibits killing any sentient being, but there is a difference whether one wants to kill a human being or an animal: one will commit an upper level non-amendable offence if he kills a human being, and a lower level amendable offence if he kills an animal. Both are resultant offences. The second one may be also called "equivalent type of offence" in relation to the primary offence, which is killing a human being.

It is important to be able to distinguish a resultant offence from a causal one, because the evaluation of the gravity of the offence may be different in the two cases.

The same action, say killing an animal, may have different results in terms of gravity of offence whether it is a resultant or a causal one. We will explain this point by means of a diagram.

Goal	Final outcome of the action	Offence
Killing a human being	One misses the target and kills an animal instead. The goal <u>has not been fulfilled.</u>	Since against the animal there is no killing intention, there is also no offence deriving from the fact of having killed it. There is instead a <u>middle level amendable offence</u> as offence at the preliminary stage committed in the attempt of killing a human being.
Killing an animal	The animal is successfully killed. The goal <u>has been fulfilled.</u>	The animal that has been killed is the premeditated target. Having killed it, one commits a <u>lower level amendable offence.</u>

In both cases the outcome of the action is that an animal is killed, but the offence one commits is different, a causal offence in the first case, and a resultant equivalent offence in the second case.

This distinction will become clearer in the course of our discussion.

Chapter 4- Making amends

1- Introduction

a – The nature of the lay precepts

If one knows of having committed an offence, one should make amends.

The nature and function of the five and eight precepts are different from that of monastic precepts.

In speaking about nature and function of different sets of rule, we have to refer to Vinaya Master Dao Xuan¹³, according to whom the five and eight precepts belong to the transformative teaching, akin in this to the Bodhisattva precepts.

What does Master Dao Xuan mean by “transformative teaching”? This master divided all Buddhist teaching into two broad categories, namely the prescriptive teaching and the transformative teaching. The prescriptive teaching corresponds to the Vinaya for monastics, and it obeys to special rules. The transformative teaching encompasses all the rest of the Buddhist teaching and operates at a different level. It is called transformative because it operates through transformation and cultivation of the mind by means of *samādhi* and wisdom. Although *śīla* is a factor present in both aspects of the teaching, it operates according to different principles. This is the reason why the precepts for the lay lack a strict and detailed system for their application as the monastic precepts do. They should be intended more as guidelines for right behaviour, intending with this word a behaviour that enables the person to attune his life to the Dharma in order to reach the highest goal.

b – Eligibility for full ordination

According to the Theravada and Tibetan traditions, if a lay person commits one of the gravest offences – what we have called an upper level non-amendable offence – is still eligible to take full ordination if sincerely regretful. In other words, this offence is not seen as an obstacle to it.

On the opposite, in Chinese tradition such an offence is interpreted as an “excluding offence”, namely a permanent obstacle to full ordination. This is done according to a very strict interpretation that we find in the Nan Shan Vinaya school, which is based on a commentary on the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*, the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā*¹⁴.

Let’s first define what is intended as “excluding offence”. The term appears in the procedure for

¹³ Vinaya Master Dao Xuan flourished during the Tang Dynasty. He is the founder of the major Chinese Vinaya school, the Nan Shan School, named after the mountain on which the Master lived. The Nan Shan Vinaya school uses the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* as its foundation but takes into account also the other Vinayas to enlighten the topics which are not clear or missing in the *Dharmaguptaka*.

¹⁴ The *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya* is one of the five Vinayas translated in Chinese and included in the *Chinese Vinaya Piṭaka*.

bhikṣu full ordination; before one can be allowed to take the ordination, one is asked if he has ever committed an “excluding offence”. If we look at the definition in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*, we find that the only possibility to commit an “excluding offence” is to be a fully-fledged bhikṣu or bhikṣuni, namely someone who upholds the Prātimokṣa and is bound to the precepts listed therein. An “excluding offence” is a transgression of one of the precepts of the first category – a defeat - which implies permanent banishment from the saṃgha. If the offender disrobes and, later, wants to take ordination again, this cannot be given. If it is given, it is invalid.

According to this definition, an upper level non-amendable offence cannot be considered an “excluding offence”. As we will see below, a person who commits this kind of offence can still take the five precepts again after due repentance. This is consistent with the definition of “transformative teaching” which allows for more flexibility. A lay person must be allowed more latitude for learning and transforming his heart.

A contemporary Vinaya Master, Ven. Ben Yin from Taiwan, shares this opinion either. In a series of lectures that he delivered to a group of candidates to full ordination he said:

“Speaking about the excluding offenses, VM Daoxuan quoted the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā* which maintains that it does not matter if someone is a layperson holding the five precepts or the eight precepts, or a śrāmaṇera, śrāmaṇerī, or śikṣamāṇā. If he or she commits one of the four grave offenses (equal to the four defeats for a bhikṣu), he is disqualified from receiving full ordination. In the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* the concept of excluding offense is not as strict as mentioned in *Guidelines for Practicing Vinaya*¹⁵. The real meaning of “excluding offense” signifies someone who was previously a bhikṣu and violated one of the root precepts during his monastic life. After leaving the saṃgha, if he returns and requests to be ordained again, he cannot be accepted and cannot receive full ordination again.

When a householder violates one of the four root precepts, it is especially problematic. When you are in the mundane world, refraining from sexual misconduct can be a trial, and those who have received the five precepts sometimes violate this rule. Are such people excluded from ordination? I once asked some practitioners from the Tibetan tradition about this, and also discussed the issue with the upādhyāya, VM Daohai¹⁶. The consensus was that it is possible to be lenient on this issue and let them repent. Going by the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*’s definition of excluding offense, we can circumvent the extensive limitations recorded in the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā*. VM Daoxuan is relatively strict, going by the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya Vibhāṣā*’s position that anyone, including lay Buddhists, who has violated one of the root precepts, commits an excluding offense. Nevertheless, the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*’s ordination stipulations are aimed at those who have been previously ordained, which is not the case for lay Buddhists. Therefore there is still room for making amends, and we can accept these candidates without considering their transgression to be an excluding offense.”¹⁷

We can therefore conclude that an upper level non-amendable offence cannot be defined as

¹⁵ This is a work by Vinaya Master Dao Xuan.

¹⁶ Vinaya Master Dao Hai was the most senior Vinaya Master in Taiwan up to his demise, occurred on 2013.

¹⁷ This passage appears in *Karmas for the Creation of Virtue*; the translation of this passage is due to Lynne Mallinson.

“excluding offence”, thereby giving room to the possibility to ordain for those who show sincere and unmistakable regret for their acts.

A very frequent problem we can come across is that of a woman who takes the five precepts without any previous knowledge or real understanding and later in life aborts a child. Abortion is killing a human being, therefore a grave offence. It may be that this person understands her offence, makes amends and repentance and finally develops the wish to go forth. According to our definition, a preceptress can still decide to grant her ordination if she sees that her regret is sincere and genuine and her desire to go forth deeply rooted in her heart.

2- The Method

a – The different aspects of repentance

Making amends for an offence includes different aspects: the formal confession, the rituals of repentance and meditation on the nature of the offence.

b – The formal amends

The first necessary thing is assessing the offence. Lay people can ask their monastic teachers to help them in this task. We have already studied that there are three level of offences for a lay person. For the first level of offence there is a further distinction in relation to the intention behind the act: an action done with cruelty, without any sense of shame and any hesitation, habitually, with the assumption that the act is good and virtuous – namely an action driven by deeply rooted wrong views– is the gravest; on the other hand, a negative action done not habitually, whose fulfillment gives rise to remorse and sense of shame, and that is correctly perceived as unwholesome is next in gravity.

Once the offence has been assessed, one can apply the appropriate method for making amends as illustrated in the following table:

Offence		Method	
Upper level non-amendable offence	Transgression committed with the gravest of intentions	Extinction of the precepts. One has to perform rituals of repentance in front of the Buddhas of the ten directions. If he sees a propitious sign, his old precepts are restored, and one needs not take them again. If he does not see a propitious sign, after one year of repentance <u>he can take again the precepts</u> ¹⁸ .	
	Unwholesome intention of medium or lower gravity	<p>Extinction of the precepts. One can confess¹⁹ in front of four or three monastics²⁰. One pays homage to them, kneels and with the palms joined recites the following formula:</p> <p>“Venerable ones, please pay careful attention! I, upasaka (upasika) So-and-so, because of (engaging in sexual intercourse or whatever else one has done) have transgressed an upper level non-amendable offence. I now confess this offence to the Venerable ones and make repentance. I dare not do it again. May the Venerable ones remember me!” (3x)</p> <p>The officiant answers: “Restrain your mind and don’t do it again”, to which the offender answers: “I will do it.”</p> <p>After this, one can take again the precepts.</p>	
Middle level amendable offence	Preliminary offence of a root offence	Confession in front of three monastics.	<p>One pays homage, kneels and with the palms joined recites the following formula:</p> <p>“Venerable one(s), please pay careful attention! I, upasaka (upasika) So-and-so, because of (killing an insect or whatever one might have done) have transgressed a middle (lower) level amendable offence. I now in front of the Venerable one(s) confess all these offences that I transgressed since I took the precepts, I do not dare conceal them. Having confessed them, I can obtain serenity and happiness.”</p> <p>The officiant answers: “Do you see your offence?”</p> <p>Answer: “I see it.”</p> <p>Officiant: “Are you able to keep purely your precepts from now on?”</p> <p>Answer: “I am able.”</p> <p>Officiant: “Well done.”</p> <p>It is advisable to take again the precepts after the completion of the amends procedure.</p>
	Equivalent offences		
Lower level amendable offence	Preliminary offences of equivalent offences	Confession in front of one monastic.	<p>The officiant answers: “Do you see your offence?”</p> <p>Answer: “I see it.”</p> <p>Officiant: “Are you able to keep purely your precepts from now on?”</p> <p>Answer: “I am able.”</p> <p>Officiant: “Well done.”</p> <p>It is advisable to take again the precepts after the completion of the amends procedure.</p>
	Equivalent offences		

¹⁸ According to Hua Yan Master Fa Zang and Tiantai Master Yi Ji.

¹⁹ Remember that this offence is defined as ‘non-amendable’. The reason is that the precepts are extinguished when the act is fulfilled. Nevertheless, one who regrets his act should still confess it, becoming eligible to take the precepts again after due repentance.

²⁰ The term “monastics”, although originally an adjective which does not admit the plural, has become widely used in English literature to indicate an ordained person of both sexes.

If monastics are not available, one may repent in front of the Buddha. One goes in front of the altar, lights candles and/or incense, bows three times, kneels and, with the palms joined, confesses one's transgressions.

c – Rituals of repentance

The act of transgressing a precept generates two different results: one is the offence born from having gone against the teaching of the Buddha; the second is the karmic result of the act itself.

The first is attuned by making formal amends as we have already explained above; only one who has formally taken the precepts can commit an offence of this kind. Once the formal amends has been performed, and one has taken again the precepts, one has restored his purity. In this way, the offence does not constitute an obstacle anymore.

The second is proper to whoever engages in unwholesome acts, either precept holders or not, either Buddhist or not, and constitutes an obstacle to the practice of the Way. It piles up as negative karma which cannot be attuned by making formal repentance. The method of purifying it is by engaging in rituals of repentance at least for a certain period of time. The most common rituals, both in Chinese and Tibetan tradition, include the performance of prostrations, together with the recitation of appropriate mantras and prayers. The *Text of repentance of the 88 Buddhas*, the *Sūtra of the Buddha preaching the names of the Buddhas*, the *Water text of Repentance*, the *Repentance of Great Compassion*²¹ are examples of these common in Chinese tradition. In the Tibetan tradition, the Vajrasattva ritual of repentance is one of the most common.

It should be good to include in one's daily practice a ritual of this kind. Beside the negative karma that we may know of, born from actions done in this life, we inherit also the unknown one coming from our previous lives that can be purified in the same way.

d – Meditation on the nature of the offence

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* recites:

Offences arise from the mind; it is from the mind that one has to repent.

When the mind ceases, offences cease concurrently.

The mind ceased, the offences exhausted: both are empty.

This is called true repentance.

Offences are generated by speech and body, but their real origin is intention, which is a mental phenomenon. Unwholesome intentions have at their base ignorance, hatred and delusion, called the three unwholesome roots. All these phenomena, as all conditioned phenomena in the world, are dependently arising and therefore empty of an independent, autonomous self-nature. If one can awaken to the ultimately empty nature of all phenomena, included the mind, can reach utter purity of mind.

When we read 'the mind ceases' we should not think of the cessation of a 'something' called mind. What ceases upon reaching full enlightenment is the working of the conditioned mind, and the conceptual world associated with it. We speak of ceasing simply because we speak of arising,

²¹ Connected with the worship of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

but where all dualities end, there is no ceasing simply because arising is seen through as a conditioned, illusory phenomenon.

If one can reach this stage of purity, offences cease with the cessation of the illusory world build up by the *samsāric* mind.

e – Concluding summary

The three methods of repentance should always be used concurrently. They should not be intended as mutually exclusive, but as synchronized tools addressing the different aspects of the same task, namely purifying the mind. The last one, in particular, should not give rise to the illusion that one is free from guilt simply because he meditates a few hours a day: to be purified in this way means that one has reached the level of purity of an *ariya*, namely at least the first fruit.

While waiting for that, one needs to purify one's misdeeds through formal amends and rituals.

Chapter 5- Analyses of the Five Precept

1- Abstaining from killing any sentient being

I undertake the training of abstaining from killing any sentient being.

The object

In the teaching of the Buddha there are three categories of living beings, namely human beings, non-human beings and animals. Non-human beings include *devas*, *nāgas* (dragons), ghosts of every kind, and in general any kind of beings living in a sphere of existence other than human or animal. Accordingly, we have three levels of offences one may commit depending on the intention.

1. Killing a human being with the intention of killing a human being is an upper level non-amendable offence.
2. Killing a non-human being with the intention of killing a non-human being is a middle level amendable offence.
3. Killing an animal with the intention of killing an animal is a lower level amendable offence.

Killing

A - Definition of human being.

Killing a human being is the gravest transgression. The monastic Vinaya says that one is considered a human being “from the moment in which consciousness first gets established up to the last moment of consciousness”.

When does consciousness get established? In the *Assalayana sutta*, MN 93 we find this passage:

The descent into the womb takes place through the junction of these three (conditions): there is the union of mother and father, the mother is in season and the *gandhabba* is present.²²

The term *gandhabba* does not refer to the celestial being, but to the consciousness of the being to be reborn. Chinese sources of the Āgamas sometimes translate the term as ‘external consciousness’ or ‘aspiring consciousness’²³. The same passage is present also in another sutta of the same collection, namely the *Mahātaṇhasankhāya sutta*, MN 38. The *Mahānidāna sutta*, DN 15, affirms the mutual conditionality between *nāma-rūpa* and consciousness: none can exist without the other. It is therefore clear that consciousness gets established in the womb at the moment of conception.

²² Translation: Bhikkhu Anālayo.

²³ See *Rebirth and the Gandhabba*, by Bhikkhu Anālayo.

In Buddhism, the term *kalāla* is used to indicate the embryo during the first week, when the fertilized ovum starts the meiosis, or cellular division, and, through the morula stage consisting of a sphere of approximately sixteen cells, becomes a blastula, a structure in which the cells migrate on one side of the sphere letting a cavity in the middle called blastocoele. The blastula implants on the endometrium of the uterus. Consciousness is present already at the *kalāla* stage. The *Mahīśāsaka Vinaya* calls the embryo up to the 49th day a ‘pseudo human being’²⁴, which, nevertheless is all the same grounds for the gravest offence if killed according to this same Vinaya.

When does the last moment of consciousness occur? Buddhism looks at death as a process that starts when the breath stops. Consciousness is believed to leave the body not immediately but after a while, depending on various conditions, not last the level of attainment of the dying person. For this reason, it is usually advised not to touch the body of a deceased person for some hours after death so that the process of death may unfold peacefully and without traumas, until the area around the heart gets cold, which is a sign that the consciousness has left the body.

From a medical point of view, death was once defined as the cessation of breathing and cardiac activity, a concept known at present as clinical death. This has been the only criterion to declare legal death up to the advent of techniques like mechanical ventilation that may keep bodily functions like breathing going on even when the person’s brain is extensively damaged and beyond repair. For this reason, scientists have tried to find new parameters to ascertain death, particularly for legal reasons connected with organ harvesting. This led to the introduction of the concept of brain death.

In 1968 the Harvard Medical School, after a long research based on field findings, elaborated the parameters for declaring brain death, which has since then become the standard definition of death.

Brain death is defined as the complete and irreversible loss of all the functions of the entire brain, including the brainstem. The brainstem contains the centres involved in the regulation of cardiovascular system, respiration, sleep-wake cycle, pain, alertness, awareness and consciousness. Damage in the brainstem can occur for traumatic (ex. a car accident) or non-traumatic (ex. hypoxia due to cardiac arrest) injuries. When breathing – a function directly controlled by the brain-stem – stops, the brain receives no more oxygen and the damage may become irreversible if oxygen supply does not restart within 8 minutes. The heart can go on beating on its own (provided that cardiac arrest is not the cause of the injury), because it has its own electric ‘battery’ independent from brain control. Nevertheless, in the absence of ventilation and oxygen, it will stop beating altogether within one hour. Therefore, there may be a time lapse between clinical death and brain death. The assessment of brain death requires a detailed protocol aimed at testing all the vegetative functions controlled by the brainstem and the conditions of the brain protracted for many hours at regular intervals (different legislations may define different time limits). When brain death is declared, it means that the brain cannot recover anymore because the neural damage is irreversible; even with mechanical ventilation, the biological processes of the body cannot be kept running without external help in the absence of a

²⁴ T22, 8 b7.

functioning brain and, as soon as the mechanical ventilation is suspended, the body heads to the death process. Nevertheless, for a Buddhist point of view, consciousness may still be present, as already explained above.

In general, it is advisable to avoid resorting to things like mechanical ventilation and let instead the process of death unfold in its natural way, helping the dying with prayers.

Between these two time limits, one is considered a human being and any willing act ending in his death is the ground for an upper level non-amendable offence.

The same definitions may be applied to animals.

B – The action of killing

The action of killing encompasses various instances:

1. The offender personally performs the act of killing.
2. The offender instigates someone to kill, either being present on the scene and teaching step by step the performer of the act how to carry it out, or by instructing one in advance and then sending him/her to perform the act.
3. The offender hires a killer. In the case of animals, calling a disinfestations crew to get rid of rats and similar pests falls in this category.
4. The offender suggests, extols and praises death, either by speech or by writing, instigating someone to commit suicide, or to kill someone. Suggesting euthanasia, abortion or death penalty falls into this category.
5. The offender helps an aspirant suicide to prepare the devices he needs to fulfill this wish.
6. The offender intentionally gives wrong medicine to an ailing person speeding the death.

The act of killing may involve the use of weapons, poisons, or the construction of devices; in general, any means the offender devises to fulfill the goal.

Given all the conditions listed above, one commits the full offence if the being dies.

Conditions of the transgression

The conditions of the transgression are those factors whose complete fulfillment results in the full offence. The non-fulfillment of one of these conditions results in a lesser offence or in a non-offence instance.

There are five conditions for this transgression:

1. The object is a sentient being;
2. The offender perceives it as a sentient being;
3. The offender has the intention to kill;
4. The offender devises expedient means to fulfill the goal;

5. The goal is fulfilled, namely the sentient being dies.

Characteristics of the transgression

The characteristics of a transgression help us to evaluate our acts in the light of each precept and understand the kind of offence we might have committed.

The following table summarizes the possible situations depending on the intention:

Intention	Fulfilled goal	Unfulfilled goal
Killing a human being	The human being dies: upper level non-amendable offence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The human being does not die: middle level amendable offence 2. The human being dies later as a consequence of the murder attempt: upper level non-amendable offence
Killing a non-human being	The non-human being dies: middle level amendable offence	The non-human being does not die: lower level amendable offence
Killing an animal	The animal dies: lower level amendable offence	The animal does not die: lower level amendable offence

Perception

The perception of the situation is an issue in deciding the gravity of the offence. Correct or incorrect perception refer to the moment at which the act of killing is enacted. In the following table, the preliminary condition is that the offender has the intention to kill a human being and that the action is enacted. If the intention is different, the various instances may be inferred according to the same model.

Factual situation	Correct perception	Doubt	Incorrect perception
The object is a human being	One perceives the object as a human being: upper level amendable offence	One doubts whether the object is a human being: middle level amendable offence	One perceives the object as a non-human being (or an animal): middle level amendable offence
The object is a non-	One perceives the object as a non-human	One doubts whether the object is a non-human	One perceives the object as a human

human being	being: middle level amendable offence	being: lower level amendable offence	being (or an animal): lower level amendable offence
Killing an animal	One perceives the object as an animal: lower level amendable offence	One doubts whether the object is an animal: lower level amendable offence	One perceives the object as a human being (or a non-human being): lower level amendable offence

As it should be clear from the above table, the offences refer always to the original intention, as we already anticipated in Chapter 3, in the section *Resultant and Causal Offences* to which I refer.

Exceptions

There is no transgression if:

1. One kills a sentient being unintentionally hitting it with something thrown away without looking around or with something that slips from the hands during working, or when sweeping the ground, or when using a mop.
2. One is tending after a sick and, although one is very scrupulous, the being dies.

Abortion

After fertilization, the new being is called an embryo up to the eighth week. From the ninth week it is called a fetus. As already explained above, according to the Buddhist teaching, both the embryo and the fetus are sentient beings. A fertilized ovum cannot start dividing and developing if there is not a consciousness that connects with it. “With consciousness as condition, *nāma-rūpa* gets established”, the *pratītiya-samutpāda* formula recites. *Nāma* is defined in the *Sammadiṭṭhi Sutta* (MN 9) as feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention, in other words all those faculties that enter into play for the recognition and designation of all phenomena, included ourselves as cognizable phenomenon. *Rūpa* is defined in the same *sutta* as the four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements. It is not that consciousness builds up the mental and material aspects of a new being, but instead a fertilized ovum becomes the *nāma-rūpa* of a new being only if there is a consciousness that gets a footing in it²⁵.

The obvious consequence of this is that adopting whatever means to abort intentionally a child at any stage of development cannot but be considered killing.

As Buddhist, we must know that we cannot either practice or suggest abortion to anybody, not even in reference to animals. Whoever does it, at the moment in which the abortion is successful

²⁵ For detailed explanations, please refer to Bhikkhu Bodhi series of lessons on the *Majjhima Nikāya*, “Exploring the Word of the Buddha”. Eleven lessons are devoted to a detailed explanation of the *Sammadiṭṭhi Sutta*.

and the fetus dies, commits an upper level non-amendable offence.

Contraception

In Buddhism there is no prohibition whatsoever for the use of contraceptive. They are the best way of preventing unwanted pregnancies and avoid abortion.

In connection with this rule, the use of morning after pill and IUD (Intrauterine Device) can be done without worries because these do not kill the embryo but prevent fertilization.

2- Abstaining from stealing

I undertake the training of abstaining from stealing what is not given.

Stealing

According to the Vinaya, stealing encompasses whatever action that damages other peoples' properties or deprives them of their rights. It includes not only stealing in the strict sense of taking away what belongs to others, but also appropriating things in a deceptive way or destroying things belonging to others out of anger and resentment.

The sentence 'what is not given' has therefore many shadows of meaning depending on the situation.

This is the most difficult precept in the Vinaya, easy to break if one is not careful enough. It is therefore advisable that also the laity try to understand it as best as they can. In particular, those lay persons involved in managing the properties of the Saṃgha should take particular care in studying this precept carefully.

Conditions of the transgression

There are six conditions for the transgression:

1. The item has an owner;
2. One knows that there is an owner;
3. One has the intention to steal;
4. The item is worth five monetary units²⁶ or more;
5. One devises all means to achieve the goal;
6. The object is removed from its original place.

The owner

There are three categories of possible owners:

²⁶ We will elaborate on the meaning of 'five monetary units' in the discussion that follows.

1. The Three Jewels;
2. Human beings;
3. Non-human beings and animals.

➤ **The Three Jewels**

A - Buddha and Dharma

1. Objects that are used for worshipping the Buddha, like a Hall for worshipping Buddha statues, robes offered to Buddha statues, banners and similar, and objects that are used for the Dharma, like paper, ink, or cases and envelopes in which the scriptures are constantly stored and kept.
2. Objects that the donor offers specifically for purchasing what is needed for worshipping the Buddha and the Dharma, like money, jewels, fields, orchards, and similar.
3. Objects that are used every day to worship the Buddha or the Dharma, like incense, candles, flowers, banners, and whatever else.
4. In many Buddhist countries it is tradition to offer food to the Buddha every day. This food may be taken from what belongs to the Saṃgha; in this case every monastic can use it after it has been offered. Alternatively, it may have been offered specifically to the Buddha; in this case, only the attendant of the Buddha can dispose of it. The same holds true for food offered to the Dharma.

Description of the transgression

Usually, if there is a keeper, the offence is committed against the keeper. If there is no keeper, one commits the offence against the donor, because one prevents him from receiving the merits of the donation. In both cases, one may commit an upper level non-amendable offence if the object is worth five monetary units or more, or a middle level amendable offence if the object is worth less than five monetary units.

For the Dharma it is usual to judge the offence according to the value of the paper, the ink, etc., since the Dharma in itself is beyond price.

B - Saṃgha

The term saṃgha refer to the monastic community. What belongs to the Saṃgha can be used only by the members of the saṃgha and by those lay persons who reside in the monastery for a period of time and perform some services for the monastery.

There are essentially two categories of saṃgha's properties with which a lay person may get involved:

- a) Properties of the monastery.
They are confined to a fixed place, namely the monastery. Every item should be regarded as a single entity that cannot be split into parts. Moreover, they cannot be

apportioned to the single members of the community as personal possessions. Furniture, buildings, orchards, storehouses, fields, food and so on are included in this category. They have to be considered as the property of the saṃgha of the ten directions considered as a single unit.

The laity may use these properties either when they reside in a monastery.

In case of stealing, if there is a keeper, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence against the keeper if the items are worth five monetary units or more. If there is no keeper, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence against the saṃgha of the ten directions considered as a single unit if the items are worth five monetary units or more. The same evaluation is done in case of damage. If something is damaged, be it still repairable or out of repair, one should inform the person in charge and provide the means to remedy the damage or to refund the item if non repairable. If he does not, the damage becomes a case of stealing, and the offence is evaluated as above.

The karmic retribution derived from stealing the property of the saṃgha of the ten directions is extremely heavy. The *Mahāvaiṣṭya Dharani Sūtra* says, “I can still save those who have transgressed the five capital sins and the four heavy precepts, but I cannot save one who has stolen the properties of the saṃgha.”²⁷

b) Food of the monastery belonging to all the monastics of the ten directions.

All the food raw or cooked which has not yet been taken out from the storage as daily provisions for the saṃgha belongs to the monastery and is included in the category *a*). Nobody is authorized to use or consume it. The food that the authorized person has taken out from the storage as daily provisions is called ‘Food of the monastery belonging to all the monastics of the ten directions’. It may be considered as such only from the dawn up to the noon of the day in which it will be consumed. This food may be consumed by the monastics only after a signal is given (like beating two woods together or beating a gong).

Before the signal is given, the offence is against the keeper, namely the one who is in charge of managing the kitchen and the refectory and preparing the food. After the signal has been given, the offence is against the monastics of the ten directions, considered one by one. In the first case, one may commit an upper level non-amendable offence according to the value of the food. In the second case, he commits only a middle level amendable offence because the value of the food has to be divided for the number of the monastics of the ten directions.

After the monastics have taken what they need, the leftovers are given up to the laity. In this case, the food becomes the possession of the laity and any lay person can take them without transgression.

Leftovers can be offered again by a lay person to the monastery, becoming again property of the monastery (category *a*)).

In the monasteries of Chinese tradition, it is usual to store the leftovers again as property of

²⁷ T21, p.645c.

the monastery (category *a*).

Since monastics should not cook by themselves, neither have anything to do with food preparation, lay persons, if present, should be in charge of the kitchen of a temple. This task requires knowledge of the characteristics of this precept. The manager of the kitchen should, for example, be careful that nothing belonging to the temple gets rotten. If it does, unless unpredictable conditions, one should refund the temple for the loss.

The changes of ownership undergone by food are summarized in the following table:

Before dawn	Before dawn, all food has to be considered as ‘property of the monastery used by the resident saṃgha (considered collectively)’ (category <i>a</i>). Even if the person in charge may have taken out something from the fridge the day before, or may have planned to cook some particular food, since dawn has not yet come, it cannot be considered as ‘provision for the day’ (for the Vinaya, days span from one dawn to the next). Stealing food at this point is stealing property of category <i>a</i> .	
From dawn to breakfast time	Starting from dawn, the food that the person in charge has taken out as provision for the day becomes ‘property of the monastery shared by the saṃgha of the ten directions’. Before a signal is given, one who steals this food may commit a different offence according to the owner: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If there is no keeper, the offence is against the saṃgha of the ten direction, whose members are considered one by one. The value can never reach the limit of five monetary units; therefore, the offence is a middle level amendable offence.2. If there is a keeper – the chief of the kitchen, the cook, or the chief of the refectory, lay or monastic, depending on how the monastery is organized – it is against him or her that one commits the offence. If the value reaches the five monetary units, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence.	
From breakfast (signal) to lunch (signal)	When a signal is given, the food becomes the property of the saṃgha of the ten directions – the keeper is no more the owner. All monastics, resident or not, have the right to enjoy a share of it. One who steals this food commits the offence against the saṃgha of the ten directions. Since the value cannot reach the five monetary units, one commits a middle level amendable offence.	If the food is consumed without giving a signal, this configures the offence of ‘stealing the food of the saṃgha’. Since the offence is against the saṃgha of the ten directions, one commits a middle level amendable offence.
From lunch to the end of lunch		
From end of lunch to noon	Waving aside the monastics private share of the food, the rest of the leftovers are still considered property of the saṃgha of the ten directions and the offence is assessed accordingly as already explained above.	

After noon	1. If the food is given away to the laity, it becomes personal property of lay people and the offence should be assessed accordingly. This is the case of monasteries in Theravada tradition. All the leftovers become property of the laity and anybody may take them. Even animals may have a share. Monastics have nothing to do with them anymore. Alternatively, the leftovers are given back to the monastery as property of category <i>a</i> . This is the case of the majority of Chinese monasteries. Stealing them entails an upper level non-amendable offence.	
	2. If the leftover food is given back to the monastery and stored in the monastery magazine, nobody can take it. Stealing it is stealing the property of the monastery; according to the value, one may commit an upper level non-amendable offence	
	3. If the leftover food has neither been given away to the laity nor given back to the monastery yet, it has still to be considered as property of the samgha of the ten directions. If one steals it, two cases may occur:	a. if there is no keeper, the offence is against the samgha of the ten directions (middle level amendable offence).
		b. if there is a keeper, the offence is assessed according to the value as above.
4. After noon, monastics and those who have taken the eight precepts should not eat any solid food. Even giving a signal must be considered an invalid procedure. If one consumes leftover food that has not been given back to the monastery, one commits a middle level amendable offence. Taking out from the store new food for eating after noon is stealing the property of the monastery. According to the value of the items, one may commit an upper level non amendable offence.		

Note: A lay person who resides in a temple for at least two weeks and performs some duties for the temple and for the monastics has the right to use not only the food, but also what he needs for daily life, like soap, tooth paste, etc. If it is the will of the donor that everybody who lives in the temple partakes of some donations, everybody may make use of them freely.

Misuse

One particular case of stealing is misuse, namely using something belonging to one Jewel for another one. If one thinks, for example, that there is too much money deposited as property of the Buddha that may be nobody will ever use, and thinks, in total good faith, to use a part of it to provide the samgha with robes, he commits an upper level non-amendable offence.

Another case would be, for example, to use a vessel used to worship the Buddha for something else, as worshipping a Bodhisattva, or an Arahata. In this case, one commits an offence either.

Lay people who are involved in managing the monetary donations of a monastery should always be very clear about whom is the donor and about the purpose for which the donor has given the money. It is advisable, when possible, to keep a registry of the donors, supplied with the address

and the telephone number, the date of the donation, the amount and the purpose, so that in case of doubt it is always possible to trace back the donor and ask him or her. Asking the donor is the way to solve many problems. If the donor agrees to divert one's donation for a different purpose, it is all right to do it.

The monastery may also clearly announce that all the donations whose donor and purpose are not specified are intended in general for managing the monastery and providing the resident saṃgha with needed commodities.

If a donor gives a donation specifically for the Buddha, this donation cannot be used for anything else.

➤ **Human beings**

The offence in this case is committed against the owner or against the keeper if there is any. One commits an upper level non-amendable offence if the item is worth five monetary units or more, or a middle level amendable offence if the item is worth less than five monetary units.

➤ **Non-human beings and animals**

The offence against a non-human being is a middle level amendable offence; nevertheless, if there is a keeper one may commit an upper level non-amendable offence if the item is worth five monetary units or more.

The offence against an animal is a lower level amendable offence.

Intention of stealing

As specified in the conditions of the transgression, to have an offence there must be the intention to steal. The term "intention" may have different shadows of meaning, as follows:

1. Ignorance of the precept. If one violates the precept out of ignorance, as for example when the keeper of the monastery uses what belongs to the Buddha Jewel to provide the saṃgha with requisites, thinking that the Buddha has already enough of it, he commits an upper level non-amendable offence;
2. Extortion;
3. Taking advantage of one acquaintances, true or alleged, to obtain something;
4. Stealing intention as commonly intended, namely the desire of obtaining something by theft;
5. Threat. We can put into this category the case of threatening the victim with bad karmic results if he does not give donations;
6. To play the poor in order to obtain money, food or clothes;
7. To take advantage of one's position to make improper use of equipment one knows is not allowed to use for personal purposes;

Value of the object

“Five monetary units” are unfortunately quite difficult to reckon in modern currency. The term used in the Vinaya is *māsaka*, which was a currency used at the time of the Buddha. The limit of five *māsakas* was decided because in the country of Māgadha one who stole something worth five *māsakas* was put to death.

At the knowledge of the writer, there are fundamentally three different methods for establishing this value:

1. Some passages of the *Vinayas* suggest establishing as value that of an item the stealing of which would result in a heavy penalty for the offender according to the Criminal Law. The problem with this method is that different countries use different standards for judging the cases and inflicting the punishments, which means that we should use different parameters in different countries;
2. Some commentators suggest using the limit of five coins in the actual currency of the place;
3. The method usually used in Thailand is that a theft of an item worth 20 rice grains’ weight in gold, which are equivalent to 1/24th troy ounce of gold, would result in a upper level non-amendable offence. 1 troy ounce is equivalent to 31 g, so 1/24th of troy ounce is equivalent to 1.3 g.²⁸

According to this last method, we may try to calculate how much is 1/24 troy ounce of gold in Euros and US dollars:

1 troy ounce = 31 g

1/24 troy ounce = 1.3 g

1 g of gold is quoted at average 33 € or 38 \$; therefore, 1/24 troy ounce would be equivalent to 42.9 € or 49.4 \$.

This value would certainly give a reliable reference to evaluate the offence. Of course, one should consider the variations in the quotation of gold.

Removing from the original place

When all the conditions listed above are fulfilled, one commits the offence when the object is removed from its original place. Removing an object from its original place is defined differently depending on the nature of the object:

1. For objects which have a geometric form, like books, cases, television, CD players, computers and so on, the base is the place on which they lie. When the thief starts to take the object up to when the last corner is still on the base, the offence is a middle level amendable offence. The gravest offence, upper level non-amendable offence, occurs when the last corner

²⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu gives this information.

leaves the base.

2. Animals. For four legged animals, like horses or cows, the object is said to have been removed from its base when the last hoof moves a step forward. For two legged animals, like human beings or birds, the object is said to have been removed from its base when the second leg leaves the base. For multi-legged animals, the rule can be inferred.
3. Objects carried on the person. If one is carrying something and the thought of stealing it arises, if he moves the object from one part of the body to another this counts as 'removing from the original place'. For example, one is holding something with the left hand and the thought of stealing it arises. Motivated by this thought, he shifts the object to the right hand or into his pocket. At this point, all the conditions are fulfilled for the transgression of an upper level non-amendable offence.
4. For a ship, the object is said to have been removed from its original place when the rope by which it is tied to the shore is cut or unfastened.
5. Immovable objects, like fields. The object is said to have been removed when the legitimate owner yields his claims on the field to the offender after court battle or threat. A field is said to have been 'removed' also when one cheatingly changes the position of the stakes which delimit the boundary. When the last stake is moved, the conditions for an upper level non-amendable offence are fulfilled.

The examples given above may be used to infer the meaning in different cases.

Characteristics of the transgression

	Intention	Fulfilled goal	Unfulfilled goal
The offender acts alone	One wants to steal something worth five monetary units or more	If one succeeds in taking what one wants, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence	If one ends up with something worth less than five monetary units, or fails to get anything, one commits a middle level amendable offence
	One wants to steal something worth less than five monetary units	If one succeeds in taking what one wants, one commits a middle level amendable offence	If one takes something worth five monetary units or more, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence if he decides to keep the object. If he gives it back, one commits a lower level amendable offence. If one fails to get anything one commits a lower level amendable offence.
Instigation	One instigates another person to steal something	As soon as the object is removed from its original place, both	If the person who has been instructed takes something worth less than five monetary units or fails to get anything, both instigator and

	worth five monetary units or more	executor and instigator commit an upper level non-amendable offence if the item is worth five monetary units or more	executor commit a middle level amendable offence (offence at the preliminary stage) If the executor steals something different, or takes something from the wrong place or something belonging to the wrong person, going against the instruction received, for the instigator it is a middle level amendable offence (offence at the preliminary stage), while the executor may commit an upper level non-amendable offence or a middle level amendable offence according to the value of the object
Other cases	One asks another person to take something	The person who has been instructed thinks that he has been ordered to steal the item. If he takes something worth five monetary units or more, he commits an upper level non-amendable offence. For the person who has made the request there is no offence.	
	One instructs another person to steal something	The person who has been instructed thinks that he has simply been asked to take something and takes the item in good faith. If the item is worth five monetary units or more, the instigator commits an upper level non-amendable offence. For the one who has taken the item there is no offence.	

In all the above-mentioned cases, the person who has been instructed is also someone who has received the precept.

Breach of copyright, breach of trust, smuggling, tax evasion are all considered acts of stealing and the offence is evaluated as above.

Perception

Factual situation	Correct perception	Doubt	Incorrect perception
There is an owner	One knows that there is an owner: upper level non-amendable offence	One doubts whether there is an owner: middle level amendable offence	One thinks that there is no owner: no offence
There is no owner	One knows that there is no owner: no offence.	One doubts whether there is an owner: lower level amendable offence	One thinks that there is an owner: lower level amendable offence

Exceptions

1. One thinks that the object has been given to him/her;
2. One thinks that the object belongs to him/her;
3. One thinks that the object has been thrown away;
4. One thinks to borrow the object for a short while;
5. One assumes that the owner is an intimate friend and would not mind.

3- Abstaining from engaging in sexual misconduct

I undertake the training of abstaining from being engaged in sexual misconduct.

Definitions

Sexual misconduct is defined as having illicit sex with an object that is unallowable for the offender, for example someone who is already married, who is engaged, who is protected by law, who has a guardian, etc. Having promiscuous sex with different partners would also be included.

Nevertheless, having sex with one's legitimate partner is all right. Chastity for a lay person is required only if one takes the eight precepts (see below for discussion).

Genital, anal and oral sex are all instances of this precept. There must be penetration of the penis into the vagina, the anus or the mouth to have the full offence.

Non-penetrative sex entails a lesser offence.

Conditions for the transgression

➤ **1 – One actively involves in sexual misconduct**

1. The intercourse happens through the vagina, the anus or the mouth;
2. One has the desire of having intercourse;
3. One devises any means to fulfill one's desire (like making appointments, courting the other person, etc.);
4. The intercourse actually happens. One commits an upper level non-amendable offence as soon as there is penetration for as much as the tip of a hair.

➤ **2 – One is raped**

1. The intercourse happens through the vagina, the anus or the mouth. Being forced to consent or being actually raped are both included in this instance;
2. The rapist is an 'enemy'. 'Enemy' may include a stranger who uses violence and threat to

abuse the victim, or someone who was formerly sentimentally linked to the victim and abuses him/her on this ground;

3. The intercourse happens;
4. The victim feels pleasure. If the victim does not feel any pleasure at any moment of the act, there is no offence. If one feels pleasure even for an instant, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence.

Perception

The object of this precept includes beings from all categories, human beings, non-human beings and animals. Therefore, perception is not an issue in deciding the gravity of the offence.

Characteristics of the transgression

➤ **1 – One actively involves in sexual misconduct**

If there is penetration for as much as the tip of a hair, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence. If there is no penetration, one commits a middle level amendable offence (offence at the preliminary stage).

If one engages in non-penetrative sex, one commits a middle level amendable offence.

➤ **2 – One is raped**

If one does not feel any pleasure at any moment of the intercourse, there is no offence.

If one feels pleasure even for an instant, one commits an upper level non-amendable offence. If the intercourse does not happen, there is of course no offence.

Exceptions

The exceptions actually concern only the case of rape. If one is assaulted when sleeping and remains unaware, if one does not feel any pleasure, if one does not have any intention to engage in sexual intercourse, there is no transgression.

Actively engaging in sexual intercourse cannot have any exceptions.

The *Sūtra on the Characteristics of the Five Precepts*, whose translation is given in the appendix, states that a man who pays a prostitute for sex does not commit an offence. This has to do with the meaning of “marriage” at the time of the Buddha: since the man has given the prostitute the wage for her service, she can be considered his temporary wife and therefore he commits no offence. If the man deceives her and does not pay, then he will commit the full offence. Of course, this has to do with the customs of Indian society. In present days, even waving aside any discussions over the morality of this attitude, having intercourse with a prostitute would entail the transgression of the full offence.

➤ **Cohabitation**

In our society, the custom of cohabiting without being “married” in a so-called legal way has become very common, although this cannot be considered as exclusive to our western society. In a Buddhist country like Thailand, poor people have no money for formal and legal marriages; therefore, couples simply live together. This is not perceived as something perverted or unbecoming. This seems to have been the case also in ancient India at the time of the Buddha, as the case of the man paying a prostitute as “temporary wife” seem to suggest. In general, we can consider cohabitation as a marriage, therefore the members of the couple do not commit any offence by having sex.

4 – Abstaining from lying

I undertake the training of abstaining from lying.

Definition

Lie is whatever utterance which is opposite to what one actually thinks or feels, and the offender perceives it as such.

There are two categories of lies:

1. Great lie. It is a lie about one’s spiritual attainments. One, for example, affirms to have attained one of the four paths or fruitions, to be able to reach the four levels of *dhyāna*, or the four immaterial attainments, or affirms that the *devas* come to pay homage to him, or that he has gained spiritual powers through practice, etc. The aim of these lies is to attract supporters and gain fame. The Buddha calls the persons who make such claims the greatest of thieves, because they steal the donations of the faithful. They sow bad karma for themselves and for their followers.
2. Common lie. It is a lie about one’s own perception or knowledge of things, for example, when one says to have seen what he has not, or to have not seen what he has; he says to like what he dislikes and vice versa; he says to desire what he does not and vice versa.

The Vinaya Master Dao Xuan writes:

Notes on the Practice of the Vinaya: “The analysis of the transgression does not take into any account the objective situation, but always looks at the intention of the speaker. If what he says is contrary to what he thinks, even if the content of his statement corresponds to the actual situation, it is a transgression.”²⁹

²⁹ Book 22, p. 1b.

Conditions of the transgression

➤ 1) **Great lie:**

1. The listener is a human being;
2. One perceives him as a human being;
3. The claimed attainment is false;
4. One knows that one claimed attainment is false (the case of overestimation is an exception);
5. One has the intention to deceive the hearer;
6. One speaks about superhuman attainments;
7. One claims to have obtained them;
8. The words are clear and understandable;
9. The hearer understands.

➤ 2) **Common lie**

1. The listener is a human being;
2. One perceives him as a human being;
3. One says something that does not correspond to what one thinks or perceives;
4. One knows that what one says does not correspond to what one thinks or perceives;
5. The utterance is clear;
6. The listener understands.

Characteristics of the transgression

➤ **Great lie**

One claims to have realized super human states	1. By speaking directly	To a human being, perceiving it as a human being	The person understands	Upper level non-amendable offence
	2. By giving a token of agreement		The person does not understand	Middle level amendable offence
		3. By sending a proxy	The being understands	
			4. By writing the claim	To non-human beings, like devas, yakṣas, pretas, etc. To animals who have metamorphic powers and understand human speech
	5. By making a gesture of acknowledgment	To common animals that have no metamorphic powers	Whether it understands or not	Lower level amendable offence

If one, when asked if he has realized the Way, remains silent or shows some ambiguous gesture	Middle level amendable offence because the meaning is not clear
If one is in an isolated place, perceiving it as non-isolated, and claims, "I have realized super human states"	Middle level amendable offence
If one is in a non-isolated pace, but perceives it as isolated, and claims, "I have realized super human states",	

➤ **2) Common lie**

By telling a common lie, one commits a middle level amendable offence.

Harsh speech, divisive talk, idle chat

These three instances are not explicitly mentioned in the text of the precept. Nevertheless, the practitioners should train in them according to what the Buddha himself taught and that is recorded in the Sūtras and the Vinayas.

1. **Harsh speech**. The Vinaya lists various ways in which a person can insult another, for example, by mentioning his origins, if they are humble, or his activity, if this activity is perceived as very mean, or by mentioning some physical problems the victim may have, or by mentioning his/her defilements (may be the victim is prone to anger or jealousy).
2. **Divisive talk**. Divisive talk is aimed at creating division, as the term itself suggests. The offender tries to stir up a conflict between two parties that are living harmoniously, by reporting separately to the two parties what the other has said. The result is to first create suspicion which later may result in open conflict.
3. **Idle chat**. It is a talk on a topic that is not Dharma, which means that for the majority of our time we are involved in this kind of talk. The Buddha describes idle chat as talk about politics, about wars, about thieves, about men, about women, about music and arts, gossip, etc.

The *Saleyyaka sutta*, belonging to the Middle-Length discourses collection describes in detail how to cultivate the karma of speech in a wholesome way. The reader can find it in the Appendix.

If one finds oneself guilty of a transgression in this connection, one may make amends for a lower level amendable offence.

Exceptions

➤ **1) Great lie**

1. Overestimation;
2. If one does have some super natural powers, like seeing beings on other planes of existence, but one admits that they come simply from karmic retribution and are not the fruit of cultivation;

3. If one has really realized super human attainments and he reveals it to someone who can understand, namely someone who has similar experiences³⁰;
4. When, speaking about the five Spiritual Faculties, the five Mental Powers, enlightenment, liberation, *samādhi*, *samāpatti*, one does not say that he has attained these states;
5. If one speaks for fun, or too hastily, or to himself in a secluded place, or in a dream, or says something unintentionally by mistake.

➤ 2) **Common lie**

If one speaks truly according to the situation.

5 – Abstaining from drinking alcoholics

I undertake the training of abstaining from drinking alcoholics.

Definition

Alcoholic drink is a drink which has three characteristics, namely the colour, the taste and the flavour of alcohol, and has the power to drive a man drunk. There are alcoholics drinks made through the fermentation of grains, like rice, barley, sorghum, etc. Other alcoholics drinks are made from roots, stalks, leaves, flowers, fruits or even various types of seeds, or medical herbs. For example, there is a drink which is made by letting pine leaves ferment in a solution with sugar and water. The alcoholic juice thereby obtained is diluted in water.

Whatever drink that has the three characteristics and has the power to drive a man drunk cannot be assumed. Even if a drink is defined as non-alcoholic, as far as it meets these characteristics it must be considered unallowable.

Conditions of the transgression

1. It is an alcoholic substance (see above for the definition);
2. There is not the exception of a serious disease;
3. One transgresses a middle level amendable offence for every sip.

Characteristics of the transgression

If one drinks wine, wine decoctions, or mixtures of different alcoholics, as cocktails, one commits a middle level amendable offence.

Perception

If the substance is alcoholic, one commits a middle level amendable offence no matter whether

³⁰ The Buddha discouraged his disciples from claiming superhuman attainments. Monks and nuns commit an offence if they reveal their attainments to someone who is not in the condition to understand.

one perceives it as alcoholic, or doubts whether it is alcoholic or even if one perceives it as non-alcoholic.

If the substance is non-alcoholic, one commits a lower level amendable offence whether one perceives that it is alcoholic or doubts that it is non-alcoholic.

Exceptions

The only exception concerns the case of someone who has a disease that cannot be cured with anything else and uses the alcoholic drink as a medicine.

Note: All substances like hallucinogens, narcotics, intoxicants, which compromise in some way the clarity of the mind and diminish the sense of shame, becoming an obstacle to meditation and to the development of wisdom, may be included in this precept. Smoking should also be included, in which the nicotine of tobacco, an alkaloid, can give dependence as any other drug, compromising the normal functionality of the brain.

Chapter 6 – Analysis of the Eight Precept

These are the eight precepts:

- 1 - I undertake the training of abstaining from killing any sentient being.
- 2 - I undertake the training of abstaining from stealing what is not given.
- 3 - I undertake the training of abstaining from sexual intercourse.
- 4 - I undertake the training of abstaining from lying.
- 5 - I undertake the training of abstaining from drinking alcoholics.
- 6 - I undertake the training of abstaining from eating at improper times.
- 7 - I undertake the training of abstaining from dancing, singing, music, shows, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying myself with cosmetics.
- 8 - I undertake the training of abstaining from using high and large seats and beds.

The first five precepts are in common with the set of five, with the exception of the third, which requires the complete abandonment of any sexual activity, even with one's legitimate partner. It is in other words the same vow of chastity made by monks and nuns. As already explained, the eight precepts are taken up by a lay person for a limited period of time, usually in a monastic setting or during intense meditation retreats. The meaning of the vow of chastity for the laity has to be understood in this context. Sexual desire is what keeps us chained to the round of rebirths and a major obstacle in calming the mind; hence, it should be controlled and abandoned when one is engaged in intensive meditation practice.

Let's than move on and examine the other three precepts.

1 - Abstaining from eating at improper time

I undertake the training of abstaining from eating at improper times.

Definitions

➤ **Proper time**

This precept has been instituted for monastics disciples. The “proper time” is the period from dawn to noon. At present, we consider the nautical crepuscule - the one that best approaches the definition of dawn given in the Vinaya - and the solar noon - that is the instant at which the sun is perpendicular over the meridian of the place - as the terms between which one can consume the meals.

The reasons for instituting this precept for monastics are as follows:

- 1- Since monastic disciples depend on the laity for their needs, it is improper for them to

bother the donors with continuous requests of food;

2 - Going on alms round in the evening may put in danger the vow of celibacy, as well as life;

3 – Food, like sex, is one of our most deeply ingrained addictions. With the apparent pretext of bodily needs, the mind has the habit to indulge on it frequently.

For lay people the last reason becomes prominent. In training to abstain from eating at improper times one can become aware of how much power the desire for food has on our mind, and of the fact that actually our body needs less than we think. The time spared from preparing food can be used in the cultivation of the Path.

➤ **The categories of edibles**

To abstain from eating at improper times does not mean that one has to starve. There are some edibles that are allowed outside the so called proper time. For monastics, edibles are classified into four categories:

1. *Yāvakālika* (limited up to noon)

These edibles can be eaten from dawn to noon. This is called ‘proper time’. The period from noon to the next day before dawn is called ‘improper time’.

They fall into two broad categories:

Bhojana (staple food)	Cooked grains. In this category are included rice, barley, millet, oats, Job’s tears, wheat, sorghum, any grain that comes from grass.
	<i>Kummasa</i> . According to the <i>Vinayamukha</i> ³¹ , this is a staple food made of flour, beans or sesame seeds.
	<i>Sattu</i> . “Any of the seven types of grain dried or roasted and pounded into meal.”
	Fish
	Meat. The Vinaya allows eating the flesh of almost all animals, except human beings, elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, lions, tigers, leopards, bears, and Hyenas (panthers). The meat has to be eaten cooked; uncooked meat is considered unallowable. The countries in which the custom of going on alms round is still the everyday practice of monastics, vegetarianism is not common.
Khadiniya (chewable or non-staple food).	Whatever edible outside staple food, can be put in this category. The Chinese Vinaya lists five categories: roots, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits. Into this categories are included also flours and baked products, milk and dairy products (like milk, butter, curds), rock candy ³² , oil, sesame seeds, and so on.

³¹ The *Vinayamukha* is a contemporary Thai Vinaya commentary.

³² The rock candy is obtained from the juice of the sugar cane, with the addition of glutinous rice.

Notes:

1. Rice gruel. Rice gruel partakes of both categories. If it is sufficiently diluted, it is considered non-staple food, but if it is too thick, it is considered staple food.
2. Flour products. Usually, flour products, for example bread, cakes, and similar, are considered non-staple food.

2. Yāmakālika (Juice drinks or drinks which can be taken after noon)

The life span of juice drinks ranges from noon to the following day before dawn. This is called ‘proper time’. The ‘improper time’ starts from the dawn of the following day.

We include in this category:

1. The juice obtained from various fruits, or sugar cane;
2. The water obtained by boiling grains and legumes, provided that the seeds remain intact. If the seeds break, this product must be considered *yāvakālika* and cannot be eaten after noon.
3. The tonics (see below for definition) diluted in water are considered *yāmakālika*.
4. The juice of various species of gourds is **not** allowed as *yāmakālika*, for example watermelon, sweet gourd, and white gourd, because the drags are difficult to separate.
5. Coconut water, which is usually obtained from young coconuts that have almost no meat, is allowed. It is actually a very common drink in tropical countries. On the other hand, coconut milk, which is obtained by smashing the meat of the coconut, is **not** allowed as *yāmakālika*.

If the juice is boiled, it cannot be considered anymore *yāmakālika*, because it becomes too thick.

Juice must be strained before being drunk, to eliminate the dregs.

Juice has to be “purified” by adding to it some water. A single drop of water is enough; even some rain’s drops falling into the juice can do the job. The meaning is symbolic: by altering the flavour of the substance, one should diminish one’s attachment to the taste of it.

3. Sattāhakālika (Tonics or medicines limited to seven days)

The life span of tonics ranges for seven days, reckoned from the day on which they have been determined as such up to the dawn of the eighth day. This is called ‘proper time’. The ‘improper time’ starts at the dawn of the eighth day.

The main characteristic of the edibles falling in this category is that they are tasty and particularly flavoured. Their composition has a prevalence of carbohydrates and/or fats.

There are five tonics described in the Vinayas:

- 1) **Ghee**. Traditionally, ghee is made from butter churned out of Indian yogurt (*dadhi* or *dahi*,

curd). This butter is boiled and constantly stirred until all the water is evaporated. Then, further heated to get a pleasant flavor, slightly cooled and filtered through muslin to remove sediment. (source: Food-India.com)

2) Butter. In the West, we intend for butter the product obtained by churning cream, but, actually, the term used is the Vinaya is *navanīta*. This is an Indian sort of butter obtained from curd and not from cream, as Ajahn Brahmavamsa describes in his Vinaya Notes:

“*Navanīta* is neither butter, nor cheese. In the villages of India it is still made, according to one recent eye-witness, as follow:

”You take a pot of curd and add a small amount of cold water and twirl it round with a stick rubbed between the hands. On the working end of the stick is a lump of wood with grooves in it; if you imagine an orange with alternate segments removed, it might give you some idea. After twirling for a few minutes, you add some more cold water and continue twirling, doing this several times until you have added approximately an equal part of water to the curd. The *navanīta* gradually rises to the surface and they skim it off. It can then be heated and skimmed in the usual way to make ghee”.

The instrument used to churn the curd into *navanīta* is reproduced in this photo:



The curd is obtained from the milk by letting it sit for a certain time till the proteins of the milk (mainly casein) precipitate due to the acidification of the environment caused by the fermentation of the lactose into lactic acid processed by the bacteria that are naturally present in milk. This curd is also known as traditional buttermilk, or yoghurt. In India is called *dahi*, which is related to the Sanskrit and Pāli word *dadhi*, the word found in the Vinaya to define this dairy product.

By letting the milk sit for some hours, the fat fraction of the milk gets naturally separated from the rest and can be skimmed out as cream (to speed the process at an industrial level, the separation of cream from milk is done artificially by centrifugation). By churning the cream, we obtain the butter we normally know in the West.

All the above described dairy products, namely butter, *navanīta* and ghee can be consumed as medicine for seven days.

3) Oil includes a number of oils obtained from seeds, like olive oil, sesame oil or mustard oil, or from the tallow of bear, pig, fish and donkey;

4) Honey;

5) Sugar/molasses: all kind of sweeteners. Artificial sweeteners can be included in this category, although some interpreters affirm that if the sweetener is used as a medicine, as in the case of sweeteners for diabetics, it can be taken as medicine for the life.

4. *Yāvajīvika* (Medicines for the life)

The edibles which are included in this category have an undetermined life span. Three are the

conditions by which the life span expires:

1. the medicine finishes;
2. the ailment is cured;
3. the owner dies.

The main characteristic of these edibles is that they have not an appealing taste, they are bitter, or salty, or too sweet.

They are usually grouped into six categories:

1. Roots, as, for example, turmeric or ginger;
2. Decoctions obtained from plants, for example tea;
3. Leaves;
4. Fruits (peppers, *Artemisia vulgaris*)
5. Resins (*Asafoetida*, *Ferula* spp.,)
6. Salts.

As a general rule, all the edibles that do not fit into the previous three categories, usually fit here.

Pepper, pure black cocoa, black chocolate (without any milk), cinnamon, teas of various types, black coffee³³ all fall into this category.

5. Mixtures

There are basically two criteria to classify mixtures of different edibles:

1. The substances are present in different concentration. In this case, the medicine is determined according to the edible which is more concentrated. For example, if one adds some jujube fruit to an edible classified as medicine for the life, the resulting compound may be determined as medicine for the life. This may happen with Chinese medicines.
2. All the substances which form the compound are present in similar concentration. In this case the medicine may be classified according to the following hierarchy of edibles:

➤ *Yāvakālika* ➤ *Yāmakālika* ➤➤ *Sattāhakālika* ➤ *Yāvajīvika* ➤

Note

The need of classifying edibles into four categories comes from the monastic Vinaya rules. Although these rules do not apply for lay people, one who keeps the eight precepts may utilize the same standards in studying this rule and make use of the edibles listed as juice drinks, tonics or medicines for the life outside the proper time if one feels the need.

³³ Without sugar. If sugar is added, the coffee becomes *sattāhakālika*.

The offence

If one eats outside the proper time knowingly, one commits a lower middle amendable offence.

2- Abstaining from dancing, etc.

I undertake the training of abstaining from dancing, singing, music, shows, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying myself with cosmetics.

The reason for this precept is clear: the activities listed in the text carry the mind away from its task. Moreover, they may become a disturbance to other practitioners living in the same environment.

Perfumes may be quite a nuisance, particularly for those, like monastics, who are no more accustomed to make use of them. Lay people may not be so sensitive to it, particularly if they make normally use of perfumed substances.

For all these actions, one makes amends for a lower level amendable offence.

3- Abstaining from using high seats

I undertake the training of abstaining from using high and large seats and beds.

In the monastic Vinaya, the maximum height for the leg of a bed is around 40 cm, excluded the peg to be put into the insertion socket. At the time of the Buddha - as in many countries nowadays – people used to sit on the ground and the use of high seats and beds was reserved to influential people, like rulers or rich notables. The use of this furniture by monks was therefore seen as a demonstration of haughtiness, and consequently criticized. The Buddha, prompted by the criticism, instituted a precept for monastics by which it is forbidden to use a bed or a chair whose legs are higher than 40 cm.

At present, people normally use chairs and beds that are higher than what is established in the Vinaya without considering this a manifestation of undue pride. The rule can be understood as preventing the use of luxurious furniture, upholstered with soft and expensive material that makes it too comfortable and above the standards of average people.

For all these actions, one makes amends for a lower level amendable offence.

Chapter 7 – The monastic Vinaya

The Buddha created a system by which the monastic saṃgha depends on the laity for its survival, and the laity depend on the saṃgha for their spiritual support. The harmonious relationship between monastics and lay supporters is what grants the survival of the Buddhadharma in the world.

According to what is recorded in the Vinaya, the Buddhadharma will survive in the world only if there will be a monastic saṃgha still capable of upholding purely the precepts, of restoring its purity and granting ordination. The laity play a fundamental role in this perspective in which many of the monastics precepts need the help of lay persons to be implemented. Hence, both monastics and lay people share the responsibility of granting the abiding of the Buddha's dispensation in this world.

This chapter is devoted to explain to the laity the monastic precepts of their concern and to give some instructions on how to help monastics keeping them.

Why instituting the precepts?

When the Buddha first started to institute the precepts in response to the unbecoming behaviour of his monastic disciples, he outlined ten functions that they fulfill:

1. Allowing sentient beings to become part of the saṃgha. It is by being ordained according to the rules of the Vinaya that one becomes a bhikṣu or a bhikṣuṇī, and it is by promising to undertake the training according to the Prātimokṣa that one shares the same lifestyle with the other monastics. The Vinaya is therefore what specifically characterizes the monastic lifestyle as different from that of lay people and it is the glue that keeps together a monastic community. Without Vinaya, there cannot exist any monastic saṃgha, and without monastic saṃgha, the Buddhadharma cannot manifest in the world.
2. Letting the saṃgha rejoice. By managing all communal and personal matters according to the rules of the Vinaya, by reciting in harmony the Prātimokṣa every fortnight, by sharing fairly the requisites and the donations, by harmonizing through body, speech and mind, the community is without quarrels and disputes.
3. Letting the saṃgha be peaceful. The absence of disputes creates an environment in which the mind settles down. All members respect each other according to the rules of seniority, the elder members showing compassion towards the junior members, and these showing reverence towards those. This harmony created by equally respecting and upholding the Vinaya is what ensures the right conditions by which the practice of every single member of the saṃgha can develop. The laity either can enjoy this peaceful and tranquil atmosphere so conducive to meditation by living in the monastery for a period of time. The support they give in terms of practical managing and help in the implementation of the Prātimokṣa rules is paid back through the same possibility of growing in the Dharma that such a place can offer.

4. Inspiring faith in those who lack faith. A monk or a nun who keeps the Vinaya should develop a dignified and composed demeanour which reflects the inner harmony. Some people may be naturally attracted by it and spurred to investigate deeper into the teaching, or even embracing it and following the practice.
5. Increasing the faith of the believers. Those who are already Buddhist can be even more inspired by those monks and nuns who are “restrained by the restraint of the Prātimokṣa”, as the scriptures recite, and take them as examples to follow in their own quest to enlightenment.
6. Restraining those who are difficult to restrain. The undisciplined individuals who are present in the saṃgha, as they are in every human society, can be submitted to various kinds of disciplinary actions which aim at curbing their pride and correcting their distorted views. Disciplinary actions in the Vinaya are different from the rules found in the Criminal and Civil Code, in which they have compassion as their guideline, and a genuine concern for ensuring that the culprit mends his ways and comes back to the correct path.
7. Letting those who have sense of shame feel peaceful and in harmony. In keeping the Vinaya rules, it is possible that one transgresses some of them. This engenders remorse in those who have sense of shame. Nevertheless, the Vinaya offers the methods to make amends for the faults, restoring in this way one’s purity and peace of mind.
8. Eradicating the present outflows. *Outflows* translates the term *āsava*. The *āsavas* constitute the most primordial level of defilements that keep us chained in *samsāra*. They are usually listed as three, namely ignorance, sensual desire and desire for existence. They may be translated as “outflows” as well as “inflows”, according to the point of view from which one considers the question: they may be viewed as “flowing out” from the mind into the sensory world through the senses, or they may be seen as “flowing into” every moment of our sensory experience. By restraining oneself and following the rules of the Vinaya, one minimizes more and more the chances to nurture further the *āsavas*, preventing unwholesome karmic results in future lives.
9. Eradicating the future outflows. Sense restraint through the rules of the Vinaya used together with an object of meditation is the first step of the “gradual training” whose final outcome is the total eradication of the outflows and liberation from *samsāric* existence.
10. Letting the Correct Dharma abide long in the world. Given the above nine conditions, the Correct Dharma can be preserved in the world for long time. This peculiar function is proper only to the monastic Vinaya. The lay precepts do not share this function. This is one of the main reasons why both monastics and laypeople should make an effort to keep the monastic Vinaya alive.

Is keeping the precepts possible in our modern age?

One of the critiques levelled against the Vinaya is that it proposes a lifestyle that is anachronistic and at a far remove from the standards of our society, inspired as it is by Indian lore and consuetude. In recent years, there have been even attempts at “reforming” the Vinaya system in a way that, in the mind of the proponents, fits better our modern society.

Although it is true that many rules that we find in the Vinaya have a direct connection with the customs of Indian society, the Vinaya constitutes an organic whole, whose study and practical implementation in the everyday life of the single monastic and of the community as a whole helps in bringing about the wanted result: liberation from suffering.

More often than not, those who speak about the limits of Vinaya do not really study it, let alone try to put it into practice. Understanding the Vinaya – its principles and practice – , although inseparable from a certain amount of intellectual information and study, is much more a question of interiorizing its meaning through repeated practice in a monastic environment, where the student can follow the example of those who have been already permeated by it in the course of many years of devoted cultivation. Only in this way does the Vinaya melt into the whole of one’s life as a monastic and can fulfill the role of becoming the base for the development of *samādhī* and wisdom. Only in this way can one feel the special flavour of the Vinaya, which is nothing but the flavour of the Dharma.

Studying the Vinaya, before being the mere understanding of a list of rules, gives us certain standards and general principles by which we can act for the benefit of ourselves, of the monastic community and of all beings according to the logic of the Dharma, and not to the logic of the world. This is why, even in our modern society, the effort of keeping the Vinaya pure and alive is far from being devoid of meaning.

The Buddha created a monastic system that has the Vinaya as its constitution and is consistent and complete in itself. There is no need of “reforms”; it is enough to understand correctly its spirit. This will guide us to make right choices even in front of situation the Buddha could not speak about because they were not present at his times.

Sometimes lay people are annoyed by the amount of rules monastics have to keep and that require their help. It takes time for them to understand what they can get by offering food to a monastic even when the food is just ready on the table. “Take it by yourself! Why do you always need a servant?” Some people – particularly Westerners - think that Buddhism is not egalitarian, in which it puts them in a subordinate position to the monastics. How to answer this mistaken assumption depends very much on how monastics act and explain the question. Monastics have the duty to explain their rules in a way that is acceptable and comprehensible and to motivate people initially through their own behaviour.

A lay person who understands why the Vinaya has to be kept as pure as possible and volunteers to offer his help to this goal is cultivating merits and putting the base for his own spiritual progress.

The duties of the saṃgha

1 - The poṣadha ceremony

The Buddha established that the monastic saṃgha, bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇīs separately, has to meet on the days of the full and new moon to recite in full the *Prātimokṣa*, the list of 250 rules for bhikṣus and 348 rules for bhikṣuṇīs³⁴.

The meaning of this ceremony is twofold: on one side, the saṃgha restores its purity through the self-examination and mutual confession among its members; on the other side, the members of the saṃgha memorize every fifteen days the rules they vowed to keep.

The ceremony is usually preceded by an announcement at breakfast hour indicating the hour and the place of the meeting. Usually, the poṣadha ceremony is held in the Main Hall. Some temples, particularly in the Southern tradition (Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka), may have a separate Poṣadha Hall.

At the appointed time, the monastic community gathers. All those fully-fledged monastics who are present in the territory of the monastery have the duty to attend the ceremony.

One of the bhikṣus/ṇīs is appointed as reciter and ascends the seat prepared for the Prātimokṣa reciter. The person that recites the Prātimokṣa should sit in a higher position than those who listen.

If there are non-fully ordained monastics – śikṣamāṇās, śrāmaṇeras, śrāmaṇerīs – they enter the Hall together with the rest of the community, but, after having declared their purity to the fully fledged saṃgha, they are invited to leave. The recitation goes on without them. In fact, a person who is not fully ordained cannot listen to the recitation of the Prātimokṣa. If one sneaks inside to listen without anybody knowing, this is called ‘affiliation by theft’ and constitutes a permanent obstacle to full ordination.

After their leave, the reciter starts with the ceremony. The Prātimokṣa is usually recited by heart.

On the day of *poṣadha*, the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha has to go to the bhikṣu saṃgha to ask for instruction. One bhikṣuṇī is appointed and goes to the bhikṣu saṃgha with a companion to ask that a monk be appointed for going to the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha for teaching. The next day the bhikṣu saṃgha informs the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha about the result of their request. If someone has been appointed, the details of the lesson, date and hour, will be communicated to the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha at a later time.

2 - The summer retreat (*varśa*)

The most important meeting of the saṃgha during the year is the summer retreat, also known as rains retreat, because in India and Southeastern Asia this period corresponds to the rainy season.

At the beginning of the history of the Buddhist saṃgha, the monks were used to wander around at any season. Nevertheless, this habit during the rainy season was particularly troublesome:

³⁴ According to the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*. Different Vinayas have a different number of rules.

monks risked losing all their belongings – eminently robes and bowl – in the floods, and their wondering met the annoyance of people. The rainy season is in fact the seeding time and the period when vegetation starts growing after the long drought of the hot season. The monks in their wandering stepped over the crops and the sprouts, damaging them.

Prompted by the complaints of people, the Buddha, following a practice already established among groups of non-Buddhist contemplatives, laid down a rule by which during the rainy season every monk or nun needs to find a fixed residence for three months and engage in intensive practice.

The three months are reckoned by the lunar calendar, from the full moon of the 4th month, to the full moon of the 7th month. For the Chinese lunar calendar, the period ranges from mid May to the end of July. In Thailand, since the Thai New Year starts in April, the period is between mid July to October.

A monk or nun may choose his/her residence in a monastery, a hermitage, a private house or even under a tree. There is therefore no fixed rule for what concerns the type of residence.

According to the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*, there are three possibilities for starting the retreat:

1. The first retreat: from the 16th of the 4th month up to before the dawn of the next day. This is the official opening of the summer retreat. Usually, all monks and nuns, unless they have some special problems, should start on this day. According to the Vinaya, the days last from one dawn to the next. Therefore, the dawn of the 17th marks the end of the 16th.
2. The intermediate retreat: from the 17th of the 4th month to the 15th of the 5th month. If someone has some difficulties starting on the 16th of the 4th month, he or she has an entire month to manage one's business and reach his/hers residence. One may enter the retreat on any day from the first to the last.
3. The last retreat: on the 16th of the 5th month, ending before the dawn of the 17th. This is the last possible day to enter the retreat.

If one does not enter the retreat even on the last day, one commits an offence and cannot reckon that retreat on one's monastic age. Monastic age is in fact reckoned in varśas. If a bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī says to have five varśas, it means that, from the full ordination, he/she has participated in the retreat and has completed it five times. Varśas do not always correspond to the 'years' as we are used for indicating the age of people. If, for example, someone gets full ordination on the 14th of the 4th month and starts his first retreat on the next day, at the end of it he will already have one varśa.

During the retreat, one is not expected to leave the monastery. Nevertheless, sometimes there may be the need to go on errands, either for public business or for one's private necessities. In this case, it is possible to ask for the so-called 'one-week leave'. As soon as one has managed the question, one should immediately return to one's residence even if the week is not yet expired.

3 - The pravāraṇā ceremony

On the last day of the summer retreat, the 15th of the 7th month, the saṃgha meet to restore their purity, to make public confession of any mistakes they might have committed, and, most

important, they publicly invite the rest of the community to reveal any offence they might have seen, heard, or suspected him/her to commit. *Pravāraṇā* in fact is a word that means invitation. This is the pivot of the ceremony.

The public confession is held at the end of the summer retreat and not before for two reasons: one is to avoid conflicts and animosity bursting in the community and undermining its peace, thereby compromising the retreat; the second is to let enough time to people to know each other. The participants to the retreat are usually monks that gather just on this occasion and may not know each other. Criticism may therefore be unwelcome or even unfounded precisely because of this reason. After three months of life together, everyone is in a better position to express his opinion on another person's behaviour.

Nevertheless, not all monastics can criticize the others at random. The ceremony provides for the appointment of one or more members that are called 'those endowed with the five virtues' and who are the only qualified to criticize or accuse the others of an offence. The five virtues mentioned concerns their ability of being unbiased, of being well learned and being compassionate enough to give wise advice to the potential offenders. The other members of the community, one by one, kneel in front of this person and, loudly, in a way that everybody in the community can listen, invites him/her to speak out any offence he/she might have seen, heard or suspected the person to commit.

The bhikṣuṇī saṃgha has a double ceremony. First, one bhikṣuṇī is appointed to go to the bhikṣu saṃgha with a companion to invite the bhikṣu saṃgha. After this first part is concluded, the appointed bhikṣuṇī and her companion return to the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha, informs the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha on the results of her errand, after which the bhikṣuṇī saṃgha proceeds with its own pravāraṇā ceremony as usual.

3 - Kaṭhina

The end of the summer retreat is not only the day of the *pravāraṇā* but it marks the beginning of the *kaṭhina* period either. Those who have completed the first retreat are rewarded with the offering of robes; one of them in particular is chosen as the *kaṭhina* robe, which is entrusted to only one member that is appointed during the *kaṭhina* ceremony, and he is one who normally resides in the monastery and is endowed with the five virtues, as above.

Only those who have completed the first retreat are rewarded with this special offering; the others, those who participated in the intermediate or in the last retreat, are not eligible to 'accept the *kaṭhina*'.

The *kaṭhina* period may last for one month or five, depending on a monk's accepting or not accepting the *kaṭhina*. Accepting the *kaṭhina* means that one takes on himself the so-called *kaṭhina* privileges, five instances that allow for a loosed application of certain monastic rules. If one does not accept the *kaṭhina*, his *kaṭhina* period will last for one month only, while for one who accepts the *kaṭhina*, this period last for five months.

In many Buddhist countries, particularly those that follow the Theravada tradition, the *kaṭhina* is a chance for lay people to make merits by offering robes and/or other requisites to the saṃgha. It is in fact one of the major events during the Buddhist year, and lay people crowd into Buddhist

temples to participate in the ceremonies.

It is believed that this is a particularly propitious period for making offerings: the saṃgha has just ended the retreat during which the members have accumulated many merits, and have just ended the *pravāraṇā*, thereby restoring their purity. Giving offerings to such a saṃgha is therefore considered particularly important and fortunate.

Once upon a time, the laity offered fabric to the saṃgha for sewing a *kaṭhina* robe. All the monastic community together had one single day to dye, cut and sew the robe. It was a great example of collegiality and this opportunity glued the community together. Nowadays, the robes are usually offered already made. As already explained above, only one of them is chosen as the *kaṭhina* robe.

The offering of the *kaṭhina* robe by the laity usually provides for parades and blessings, and in Theravada countries is a very waited for and colourful event.

The monastic rules³⁵

1 - How to behave with monastics

Salutation

Monks and nuns have many rules forbidding the contact with people, particularly if they belong to the other sex. In the West, shaking hands and hugging people constitute common behaviour, but they should be absolutely avoided when dealing with monastics. The proper way to salute a monk or a nun is to respectfully hold your hands in *añjali* and bow slightly.

Secluded places

Secluded place is a place that is out of the range of hearing or seeing or both. In other words, it is a place that does not allow listening what the people inside might say, or does not allow seeing them or both.

Monastics should not stay in such places alone with a person of the other sex, sitting or standing with them while having a conversation. Lay people should therefore avoid such situations, trying as much as possible to find a companion when they need to meet a monastic of the opposite sex. If no companion is available, and the meeting happens in a room, the door should be left open. Better would be to hold the meeting in a place that is in the range of seeing and hearing of those who might pass by.

2 - Rules dealing with money

Monks and nuns should not make direct use of money, neither should they engage in barter and trade. The main reasons for this injunction are to train monastic disciples in contentment, and to

³⁵ For the sake of simplicity, the rules that will be given in full in the text are quoted from the Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa. The Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa might sometimes have a slightly different version of them.

give lay people the opportunity of cultivating the virtue of generosity by providing the saṃgha with material needs. Supporting oneself with only the food gathered on alms round and on what people willingly decide to offer is a powerful tool for simplifying the life and attune the mind to the Dharma, and the Dharma is what monastics have to offer to lay people.

➤ **The rules**

There are three basic rules in the Prātimokṣa which deal directly with this issue, all coming for the section of infractions that entail forfeiture. Let's examine them:

1. Suppose a king, or a high official, or a Brahmin, or a householder, or the wife of a householder appoints a messenger to deliver a fund to a bhikṣu. The messenger, having arrived at the bhikṣu's residence, says: "Venerable sir! This robe fund is for you, accept it." This bhikṣu has to answer the messenger: "I cannot take this robe fund. If I need a robe, I can accept it at the right time and in the correct way." The messenger asks the bhikṣu: "Does the venerable one have a steward?" the bhikṣu answers: "Yes, there is an *ārāmika* (a monastery attendant) or an *upāsaka* who acts as a steward; he always manages the affairs of the community." The messenger reaches the steward's dwelling place and, after having given the robe fund to him, returns to the bhikṣu dwelling place, saying: "Venerable sir! I have given the robe fund to the steward that you have indicated. Venerable sir can obtain a robe in the right season from him." If the bhikṣu needs a robe, he can go to the steward's dwelling place two or three times, saying: "I need a robe." If, after having prompted the steward two or three times, he obtains the robe, it is good. If he does not obtain a robe, he can go and stand silently in front of the steward four, five, or six times, in order to have him remember the question. If, after having stood silently four, five or six times in front of the steward, he obtains the robe, it is good. If he does not obtain the robe, obtaining it by insisting beyond this limit it is an offence entailing forfeiture. If he does not obtain the robe, he should inform personally or via messenger the persons who sent the robe fund with these words: "Previously, you appointed a messenger to send a robe fund for the sake of the bhikṣu So-and-so. This bhikṣu did not obtain any benefit from it. Go and take back your money, do not let it be lost." This is the correct procedure.
2. If a bhikṣu takes gold, silver or money, or has it taken, or consents that it is deposited on his behalf, it is an offence entailing forfeiture.
3. If a bhikṣu engages in various types of exchange of valuables and money, it is an offence entailing forfeiture.

➤ **The procedure**

Private persons

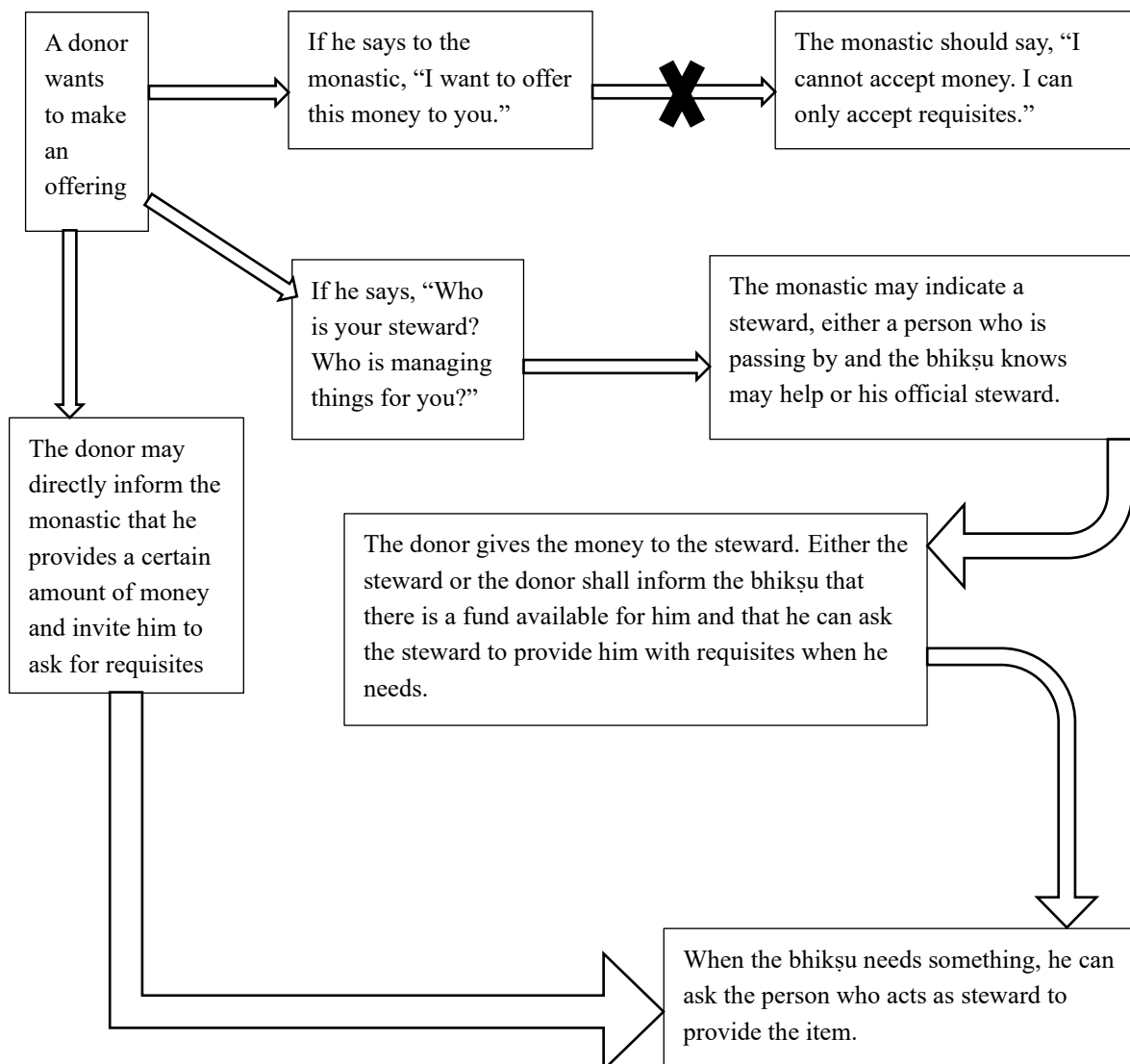
As stated in the rule quoted above, when someone wants to offer a fund directly to a monk, this should refuse and instead indicate an assistant or steward if asked for. He may even explain to the lay people who are interested the procedure to be followed for establishing a fund for supporting a monastic.

The Buddha allowed that a lay person can volunteer to manage a fund for a monastic in order to provide him with requisites. In the Pāli Vinaya, this is called the Meṇḍaka allowance, from the name of a rich merchant in Śrāvastī who was a stream-enterer and was very generous. He expressly asked the Buddha whether it would have been possible for a lay person to manage a fund for a bhikṣu and the Buddha allowed it.

The steward must always be a lay person and he may be:

1. Whoever person that is near and is pointed by the bhikṣu for this purpose;
2. The person who wants to make an offering and informs the bhikṣu that he will provide a certain amount of money, inviting him to make a request any time he needs something;
3. A person who volunteers to be the official steward of the bhikṣu and to whom the donors may turn any time they want to make an offering. The steward should inform the bhikṣu on how much money is available. He/she or the donor should invite the bhikṣu/ṇī to make a request any time they need something.

This flow chart explains the procedure a lay person should follow to make an offering to a monastic:



A monastic cannot answer to questions like: “To whom should I give this money?”, or “Who can keep this money for you?” because this would go against the rules we have quoted above, because this means accepting the money. The only question he can answer is, “Who is your steward?”, or, more simply, “Do you need something?” in this last case offering directly the help to provide the monastic of what he or she might need without passing through a third person.

The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya allows a monastic using the sentence “Do as you know” in case a lay person offers to help with money that has been left somewhere for the monk or nun, or other similar cases. This sentence means that the lay person should use the money to provide the monastic with requisites.

Nevertheless, if the lay person does not understand and uses the money for something else, for example he offers it to a monastery or a charity, the monastic cannot say anything.

If a lay person offers requisites to a monastic, the monastic may accept them without transgression.

Monasteries

Things work basically in the same way in the case the offering’s recipient is a monastery instead of a single monastic. In those monasteries that keep the Vinaya rules, there may be a lay person in charge for managing a public fund to whom donors may turn to make an offering. They may ask a monastic official about the needs of the monastery before turning to the steward. It is advisable to specify always the purpose of the donation, so that those using it are certain about the destination of the money.

If a monastic accepts money that is not intended for his personal use, he commits a lesser offence.

➤ Keeping money

Nowadays, it is quite frequent to see monks and nuns keeping money. In many countries, it is difficult if not impossible to have a *kappiya*, namely a steward or someone who understands enough Vinaya to be of some help, particularly if one has no fixed residence and travels a lot. Even in Buddhist countries like Thailand, the figure of the *kappiya* is often unknown to the laity in those monasteries that do not keep strict Vinaya. In countries like Taiwan, Korea, China, lay people are used to offer money directly in the hands of the recipient. This is not perceived as going against monastic ethics.

Monastics who accept money may not consider the money as their own private property, but instead as something that can be used for all sentient beings, included oneself, any time there is the need. Sometimes great masters are used to manage huge amounts of money, but what really happens is that this money flows through their hands towards sentient beings.

In those countries in which they follow the Nan Shan Vinaya school that includes other Vinayas in the interpretation of the rules, monks and nuns usually adopt the standards of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya or other Vinayas that provide for some exceptions for accepting and keeping money, thereby avoiding committing the related offences.

One should not judge those who do it, because one cannot know their condition and what their goals are. The best policy is to adapt to the monastic one meets: if one knows that this person does not accept money, one may volunteer to be his steward at least for the time being by offering requisites or establishing a fund. If the monastic does accept money, one may offer it to him directly.

3 - Rules dealing with food

➤ **The rules**

1. If a bhikṣu/ṇī keeps seven-day medicines for more than seven days, it is an offence entailing forfeiture.
2. If a bhikṣu/ṇī eats at improper times, it must be confessed.
3. If a bhikṣu/ṇī eats food kept overnight, it must be confessed.
4. If a bhikṣu/ṇī takes food that has not been offered, except water and toothpaste, it must be confessed.
5. If a bhikṣu/ṇī cooks by himself, it is a minor offence.
6. If a bhikṣu/ṇī touches aliments that are not allowable, it is a minor offence.

Meals

Monastics should never touch food that has not been offered by a lay person, with the exception of water and toothpaste. The procedure for offering food may vary according to the interpretation and the custom. The most common methods are:

1. Putting the food directly into the bowl. This happens when the monks or nuns go on alms round, but some monasteries may be organized in a way that the recipients pass in single file in front of ready tables and, for each dish, a lay person is in charge to put a fixed amount in their bowl.
2. Displaying the food on a table and then offering every dish one by one by lifting it slightly. The monk or nun “receives” it by touching the dish with his/her hands.
3. Displaying the food on a table and offering everything by touching the table. The monk or nun “receives” the food by touching the table on his/her turn.

After noon,³⁶ monks and nuns cannot keep any food. Rule n. 3 above says that one should not eat food kept overnight. Keeping the food overnight means storing it as one personal property in one own’s room. Storing it is a minor offence, and eating food stored in this way is the full offence. The leftover food should therefore be given away to the laity or stored again as property of the monastery, not to be touched until the person in charge decides to take it out as provision for that day³⁷.

³⁶ Please, refer to what has already been discussed above, *Abstaining from eating at improper time*.

³⁷ Please, refer to *Abstaining from stealing*, the chapter on the saṃgha properties.

Allowable edibles

When discussing *Abstaining from eating at improper times*, we have already explained in detail the four categories of edibles. The last three, namely seven-day medicines, afternoon juices, and medicines for life, are also called ‘allowable edibles’, in which they may be consumed by a monastic at so-called ‘improper times’ if there is the need. The need, as already explained, may be weakness, hunger, or a disease as we normally intend it, for example a flu.

Since monastics cannot take anything that is not offered, lay people should offer the allowable edibles. A monk or nun may ask, “I need something”, “I need an aspirin”, “I’ve got a flu; I should take some medicines” and so on. The lay person may therefore provide what needed.

The life span of the edible starts from the moment on which it has been offered. For example, a juice may be consumed not beyond the dawn of the next day; dark chocolate not beyond the dawn of the eighth day. What to do if the substance has not been entirely consumed?

Again, lay people are essential: the monk or nun has to give it away to them. After having been given away, the item belongs to the lay person; he or she may offer it again as new, or dispose of it as one thinks fit.

One might ask: but if no lay people are around, what does a monastic do? The most common expedient is to make the clear mental determination to give up the edible, store it somewhere and do not touch it anymore.

Cooking

The rule number 5 above says that monastics should not cook. If lay people are guests in a monastery, it should be their duty to take care of the kitchen and help offering the meal to the resident monastic community.

4 - Rules dealing with vegetation and digging

➤ **The rules**

1. If a bhikṣu/ṇī destroys living plants, or teaches someone to do it, it must be confessed.
2. If a bhikṣu/ṇī digs the ground, or teaches someone to do it, it must be confessed.

➤ **The practice**

In ancient India, people believed that plants are the dwelling of spirits and ghosts, and that by destroying them one does harm to the being dwelling inside.

The ground is the dwelling of many creatures that may be injured or even killed by digging it.

These reasons prompted the Buddha to institute the prohibition of cutting trees and vegetation and digging the soil.

In those monasteries that observe the Vinaya, these works are assigned to the laity or to non fully-fledged monastics, like novices. Monastics cannot directly say to a person “Dig here” or

“Cut this tree”, because this means “teaching another person”. They may indicate the place that needs the treatment and say, “Do as you know”, or “This tree’s branches are too long”. It is understood that the lay person who volunteers to help needs to be instructed in advance about this procedure.

It is not an offence for a monastic to discuss the works to do in a separate setting, for example during a meeting held precisely to manage the question. In such a setting, one may be detailed about which trees need pruning, which holes need to be dug, etc.

➤ **Fruit**

Fruit that contains seeds that can germinate should not be eaten as it is by a monastic. By eating such fruit, one commits an offence. This fruit should therefore be made allowable by a lay person, a *kappiya kāraka* – “the doer of what is allowable”.

The procedure is simple: the monastic points to the fruit and says, “Please, make this allowable” (*Kappiyam karohi*). The lay person takes a knife and, slightly cutting one of the fruits, answers, “Bhante/Ayya, it is allowable” (*Kappiyam bhante/ayya*).

If there are many fruit of this kind, they may be put together in a way that they touch each other and only one of them needs to be cut. This makes allowable the entire pile.

Seedless fruit, fruit that has already been cut into pieces or peeled, fruit that is already damaged may be consumed directly.

Appendix

This appendix collects some texts from the Pāli and the Chinese canons that are intended as in-depth analyses of the issue.

The first, the *Saleyyaka sutta*, is included in the *Majjhima Nikāya* collection as sutta n. 41. It is the exhaustive exposition of the ten unwholesome and ten wholesome actions that constitute the foundation of all the sets of precepts in Buddhism.

The second, the *Sīgālovada sutta*, is included in the *Dīgha Nikāya* collection as sutta n. 31. It explains the so-called “Vinaya for householders”, in which it gives the principles on how to lead an irreproachable life as a lay person in the light of the Buddhist teaching.

The notes attached to these two translations are authored by the original translator.

The third, the *Sūtra on The Characteristics of the Five Precepts*, is included in the Chinese Tripiṭaka, T24, p.939. It belongs probably to the Sarvāstivāda tradition and has been translated into Chinese by the renowned Vinaya Master Gunavarman. In Chinese tradition, this sūtra constitutes the standard for analyzing the lay precepts. Nevertheless, it must be noticed that the standards common in the Sarvāstivāda tradition may be different from those of the Dharmaguptaka tradition. When the two interpretation conflict, one should keep to that of the Dharmaguptaka and take the Sarvāstivāda point of view as reference only. This sūtra ends quite abruptly. There is not a real ending, as it is the normalcy in Buddhist literature. Maybe, the sūtra suffered some problems in the transmission.

Saleyyaka Sutta: The Brahmans of Sala – Majjhima Nikāya 41

Translated from the Pali by Ñānamoli Thera

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kosalan country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus, and eventually he arrived at a Kosalan brahman village called Sala.
2. The brahman householders of Sala heard: "A monk called Gotama, it seems, a son of the Sakyans who went forth from a Sakyan clan, has been wandering in the Kosalan country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus and has come to Sala. Now a good report of Master Gotama has been spread to this effect: 'That Blessed One is such since he is arahant and Fully Enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable teacher of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed. He describes this world with its gods, its Maras, and its (Brahma) Divinities, this generation with its monks and brahmans, with its kings and its people, which he has himself realized through direct knowledge. He teaches a Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end with (the right) meaning and phrasing, he affirms a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure.' Now it is good to see such arahants."
3. The brahman householders of Sala went to the Blessed One; and some paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some exchanged greetings with him, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, sat down at one side; some raised hands palms together in salutation to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some pronounced their name and clan in the Blessed One's presence and sat down at one side; some kept silence and sat down at one side.
4. When they were seated, they said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the condition, why some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell; and what is the reason, what is the condition, why some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world?"
5. "Householders, it is by reason of conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of unrighteous conduct, that beings here on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. It is by reason of conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of righteous conduct, that some beings here on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world."
6. "We do not understand the detailed meaning of this utterance of Master Gotama's spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning. It would be good if Master Gotama taught us the Dhamma so that we might understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's utterance spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning."

"Then, householders, listen and heed well what I shall say."

"Yes, venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

7. "Householders, there are three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct. There are four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct. There are three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

8. "And how are there three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone is a killer of living beings: he is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, and merciless to all living beings. He is a taker of what is not given: he takes as a thief another's chattels and property in the village or in the forest. He is given over to misconduct in sexual desires: he has intercourse with such (women) as are protected by the mother, father, (mother and father), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also with those that are garlanded in token of betrothal. That is how there are three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

9. "And how are there four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone speaks falsehood: when summoned to a court or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to his guild, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus, 'So, good man, tell what you know,' then, not knowing, he says 'I know,' or knowing, he says 'I do not know,' not seeing, he says 'I see,' or seeing, he says 'I do not see'; in full awareness he speaks falsehood for his own ends or for another's ends or for some trifling worldly end. He speaks maliciously: he is a repeater elsewhere of what is heard here for the purpose of causing division from these, or he is a repeater to these of what is heard elsewhere for the purpose of causing division from those, and he is thus a divider of the united, a creator of divisions, who enjoys discord, rejoices in discord, delights in discord, he is a speaker of words that create discord. He speaks harshly: he utters such words as are rough, hard, hurtful to others, censorious of others, bordering on anger and uncondusive to concentration. He is a gossip: as one who tells that which is unseasonable, that which is not fact, that which is not good, that which is not the Dhamma, that which is not the Discipline, and he speaks out of season speech not worth recording, which is unreasoned, indefinite, and unconnected with good. That is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

10. "And how are there three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone is covetous: he is a coveter of another's chattels and property thus: 'Oh, that what is another's were mine!' Or he has a mind of ill-will, with the intention of a mind affected by hate thus: 'May these beings be slain and slaughtered, may they be cut off, perish, or be annihilated!' Or he has wrong view, distorted vision, thus: 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed, no fruit and ripening of good and bad kammās, no this world, no other world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously (born) beings³⁸, no good and virtuous monks and brahmins that have themselves realized by direct knowledge

³⁸ Beings who appear due to the force of past action (kamma) in some states of birth: all gods and divinities, ghosts, inhabitants of hells.

and declare this world and the other world.³⁹ That is how there are three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

"So, householders, it is by reason of conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of unrighteous conduct, that some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell.

11. "Householders, there are three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct. There are four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct. There are three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

12. "And how are there three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone, abandoning the killing of living beings, becomes one who abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he becomes one who abstains from taking what is not given; he does not take as a thief another's chattels and property in the village or in the forest. Abandoning misconduct in sexual desires, he becomes one who abstains from misconduct in sexual desires: he does not have intercourse with such women as are protected by mother, father, (father and mother), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also those that are garlanded in token of betrothal. That is how there are three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

13. "And how are there four of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone, abandoning false speech, becomes one who abstains from false speech: when summoned to a court or to a meeting or to his relatives' presence or to his guild or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus, 'So, good man, tell what you know,' not knowing, he says 'I do not know,' or knowing, he says 'I know,' not seeing he says 'I do not see,' or seeing, he says 'I see'; he does not in full awareness speak falsehood for his own ends or for another's ends or for some trifling worldly end. Abandoning malicious speech, he becomes one who abstains from malicious speech: as one who is neither a repeater elsewhere of what is heard here for the purpose of causing division from these, nor a repeater to these of what is heard elsewhere for the purpose of causing division from those, who is thus a reuniter of the divided, a promoter of friendships, enjoying concord, rejoicing in concord, delighting in concord, he becomes a speaker of words that promote concord. Abandoning harsh speech, he becomes one who abstains from harsh speech: he becomes a speaker of such words as are innocent, pleasing to the ear and lovable, as go to the heart, are civil, desired of many and dear to many. Abandoning gossip, he becomes one who abstains from gossip: as one who tells that which is seasonable, that which is factual, that which is good, that which is the Dhamma, that which is the Discipline, he speaks in season speech worth recording, which is reasoned, definite and connected with good. That is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

³⁹ For an explanation of these views held by some teachers in the Buddhist time, and which were a rejection of all moral values, see Ledi Sayadaw, *The Eightfold Path and its Factors Explained* (BPS Wheel No. 245/247).

14. "And how are there three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone is not covetous: he is not a coveter of another's chattels and property thus: 'Oh, that what is another's were mine!' He has no mind of ill-will, with the intention of a mind unaffected by hate thus: 'May these beings be free from enmity, affliction and anxiety, may they live happily!' He has right view, undistorted vision, thus: 'There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed, and there is fruit and ripening of good and bad karmas, and there is this world and the other world and mother and father and spontaneously (born) beings, and good and virtuous monks and brahmins that have themselves realized by direct knowledge and declared this world and the other world.' That is how there are three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

"So, householders, it is by reason of conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of righteous conduct, that some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.

15. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the warrior-nobles of great property!' it is possible that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct that is in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

16. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the brahmins of great property!' it is possible...

17. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma,...!... I might reappear in the company of householders of great property!' it is possible...

18. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the gods of the Four Kings!' it is possible that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

19. ...of the gods of the Realm of the Thirty-three...⁴⁰

20. ...of the gods that have Gone to Bliss...

21. ...of the Contented gods...

22. ...of the gods that Delight in Creating...

23. ...of the gods that Wield Power over others' Creations...

24. ...of the gods of Brahma's Retinue...

25. ...of the Radiant gods...

26. ...of the gods of Limited Radiance...

27. ...of the gods of Measureless Radiance...

28. ...of the gods of Streaming Radiance...

⁴⁰ The rendering of the various gods' names are based on the commentary to the Hadayavibhanga (in the *Vibhanga*, second book of the Abhidhamma: see *The Book of Analysis*, P.T.S. Translation Series).

29. ...of the Glorious gods...
30. ...of the gods of Limited Glory...
31. ...of the gods of Measureless Glory...
32. ...of the gods of Refulgent Glory...
33. ...of the Very Fruitful gods...
34. ...of the gods Bathed in their own Prosperity...
35. ...of the Untormenting gods...
36. ...of the Fair-to-see gods...
37. ...of the Fair-seeing gods...
38. ...of the gods who are Junior to None...
39. ...of the gods of the base consisting of the infinity of space...
40. ...of the gods of the base consisting of the infinity of consciousness...
41. ...of the gods of the base consisting of nothingness...
42. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the gods of the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception!' it is possible that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.
43. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that by realization myself with direct knowledge, I may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of the heart and the deliverance by wisdom that are taint-free with exhaustion of taints!' it is possible that, by realization himself with direct knowledge, he may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of the heart and the deliverance by wisdom that are taint-free with exhaustion of taints. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct."
44. When this was said, the brahman householders of Sala said to the Blessed One:
- "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyes to see forms.
45. "We go to Master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama accept us as followers who have gone to him for refuge for life.

Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala, The Layperson's Code of Discipline⁴¹

Translated from the Pāli by Narada Thera, 1996

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near Rajagaha.

Now at that time, young Sigala, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith.

Then the Exalted One, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered Rajagaha for alms. Now he saw young Sigala worshipping thus and spoke to him as follows:

"Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters — the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?"

"My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honoring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters."

"It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"How then, Lord, should the six quarters be worshipped in the discipline of the noble? It is well, Lord, if the Exalted One would teach the doctrine to me showing how the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"Well, young householder, listen and bear it well in mind; I shall speak." — "Very good, Lord," responded young Sigala.

And the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple **(1)** has eradicated the four vices in conduct⁴², **(2)** inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, **(3)** inasmuch as he pursues not the six channels for dissipating wealth, he thus, avoiding these fourteen evil things, covers the six quarters, and enters the path leading to victory in both worlds: he is favored in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

(1) "What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life,

⁴¹ "Suttavibhanga: (selected texts)", edited by Access to Insight. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 17 December 2013.

⁴² *Kamma-kilesa*, lit., 'actions of defilement.'

householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Killing, stealing, lying and adultery,

These four evils the wise never praise.

(2) "In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil⁴³.

"But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Whoever through desire, hate or fear,

Or ignorance should transgress the Dhamma,

All his glory fades away

Like the moon during the waning half.

Whoever through desire, hate or fear,

Or ignorance never transgresses the Dhamma,

All his glory ever increases

Like the moon during the waxing half.

(3) "What are the six channels for dissipating wealth which he does not pursue?

(a) "indulgence in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness;

(b) sauntering in streets at unseemly hours;

(c) frequenting theatrical shows;

(d) indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness;

(e) association with evil companions;

(f) the habit of idleness.

(a) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness:

(i) loss of wealth,

(ii) increase of quarrels,

(iii) susceptibility to disease,

⁴³ These are the four *agati*, 'evil courses of action': *chanda*, *dosa*, *moha*, *bhaya*.

- (iv) earning an evil reputation,
- (v) shameless exposure of body,
- (vi) weakening of intellect.

(b) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours:

- (i) he himself is unprotected and unguarded,
- (ii) his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded,
- (iii) his property is unprotected and unguarded,
- (iv) he is suspected of evil deeds⁴⁴,
- (v) he is subject to false rumours,
- (vi) he meets with many troubles.

(c) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in frequenting theatrical shows. He is ever thinking:

- (i) where is there dancing?
- (ii) where is there singing?
- (iii) where is there music?
- (iv) where is there recitation?
- (v) where is there playing with cymbals?
- (vi) where is there pot-blowing?⁴⁵

(d) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling:

- (i) the winner begets hate,
- (ii) the loser grieves for lost wealth,
- (iii) loss of wealth,
- (iv) his word is not relied upon in a court of law,
- (v) he is despised by his friends and associates,
- (vi) he is not sought after for matrimony; for people would say he is a gambler and is not fit to look after a wife.

(e) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in associating with evil companions, namely: any gambler, any libertine, any drunkard, any swindler, any cheat, any rowdy is his friend and companion.

(f) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness:

⁴⁴ Crimes committed by others.

⁴⁵ A kind of amusement.

"He does no work, saying:

- (i) that it is extremely cold,
- (ii) that it is extremely hot,
- (iii) that it is too late in the evening,
- (iv) that it is too early in the morning,
- (v) that he is extremely hungry,
- (vi) that he is too full.

"Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"One is a bottle friend; one says, 'friend, friend' only to one's face; one is a friend and an associate only when it is advantageous.

"Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irascibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice — these six causes ruin a man.

"The man who has evil comrades and friends is given to evil ways, to ruin does he fall in both worlds — here and the next.

"Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice — these nine⁴⁶ causes ruin a man.

"Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes to women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders — he declines just as the moon during the waning half.

"Who is drunk, poor, destitute, still thirsty whilst drinking, frequents the bars, sinks in debt as a stone in water, swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

"Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is ever intoxicated, and is licentious, is not fit to lead a household life.

"Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late, and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

"But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness."

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

- (1) he who appropriates a friend's possessions,
- (2) he who renders lip-service,
- (3) he who flatters,

⁴⁶ The Pāli original has here "six causes" as two compound words and one double-term phrase are counted as units.

(4) he who brings ruin.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he appropriates his friend's wealth,
- (ii) he gives little and asks much,
- (iii) he does his duty out of fear,
- (iv) he associates for his own advantage.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he makes friendly profession as regards the past,
- (ii) he makes friendly profession as regards the future,
- (iii) he tries to gain one's favor by empty words,
- (iv) when opportunity for service has arisen, he expresses his inability.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he approves of his friend's evil deeds,
- (ii) he disapproves his friend's good deeds,
- (iii) he praises him in his presence,
- (iv) he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness,
- (ii) he is a companion in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours,
- (iii) he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows,
- (iv) he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who appropriates,
 the friend who renders lip-service,
 the friend that flatters,
 the friend who brings ruin,
 these four as enemies the wise behold,
 avoid them from afar as paths of peril.

"These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

- (1) he who is a helpmate,
- (2) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow,
- (3) he who gives good counsel,
- (4) he who sympathizes.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he guards the heedless,
- (ii) he protects the wealth of the heedless,
- (iii) he becomes a refuge when you are in danger,
- (iv) when there are commitments he provides you with double the

supply needed.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he reveals his secrets,
- (ii) he conceals one's own secrets,
- (iii) in misfortune he does not forsake one,
- (iv) his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he restrains one from doing evil,
- (ii) he encourages one to do good,
- (iii) he informs one of what is unknown to oneself,
- (iv) he points out the path to heaven.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathizes be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he does not rejoice in one's misfortune,
- (ii) he rejoices in one's prosperity,
- (iii) he restrains others speaking ill of oneself,
- (iv) he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who is a helpmate,
the friend in happiness and woe,

the friend who gives good counsel,
 the friend who sympathizes too —
 these four as friends the wise behold
 and cherish them devotedly
 as does a mother her own child.

The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire.

He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways
 like to a bee that honey gathers⁴⁷,
 riches mount up for him
 like ant hill's rapid growth.

With wealth acquired this way,
 a lay person fit for household life,
 in portions four divides his wealth:
 thus will he friendship win.

One portion for his wants he uses⁴⁸,
 two portions on his business spends,
 the fourth for times of need he keeps.

"And how, young householder, does a noble disciple cover the six quarters?"

"The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and brahmans as the Zenith⁴⁹.

"In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the **East**:

- (i) Having supported me I shall support them,
- (ii) I shall do their duties,
- (iii) I shall keep the family tradition,
- (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance,
- (v) furthermore I shall offer alms in honor of my departed

relatives⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Dhammapada v. 49: "As a bee, without harming the flower, its color or scent, flies away, collecting only the honey..."

⁴⁸ This portion includes what is spent on good works: gifts to monks, charity, etc.

⁴⁹ "The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents' care; teacher's fees and the South are the same word: *dakkhina*; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is 'beyond' (*uttara*), so by help of friends, etc., he gets beyond troubles." — (Rhys Davids)

⁵⁰ This is a sacred custom of the Aryans who never forgot the dead. This tradition is still faithfully observed by the

"In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the **East** by their children, show their compassion:

- (i) they restrain them from evil,
- (ii) they encourage them to do good,
- (iii) they train them for a profession,
- (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage,
- (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

"In these five ways do children minister to their parents as the **East** and the parents show their compassion to their children. Thus is the **East** covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, a pupil should minister to a teacher as the **South**:

- (i) by rising from the seat in salutation,
- (ii) by attending on him,
- (iii) by eagerness to learn,
- (iv) by personal service,
- (v) by respectful attention while receiving instructions.

"In five ways, young householder, do teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion:

- (i) they train them in the best discipline,
- (ii) they see that they grasp their lessons well,
- (iii) they instruct them in the arts and sciences,
- (iv) they introduce them to their friends and associates,
- (v) they provide for their safety in every quarter.

"The teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion towards them in these five ways. Thus is the **South** covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the **West** be ministered to by a husband:

- (i) by being courteous to her,
- (ii) by not despising her,
- (iii) by being faithful to her,
- (iv) by handing over authority to her,

Buddhists of Sri Lanka who make ceremonial offerings of alms to the monks on the eighth day, in the third month, and on each anniversary of the demise of the parents. Merit of these good actions is offered to the departed after such ceremony. Moreover after every *punna-kamma* (good action), a Buddhist never fails to think of his parents and offer merit. Such is the loyalty and the gratitude shown to parents as advised by the Buddha.

(v) by providing her with adornments.

"The wife thus ministered to as the **West** by her husband shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:

- (i) she performs her duties well,
- (ii) she is hospitable to relations and attendants⁵¹[10]
- (iii) she is faithful,
- (iv) she protects what he brings,
- (v) she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

"In these five ways does the wife show her compassion to her husband who ministers to her as the **West**. Thus is the **West** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a clansman minister to his friends and associates as the **North**:

- (i) by liberality,
- (ii) by courteous speech,
- (iii) by being helpful,
- (iv) by being impartial,
- (v) by sincerity.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by a clansman show compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they protect him when he is heedless,
- (ii) they protect his property when he is heedless,
- (iii) they become a refuge when he is in danger,
- (iv) they do not forsake him in his troubles,
- (v) they show consideration for his family.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by a clansman show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **North** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways should a master minister to his servants and employees as the **Nadir**:

- (i) by assigning them work according to their ability,
- (ii) by supplying them with food and with wages,
- (iii) by tending them in sickness,
- (iv) by sharing with them any delicacies,

⁵¹ Lit., 'the folk around' (*parijana*).

(v) by granting them leave at times.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** by their master show their compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they rise before him,
- (ii) they go to sleep after him,
- (iii) they take only what is given,
- (iv) they perform their duties well,
- (v) they uphold his good name and fame.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **Nadir** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a householder minister to ascetics and brahmans as the **Zenith**:

- (i) by lovable deeds,
- (ii) by lovable words,
- (iii) by lovable thoughts,
- (iv) by keeping open house to them,
- (v) by supplying their material needs.

"The ascetics and brahmans thus ministered to as the **Zenith** by a householder show their compassion towards him in six ways:

- (i) they restrain him from evil,
- (ii) they persuade him to do good,
- (iii) they love him with a kind heart,
- (iv) they make him hear what he has not heard,
- (v) they clarify what he has already heard,
- (vi) they point out the path to a heavenly state.

"In these six ways do ascetics and brahmans show their compassion towards a householder who ministers to them as the **Zenith**. Thus is the **Zenith** covered by him and made safe and secure." Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The mother and father are the East,

The Teachers are the South,

Wife and Children are the West,

The friends and associates are the North.

Servants and employees are the Nadir,

The ascetics and brahmans are the Zenith;
 Who is fit to lead the household life,
 These six quarters he should salute.
 Who is wise and virtuous,
 Gentle and keen-witted,
 Humble and amenable,
 Such a one to honor may attain.
 Who is energetic and not indolent,
 In misfortune unshaken,
 Flawless in manner and intelligent,
 Such a one to honor may attain.
 Who is hospitable, and friendly,
 Liberal and unselfish,
 A guide, an instructor, a leader,
 Such a one to honor may attain.
 Generosity, sweet speech,
 Helpfulness to others,
 Impartiality to all,
 As the case demands.
 These four winning ways make the world go round,
 As the linchpin in a moving car.
 If these in the world exist not,
 Neither mother nor father will receive,
 Respect and honor from their children.
 Since these four winning ways
 The wise appraise in every way,
 To eminence they attain,
 And praise they rightly gain.

When the Exalted One had spoken thus, Sigala, the young householder, said as follows:

"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that those who have eyes may see. Even

so, has the doctrine been explained in various ways by the Exalted One.

"I take refuge, Lord, in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Exalted One receive me as a lay follower; as one who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end."

Sūtra on the Characteristics of the Five Precepts⁵²

Translated from Sanskrit by the Indian Tripitaka Master Gunavarman

English translation by Bhikṣuṇī Ruxiong

Thus have I heard. Once the Lord was in Kapilavastu. At that time King Suddhodhana went to the Buddha's dwelling place and, after having prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet, joined his palms together and reverently said: "I have something to ask which will bring benefit to me. I only wish that the World Honoured One be so compassionate as to fulfill my prayer."

The Buddha responded: "If your request is proper, I will comply with the King's will."

The King replied: "Already had the World Honoured One instituted light and heavy offences for bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, śrāmaṇeras and śrāmaṇerīs. I hope that the Tathāgata will explain clearly the differences between amendable and non-amendable offences with regard to the five precepts for the laity, so that we can be led to understand the characteristics of the precepts without any doubt."

The Buddha remarked: "Well said, well said, Gotama! Since long ago I have harbored the desire to expound the differences concerning the five precepts for the laity. If a virtuous man can keep these precepts without transgressing them this will be a cause of Buddhahood for him. If one transgresses them without making repentance, he shall always revolve in the three unwholesome states of existence."

At that time the Buddha spoke to King Suddhodhana in many ways. The King, after having listened to his sermon, prostrated to the Buddha's feet, circumambulated the Lord and took his leave.

On that occasion the Buddha so addressed the bhikṣus: "For the benefit of lay people, I will now teach you (the differences between) light, heavy, amendable and non-amendable offences."

The bhikṣus in unison replied: "So be it! We will listen reverently."

Killing

The Buddha taught the bhikṣus:

"On regard to the precept against killing, there are three ways of depriving people of life. First, performing the murder in person; second, teaching others to do so; third, sending someone else⁵³. Performing the murder in person means depriving people of life by one's own hands. Teaching others to do so means giving instructions in this way: 'Take this man, bind and kill him.' Sending someone else means teaching the executor like this: 'Do you know such and such

⁵² Warning: this sutra evaluates the offences in a way that is sometimes different from the DV. Some instances are explained in the notes, some not.

⁵³ The difference between 'teaching' and 'sending someone' is that in the first case the instigator is present on the scene of the murder and instructs the murderer step by step. In the second case, the instigator simply gives his instruction, but does not actively participate in the action.

a man? Go, take him, bind and kill him.’ When the person so instructed, following that advice, actually kills the victim, for the upāsaka (who sent him) it is a non-amendable offence.

“There are three further ways of depriving people of life: first, using parts of the body; second, throwing different tools against the victim; third, brandishing external tools with the hands. Using parts of the body means striking (the victim) with one’s hands or feet or others parts of the body with the thought: “May he die”. If he dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die immediately, but thereafter, due to the wounds, it is also a non-amendable offence; if he does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is middle level amendable offence.

“Throwing different tools against the victim means using pieces of wood, tiles, stones, knives, spears, arrows, pieces of pewter, pieces of lead and tin and throw them against the victim, with the thought: “May he die”. If he dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die immediately, but thereafter, due to the wounds, it is a non-amendable offence either; if he does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is a middle level amendable offence.

“Brandishing external tools with the hands means holding in the hands pieces of wood, tiles, stones, knives, spears, arrows, pieces of pewter, pieces of lead and tin and strike the victim with them with the thought: “May he die”. If he dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die immediately, but thereafter, due to the wounds, it is also a non-amendable offence; if he does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is a middle level amendable offence.

“Beside these, (one may kill a victim) not by using parts of the body, not by throwing different tools against the victim, not by brandishing external tools with the hands. One may kill people by preparing poisonous medicines to be applied on the eyes, or the ears, or the nose, or the body, or into ulcers, or put in the food, or smeared on the mat, or on a vehicle, with the thought: “May he die”. If he dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die immediately, but thereafter, it is also a non-amendable offence; if he does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is a middle level amendable offence.

“Other methods of killing are: making a hole with a smokeless fire inside, using stones, traps, making a hole, poking (the victim), using black magic mantras, inducing miscarriage, pressing the belly, pushing someone into water, into fire, into a hole, sending someone on an errand and killing him along the way, miscarrying a fetus whose both body and vital spirit are formed. One may use whatever method apt to induce death.

“Killing by means of a hole in which a smokeless fire burns means that if a lay person knows that someone is going to walk through a certain road, he digs a hole and lights a smokeless fire in it, hiding it with sand, saying: ‘I dig this hole because that man is going to walk along this road.’ If the victim dies because of this, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die immediately, but thereafter, it is a non-amendable offence either; if he does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is middle level amendable offence. If the hole with smokeless fire is aimed at killing a human being and a human being actually dies, it is non-amendable offence; if a non-human being⁵⁴ dies, it is middle level amendable offence; if an animal dies, it is lower level amendable offence⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Devas, ghosts, etc, are all called no human beings.

⁵⁵ The commentator rightly says that there is probably a mistake in the text. The offence should be a middle level

“If the hole is aimed at killing a non-human being, if a non-human being dies, it is a middle level amendable offence; if a human being dies, it is a lower level amendable offence; if an animal dies, it is a lower level amendable offence.

“If the hole is aimed at killing an animal, if an animal dies, it is a lower level amendable offence; if a human being or a non-human being fall therein and die, it is a lower level amendable offence in both cases.

“If a lay person digs a hole with no specific aim, with the broad intention of killing every passerby, if a human being dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if a non-human being dies, it is a middle level amendable offence; if an animal dies, it is a lower level amendable offence; if no one dies, there are three preliminary step amendable offences (corresponding to the three different root offences). Killing by means of a hole in which a smokeless fire burns should be understood in this way.

“Using black magic mantras means that a lay person on the day of the new moon looks for a still intact dead body, summons a ghost, making the corpse arise by means of mantras, washes it clean and dresses it, puts a weapon in its hands and with concentrated mind says: ‘I pronounce this spell for such a such a person’, then he utters the incantation. If the person he wants to kill dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if that person is capable to enter different states of *samādhi*, or is protected by gods, or some great sorcerer rescues him, so that he cannot be injured, it is a middle level amendable offence. Killing by means of black magic mantras should be understood in this way.

“Using a half black magic mantra means that a lay person on the day of the new moon builds an iron vehicle and thereafter an iron man, summons a ghost, making the iron man arise, he washes and dresses it, he puts a weapon in its hands and with concentrated mind says: ‘I pronounce this spell for such and such a person.’ If his victim dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if that person is capable to enter different states of *samādhi*, or he is protected by gods, or some great sorcerer rescues him, so that he cannot be injured, it is a middle level amendable offence. Killing by a half black magic mantra should be understood in this way.

“Breaking someone’s life means that in the day of the new moon one takes cow’s excrements, spread them on the ground, adds wine and food and sets a fire on it. When the fire catches, he pours water on it, uttering a spell with concentrated mind and saying; ‘As the fire is extinguished by water, as soon as this fire is completely quenched, be that person’s life be annihilated in the same way.’ Or, on the day of the new moon one takes cow’s excrements, spread them on the ground, adds wine and food and draws on it an image of the person he wants to kill. When the image is completely designed, it starts to destroy it with his fingers, uttering a spell with concentrated mind and saying: ‘As this image is destroyed, be that person’s life also be destroyed. As soon as this image is completely annihilated, may that person’s life end in the same way.’ Alternatively, on the day of the new moon one takes cow’s excrements, spread them on the ground, adds wine and food and with a needle pierces the hem of a cloth. Thereupon he extracts the needle, uttering a spell with concentrated mind and saying: ‘As soon as this needle is

amendable offence, in which it is assessed in reference to the attempt of killing a human being. The animal is not the intended target, therefore there is no offence towards it.

extirpated, be that person's life end in the same way.' Breaking someone's life should be understood in this way.

"Causing people's death by using every sort of mantras and incantations is a non-amendable offence. If the victim survives, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"Killing by inducing miscarriage means compelling a pregnant woman to swallow some poisons, or sprinkle poisons all around, or inducing bleeding with a needle, or using tears as a drug, with this intention: 'May this woman die because of this.' If she dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if she does not die immediately, but thereafter, it is a non-amendable offence either; if she does not die, either immediately or thereafter, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"If the aim is killing the mother by means of miscarriage, if she dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if the fetus dies, it is an amendable offence. If both die, it is a non-amendable offence; if neither die, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"If one induces miscarriage with the aim of killing the fetus, if the fetus dies it is a non-amendable offence; if the fetus does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence; if the mother dies, it is a middle level amendable offence; if both die, it is a non-amendable offence. Killing by inducing miscarriage should be understood in this way.

"Pressing the abdomen means pressing the belly of a pregnant woman, or putting a heavy burden on her, or teaching someone to run over her with a vehicle, or pushing her down a lofty peak, with the thought: 'May she die'. If she dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if she does not die immediately, but thereafter, it is a non-amendable offence either; if she does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence. If those methods are aimed at killing the fetus, all the cases are as explained above. Killing by pressing the abdomen should be understood in this way.

"Killing someone by sending him on a dangerous route means inducing the victim to travel along a path one knows is haunted by a ferocious and hungry wild beast, with the thought: 'May he die along this dangerous path'. If the victim dies, it is a non-amendable offence. In all the other cases, the offences are as explained above. Killing someone by sending him on a dangerous route should be understood in this way.

"Devising expedient means aimed at killing a fetus at the *kalāla* stage⁵⁶, when both body and vital spirit start to take shape, is a non-amendable offence if the fetus dies. In all the other cases, the offences are as explained above.

"There three types of praising death: first, to a man who does not hold the precepts; second, to a man who respects the precepts; third, to an old and ailing man.

"A man who does not hold the precepts is someone who kills cows and sheep, breeds chickens and pigs, practices falconry, goes fishing, goes hunting, catches rabbits, shoots deer, steals, robs, is a butcher chief, or a man who uses mantras to kill, or a prison guard. If one, having reached that man dwelling place, says him: 'You, sinner, why going on living, persisting in doing evil? It would be better die soon.' If, because of those words, that man commits suicide, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence; if he says: 'I don't

⁵⁶ See the precept on killing for explanations.

care the advice of that man' so that he does not commit suicide, it is a middle level amendable offence. Suppose one praises death in front of such a man in order to instigate him to commit suicide, but after he regrets, thinking: 'Why inducing that man to kill himself?' and returns to him with those words: 'You, sinner, if you have the opportunity to meet a good spiritual friend and stay near him, you may be able to hear the Dharma and meditate correctly, abandoning evil deeds: don't kill yourself.' If that man listens to the advice and does not commit suicide, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"A man who respects the precepts is one who belongs to the fourfold retinue of the Tathāgata. If one, having reached that man dwelling place, addresses him with those words: 'Insofar as you keep the precepts you are full of blessings and virtues; if you died now you could be reborn in the heavens. Why don't put an end to your life?' and, owing to those words, that man commits suicide and dies, it is a non-amendable offence; if he does not commit suicide it is a middle level amendable offence. If that virtuous man thinks: 'Why should I care that man advice and kill myself?' so that he does not commit suicide, it is an amendable offence. Suppose that, after having instigated someone to kill himself, one regrets saying: 'I am to be blamed: why inducing such a virtuous man to kill himself?' and returns to him with those words: 'Virtuous man, go on living. As you have so many blessings and virtues, your blessings (in the future) will also be numerous. Don't kill yourself!' If that man does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"An old and ailing man is someone whose four elements are out of balance, so that he suffers pain and distress. If one addresses such a man saying: 'Why going on bearing these pains for so long instead of putting an end to your life?' so that he commits suicide, it is a non-amendable offence. If he does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence. Suppose that the ailing man thinks: 'Why should I care that man's advice and kill myself?', or suppose that the man who gave the advice after regrets, thinking: 'I am to be blamed: why suggesting suicide to that sick man?', so that he returns to him with those words: 'Ailing man, if you find a good medicine, or a skilled physician, if you take food and drink according to the medicines, your illness can be cured. Don't kill yourself!' In both cases, if the ailing man does not die, it is a middle level amendable offence.

"With regard to the seven methods of killing mentioned above (namely, making a hole with a smokeless fire inside, using stones, traps, making a hole, poking (the victim), using black magic mantras, inducing miscarriage, pressing the belly, pushing someone into water, into fire, into a hole, sending someone on an errand and killing him along the way, miscarrying a fetus whose both body and vital spirit are formed) the conditions of transgression and non transgression are as explained in the case of the burning pit.

"If (the victim) is a human being and (the murderer), having the right perception that it is a human being, kills him, it is a non-amendable offence. If (the victim) is a human being, but (the murderer) considers him to be a non-human being, or doubts whether he is a human being and kills him, in any case it is a non-amendable offence. If (the victim) is a non-human being but (the murderer) considers him to be a human being, or doubts whether he is a non-human being and kills him, it is a middle level amendable offence."

There was the case of a man whose hands and feet had been cut and who was thrown in the moat

surrounding the city. A group of women who were about to enter the city heard his pitiful cries and turned there to give a look. They said: ‘If someone gave him a poison to drink, he could die soon instead of bearing this pain for long.’ Among them there was a foolish woman who gave him a poison killing him. Her companions said: ‘You committed a non-amendable offence.’ Then they turned to the Buddha who answered: ‘As you gave him a poison in order to kill him, you committed a non-amendable offence.’

“If a lay person devises expedient means for killing his own mother, but kills someone else, it is a middle level amendable offence. If a lay person wishes to kill someone, but he kills his own mother instead, it would be a middle level amendable offence, not a cardinal sin.

“If a lay person devises expedient means to kill a human being, but he kills a non-human being instead, it is a middle level amendable offence. If a lay person devises expedient means aimed at killing a non-human being, but he kills a man instead, it is a lower level amendable offence.

“If a human being conceives an animal, miscarrying the fetus is a lower level amendable offence. If an animal conceives a human being, miscarrying the fetus is a non-amendable offence.

“If a lay person devises expedient means aimed at killing a human being, but he dies (before performing the murder) or his victim dies (after his own death) it is an amendable offence⁵⁷.

“If a lay person devises expedient means aimed at killing his father and mother, but the doubt arises: “Are they really my father and mother?”, but then, when he is absolutely sure that they are his parents, kills them, it is a cardinal sin which is non-amendable.

“If a lay person doubts whether a creature is a human being or a non-human being, and kills him when he is absolutely sure that he is a human being, it is a non-amendable offence.

“Suppose someone catches a thief with the intention to kill him, but later the thief escapes and government officials or town authorities pursue him. If a lay person, coming across the officials along the way, so addressed by those who are in the pursuit of the thief: ‘Did you see him?’, out of hatred for the thief answers: ‘I saw him in such and such a place’ and, because of his witness, that thief is killed, it is a non-amendable offence.

“Suppose someone catches a band of thieves with the intention of killing them, but later they all escape and government officials or town authorities pursue them. If a lay person, coming across (the officials) along the way, so addressed by those who are in the pursuit of the thieves: ‘Did you see them?’ , out of hatred for only one of them, answers: ‘I saw them in such and such a place’, and, because of his witness, some of them are killed except that who is the object of his hatred, it is an amendable offence. All the other cases are as explained above.

“If a lay person, with the perception that someone is his mother, kills another woman instead, it is a non-amendable offence, but not a cardinal sin⁵⁸.

“Striking someone for fun and killing him is an amendable offence.

⁵⁷ At death, the precepts expire. The offence must be assessed up to the point the offender is still alive. After death, even if his victim dies, there is only the result of the attempted murder.

⁵⁸ Above, it was said that if one kills by mistake someone that was not his object, the offence he commits is a preliminary step offence. The difference in this case is that the person positively believes that the person he is killing is its aimed target. It's not a real mistake, in the sense that the person feels that his goal is fulfilled.

“If someone kills when crazy and out of his senses, there is no transgression.

“If a lay person knows that water contains insects and uses it for watering grass and trees, provoking the death of the insects, it is an offence. Even if one is not aware of insects living in the water, using it is an offence. If no insects are present, but one thinks that they are, and uses the water, it is an offence.”

At a certain occasion, a lay person was building a new house. As he was on the roof, a board slipped from his hands and fell on the head of the carpenter, killing him. The lay person was assailed by the doubt whether he committed an amendable or non-amendable offence. He asked the Buddha who answered: ‘There is no transgression.’

At another time, from the top of a house, because of lack of strength of the man who was holding it, a board fell down, killing the carpenter. The man was assailed by doubt, but the Buddha answered: ‘There is no transgression. From now on, pay careful attention, don’t kill inadvertently a person’.

At another time, a lay person was working on the roof of a house when he saw a scorpion in the mud. Scared, he jumped down falling on the carpenter and killing him. The man was assailed by doubt, but the Buddha answered: ‘There is no transgression. From now on, pay careful attention, don’t kill inadvertently a person’.

At another time, a lay person was walking through a dangerous path at dusk when he met a bandit, who tried to catch him. He succeeded to escape, but, falling down a slope in his break, he jumped on a weaver, killing him. He was assailed by doubt, but the Buddha answered: ‘There is no transgression.’

At another time, a lay person, when on the top of a mountain, pushed a stone which, falling down, killed a man. He was assailed by doubt and the Buddha answered: ‘There is no transgression. Nevertheless, when you want to push down a stone you should first shout out that a stone is falling, letting people be aware (of what is happening)’.

At another time, a man developed an abscess. A lay person broke it when it was not yet ripened, causing the death of the patient. The man was assailed by doubt; the Buddha answered: ‘Causing the death of a man by breaking an abscess which is not yet ripened is a middle level amendable offence. There is no transgression in causing the death of a man by breaking an abscess which is already ripened.’

At another time, a lay person took a cheerful child and bound him with a rope with the only intent to play with him, but the child died. He was assailed by doubt; the Buddha answered: ‘Since it was done for fun, it is not an offence, but from now on nobody should bind people for fun.’

At another time, there was a man who was sitting, hidden by a cloth. A lay person shouted at him: ‘Stand up!’ That man replied: ‘Don’t shout at me. If I stand up, I will die.’ Nonetheless, the lay person repeated the order. As soon as the man stood up, he died. The lay person was assailed by doubt. The Buddha answered: ‘It is a middle level amendable offence.’

Stealing

The Buddha said to the bhikṣus:

“Three are the conditions fulfilling which a lay person can commit a non-amendable offence for stealing: first, the intention of stealing; second, to devise expedient means aimed at stealing; third, to remove the object from its original place. The intention of stealing means conceiving the thought and the desire to steal; devising expedient means aimed at stealing means that one physically engages himself in stealing; to remove the object from its original place means taking the object and putting it in a different location.

“Further, in three ways one may commit a non-amendable offence for stealing: first, stealing in person; second, teaching someone else; third, sending an executor. Stealing in person means that one removes an object from its original place by one’s own hands. Teaching someone else means that a lay person gives instructions to steal an object to someone who, following his words, removes the item from its original place. Sending an executor means asking him: “Do you know where this precious object is kept?” and, if the answer is positive, sending him there to remove the object from its original place, according to the instructions.

“There are five further ways of stealing by which one may commit a non-amendable offence: first, by deception; second, by misappropriation (taking advantage of one’s own position); third, by using deceptively the name of someone else as guarantee; fourth, by armed robbery; fifth, by embezzlement.

“I define a valuable object as one worth at least five *māsakas*. Stealing such an item is a non-amendable offence.

“If a lay person knows that someone possesses the five kind of precious thing, or objects made with them and chooses between them with stealing intentions, but without removing them from their original place, he commits an amendable offence. However, if after choosing, he actually removes them from their place, when the stolen valuables reach at least the value of five *māsakas*, it is a non-amendable offence.

“As for removing an object from its original place, in the case of woven fabrics a different hanging thread means a different place, or, in the case of leather products or clothes, one colour means a place. For clothes, leather, beds, one colour indicates a ‘place’, a different colour indicates a different ‘place’. Speaking about wool clothes, one layer or one colour of it indicates one ‘place’, a different color indicates a different ‘place’. The word ‘place’ should be understood in this way.

“If a lay person, while carrying other people’s belongings, shifts the objects from the left to the right shoulder with stealing intentions, or from the left to the right hand and similar, this either accounts as a different place.

“A cart has the wheels, the axis, the railings, and the yoke. A ship has two bulwarks, in front and on the back. A house has beams, the main beam, the rafters, the boards, four corners and a secret cabin: all should be considered different places. If, with stealing intentions, one takes an object and puts it in a different place it is a non-amendable offence.

“Concerning stealing things which float in the water, suppose that someone makes a raft of timbers and let it go downstream, following a river. If a lay person, with stealing intentions, takes

the timber it is a non-amendable offence. If, with stealing intentions, he grasps a piece of wood so that the board which is behind moves in front, or he makes it sink to the bottom of the lake, or he removes a board from the water, it is a non-amendable offence.

“Suppose someone has a lake in which he breeds birds. If a lay person, with stealing intentions, touches the water it is an amendable offence. If he carries away a certain amount of water, it is a non-amendable offence⁵⁹.

“Suppose someone breeds birds, which fly away to a wild lake. If someone, with stealing intentions, carries away a certain amount of water, or he plunges to the bottom of the lake and grasps the water, both are non-amendable offences.

“(1) Another case is that of a man who possesses many precious things for inside and outside which are taken away by birds of different species that are looking at them from the top of a building and belong to someone. If someone, with stealing intentions, catches those birds it is a non-amendable offence. (2) If someone sees some birds stealing valuable objects and waits for them from afar, it is a middle level amendable offence. (3) If someone, by means of a mantra, makes those birds reach a certain place, according to his will, it is a non-amendable offence. If the birds reach a different place, it is a middle level amendable offence. (4) Suppose a wild bird takes away valuable objects; if a lay person, with stealing intentions, catches its haul, it is a middle level amendable offence; waiting for the bird, it is a lower level amendable offence. (5) Suppose that some wild birds take away valuable objects, but they are captured by other birds which belong to an owner; if a lay person, with stealing intentions, takes the birds that have an owner, it is a non-amendable offence. Waiting for the birds is a middle level amendable offence. The other cases are as already explained. (6) Suppose that some birds which belong to an owner take away some valuable object, but they are captured by some wild birds; if a lay person, with stealing intentions, takes the wild birds, it is a middle level amendable offence. Waiting for the birds is a middle level amendable offence. The other cases are as already explained.

“If a lay person, gambling, changes the position of the pieces of the game in order to win over his adversary, supposed that the gains are worth at least five *māsakas*, it is a non-amendable offence.

“If a lay person, with stealing intentions, steals some relics, it is a middle level amendable offence. If he takes them with a pure mind, pushed by his deep reverence, thinking: ‘The Buddha is my master’, there is no transgression. If a lay person, with stealing intentions, steals sūtras, one should assess the gravity of the offence according to the value of the volumes.

“There are two ways to deprive someone of his land: first, bringing a suit against the owner; second, modifying (arbitrarily) the boundaries. If a lay person, in order to obtain a land, brings a suit against someone and wins, or modifies the boundaries, so that he succeeds in annexing a fraction of the land, if his appropriation is at least five *māsakas* worth, it is a non-amendable offence.

“If a laymen should pay duty, but he does not, in case that the customs fees are worth at least five *māsakas*, it is a non-amendable offence. Suppose a lay person reaches the customs and makes

⁵⁹ The goal is to steal the water, not the birds.

such a suggestion to someone: ‘Help me carry those goods through the customs and I will give you a reward equal half the duty.’ If the goods are carried through the customs and the due fee is worth at least five *māsakas*, it is a non-amendable offence. If a lay person suggests to someone walking through a different route in order to avoid paying duty, in case that the value of the goods is worth at least five *māsakas*, it is a middle level amendable offence⁶⁰. If at the customs house there are bandits or ferocious and hungry beasts, suggesting a different route in order to avoid the danger is not a transgression.

“If a lay person becomes the accomplice of a robber and takes part in burglars in towns and villages, and they divide the haul, when the worth (of the haul) reaches five *māsakas* it is a non-amendable offence.

“Stealing animals without legs: someone keeps leeches or other invertebrates into some containers; if a lay person steals them from the containers, he commits a non-amendable offence. According to what already explained above (about removing an object from its original place), it is a non-amendable offence.

“Stealing two or three-legged animals: someone keeps in cages geese, wild geese, parrots or other birds. If someone takes them with stealing intentions, one commits a non-amendable offence. All the other cases are as explained above.

“There are two kinds of kidnapping people: first, taking them on one’s shoulders; second, by deception (inducing the victim to follow his kidnapper). If a lay person, with stealing intention, takes someone on his shoulders, as soon as the feet of the victim leave the ground, it is a non-amendable offence. If the kidnapping is carried out by deception, as soon as both the feet of the victim move on (leaving their original position), it is a non-amendable offence. All the other cases are as explained above.

“Stealing four-legged animals: elephants, horses, cows, sheep and similar. The owner binds them in a place. If someone, with stealing intentions, carries them away, as soon as all their four legs move on (leaving their original position), it is a non-amendable offence. In case that they are sleeping in a place, if, with stealing intentions, one makes them awake and stand up, as soon as all their four legs move on (leaving their original position), it is a non-amendable offence. As regards to multi-legged animals, all the cases are similar. In case the animals are closed inside a wall or a bamboo fence, if someone pushes them out of the fence, as soon as their four legs move on (leaving their original position), it is a non-amendable offence. All the other cases are as explained above. In case the cattle are put out to pasture, if a lay person, with stealing intentions, thinks: ‘As soon as the shepherd returns to the village, I will take the animals away,’ insofar as he gives rise to such a thought, it is a middle level amendable offence. If he kills (the animals), this transgression falls under the heading of killing. If, after having killed the animals, he takes away the meat for a value of at least five *māsakas*, it is a non-amendable offence.

“Seven further conditions must be taken into account: first, the person does not perceive the objects as belonging to him; second, the owner does not agree (of them being taken away); third, it is not for temporary use; fourth, the person knows that the objects have an owner; fifth, the

⁶⁰ The suggestion must have been done without the hope of getting something.

person is not deranged; sixth, his mind is not confused; seventh, he has not a disease which compromises his mind. Given these seven conditions, a non-amendable offence configures when the valuables are worth at least five *māsakas*; otherwise, it is a middle level amendable offence.

“If one of the following seven conditions are fulfilled there is no transgression: first, the person perceives the objects as belonging to him; second, the owner agrees (of them being taken away); third, it is for temporary use; fourth, the person thinks that there is no owner; fifth, the person is deranged; sixth, his mind is confused; seventh, he has a disease which compromises the mind.”

At that time, a lay person had a field of turnips. A man came to him, saying: ‘Give me your turnips.’ The lay person asked: ‘Do you have the money? Why are you so pretentious?’ The man replied: ‘I have no money.’ The lay person returned: ‘If you want my turnips you must pay for them. If I give them to you, how could I manage to get a living?’ The man retorted: ‘Are you absolutely decided not to give them to me?’ The owner exclaimed: ‘How can I give them to you?!’ The man, by means of a mantra, made all the plants dry up, but after he was assailed by doubt: “Did I not commit a non-amendable offence?”. He went to the Buddha, who answered: ‘You have to calculate the value of the vegetables, including stems, leaves and flowers to know the gravity of your offence.’

Another time a man was ploughing the field between some shrines. He took off his clothes and threw them on the ground. A passerby, not seeing anybody in all the four directions, picked up the clothes and left. The farmer saw him from far and shouted at him: ‘Don’t take away my clothes!’ The man did not hear him and, thinking that the clothes had no owner, went away with them. The farmer run after him and caught him, saying: ‘By what law do you take those clothes away?’ The man answered: ‘Since I think that they have not an owner I take them away. What is wrong with it?’ The farmer replied: ‘These are my clothes.’ The man responded: ‘If they are your clothes you can take them away.’ After, that man was assailed by doubt: “Did I not commit a non-amendable offence?”, therefore he went to the Buddha to explain the question. Having been acquainted of the matter, the Lord asked him: ‘With which intention did you take those clothes?’ The man answered: ‘Because I thought they had no owner.’ The Buddha sentenced: ‘There is no transgression. From now on, before taking an object one should carefully examine if it has an owner. Even if an object is unguarded, it may in reality have an owner.’

Arousing the desire to steal, but not having yet taken away anything amounts to a lower level amendable offence. Taking an object worth less than five *māsakas* is a middle level amendable offence. Taking an object worth at least five *māsakas* is a non-amendable offence.”

Sexual intercourse

The Buddha said to the bhikṣus:

“An upāsaka should not harbour lustful thoughts, should not search for the satisfaction of his passions, should not give rise to any concept of this kind, let alone give himself to the impure and negative actions which derive from craving, anger and ignorance, the three basic defilements which bind (people’s mind).

“There are four ways of committing sexual misconduct: with males, with females, with paṇḍakas, with hermaphrodites. ‘Females’ includes human, non-human and animal females;

‘males’ includes human, non-human and animal males. ‘Paṇḍakas’ and ‘hermaphrodites’ are classified in the same way. If a lay person has sexual intercourse through the vagina, the anus or the mouth of a human, a non-human or an animal female he commits a non-amendable offence. If he has sexual intercourse through the anus or the mouth of a human, non-human or animal male, or a paṇḍaka or a hermaphrodite, he commits a non-amendable offence. If he harbours the desire to have sexual intercourse with someone, but he does not meet the conditions, it is a lower level amendable offence. If two persons have bodily contact, but they stop before having sexual intercourse, it is a middle level amendable offence. If a lay man has sexual intercourse with a servant who has been already given in marriage and has an owner, it is a non-amendable offence. As for the lesser offences, every case is as already explained.

“The three ways for a complete sexual intercourse are the mouth, the anus or the vagina. Having sexual intercourse through others part of the bodies apart these ones is a middle level amendable offence. If a lay man has sexual intercourse with a servant who has not yet been given in marriage through parts of the body different from the three mentioned above, it is an amendable offence, but the karmic results are heavy. If a lay man has sexual intercourse with boys or servants through the mouth or the anus, it is a non-amendable offence; as for the lesser offences every case is as already explained.

“If a lay man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute without paying her, he commits a non-amendable offence. If he pays her, there is no transgression⁶¹.

“Having sexual intercourse with the still intact corpse of a human being or an animal, through the mouth, the anus or the vagina, if it is a female corpse, is a non-amendable offence; as for the lesser offences every case is as already explained.

“If a lay person, having taken the eight precepts, engages in sexual intercourse, it is a non-amendable offence. The eight precepts do not distinguish among illicit and licit sex: one commits the offence in any case.

“If a lay person who did not take the five precepts, engages in sexual intercourse with a disciple of the Buddha who did take the precepts, even if he does not commit any transgression, he is forever excluded from the possibility of taking the five precepts or going forth into homelessness and receiving full monastic ordination.”

The Buddha said to the bhikṣus:

“Twofold is my body: the flesh body and the precept body⁶². Suppose a virtuous man builds a pagoda with the seven precious stone for enshrining my flesh body, reaching the Brahma Heaven. If someone damages it, his sin can be amended. However, if someone were to damage my precept body (by attempting to the virtue of those who have taken the precepts) his sin would be incommensurable, and his punishment like that of the Dragon King Elapattra.”

False speech

The Buddha said to the bhikṣus:

⁶¹ Paying a woman for sex is like hiring her as a temporary wife, a custom still present in some cultures. This woman being a ‘wife’, there is no transgression.

⁶² The Dharma body.

“I have always in many ways condemned false speech and praised straightforward speech; not even for fun should one lie, let alone lie intentionally.

“If a lay person, without any knowledge or experience of super human states, declares to be an arhat or to be about to become an arhat, he commits a non-amendable offence. If he declares to be an non-returner, a once-returner or a stream-enterer, or to be about to enter the stage of a stream-enterer, or to have reached the first, the second, the third, the fourth dhyāna, or to master the four incommensurable minds, namely *maitri*, *karuṇa*, *mudita*, *upekṣā*, or to have reached the formless dhyānas, the dhyāna of the infinite space, the dhyāna of infinite consciousness, the dhyāna of nothingness, the dhyāna of neither perception nor non perception, to have reached consummation in the practice of the contemplation of impurity or in the practice of ānāpānasati; if he declares that gods, dragons, yakṣa, preta, piśāca, kumbhāṇḍa, rākṣasa are used to visit his abode in order to ask questions which he answers, or in order to answer the questions he submits, it is in any circumstances a non-amendable offence.

“If, wishing to say ‘arhat’, one said ‘anagamin’, it is a middle level amendable offence; all the other cases can be inferred by analogy. If a lay person, when someone asks him: “Did you realize the Way?” remains silent or hints the answer by a sign, it is a middle level amendable offence.

“If he claims that vairambhaka or other ghosts visit his abode, it is a middle level amendable offence⁶³.

“If a lay person positively listened something, but declares to have not listened anything, or he did positively see something, but declares he did not, or he affirms to be doubtless when instead he harbours doubts, or to be doubtful when instead he is doubtless, if he lies in such a way, it is an amendable offence.

“If he has the intention to tell a lie, but he does not utter the words, it is a lower level amendable offence. If he utters the words, but without giving full expression to his ideas, it is a middle level amendable offence. If he claims in front of someone that he realized the Way, it is a non-amendable offence.

“In case he is deranged, or his mind is confused, so that he is unaware of his own words, there is no transgression.”

Drinking intoxicating drinks

At that time, the Lord was in the country of Ceti, at the city of Bhadrabodhi⁶⁴. The site was haunted by a dreadful dragon, whose name was Anpalatita⁶⁵, who ravaged the land with fierceness and brutality. No man could approach his den; no elephant, horse, cow, sheep, donkey, mule, camel could get near him. Not even birds could fly over his abode. At the time of harvesting, the hot season, he destroyed all the crops. The elder Svāgata, wandering through the country of Ceti, gradually reached the city of Bhadrabodhi. Having spent there the night, at dawn he put on his robe, took his bowl and entered the village for his alms round. As he was begging

⁶³ These ghosts seem to be of a lower class, visible also to those who have not realized higher states.

⁶⁴ It is not possible to know the name. The reconstruction is done from the Chinese transliteration *Batuoluopotī Yī* (跋陀羅婆提邑).

⁶⁵ Here either, the Sanskrit name seems to be unknown. The Chinese transliteration is *Anpoluotituo* (庵婆羅提陀).

his food, he heard about the dreadful dragon who dwelt in that land, whose name was Anpalatita, and who ravaged the country with fierceness and brutality, so that no men, or birds, or any other beast could approach his den. At the time of harvesting, the hot season, he destroyed all the crops. So acquainted about the matter, his alms round concluded, (the elder Svāgata) went to the den of Anpalatita the dragon and, prepared a sit under a tree near a pond, he sat in meditation. The dragon smelled the robe and, full of rage, started to emit smoke from his body. The elder Svāgata entered *samādhi* and, with the strength of his mystical powers, started to emit smoke from his body either. The dragon was even more enraged and started to emit fire from the body. The elder Svāgata entered a *samādhi* called ‘Splendor of Fire *Samādhi*’, so that his body similarly emitted fire. The dragon produced a shower of hailstones, but Svāgata transformed them into different kinds of cakes⁶⁶. The dragon made thunders burst and Svāgata transformed them into different kinds of Mahoṭika cakes⁶⁷. The dragon blew arrows, knives, spears, but Svāgata transformed them into blue, red and yellow lotuses. The dragon produced a shower of poisonous snakes, centipedes, serpents, millipedes, but Svāgata transformed them into garlands of blue lotuses, yellow flowers, summer flowers and sweet dragon flowers. The dragon used every sort of similar crafts to overwhelm Svāgata, but, all his skills exhausted, he could not prevail and he dissipated all his strength. Svāgata, aware that the dragon had depleted all his power and was unable to move, allowed his body to assume a very tiny dimension, entered through the dragon’s ears and came out from his eyes; then he entered again through the dragon’s nostrils and came out from his mouth; he moved freely in and out the dragon’s head without injuring the beast. The dragon, seeing such miracles, was deeply astonished. He stand up straight, joined his palms together and said to Svāgata: “I take refuge in you.” Svāgata replied: “You shouldn’t take refuge in me, but in my master, the Buddha.” The dragon answered: “From now on I take refuge in the Three Jewels and I will become a lay disciple of the Buddha for the rest of my life.” The dragon, having taken the Triple Refuge and having become a Buddha’s disciple, did not involve himself again in the dreadful deeds of yore; men, birds and beasts were allowed to approach his den and, at the time of harvesting, the crops were no more destroyed.

The rumour that the elder Svāgata had subdued a dreadful dragon, having him tread the path of virtue, so that men, birds and beasts could approach his den and the crops at the harvesting time were not damaged, spread in the country. All the citizens were eager to offer him a meal. A poor woman with faith and reverence made her invitation to him and Svāgata accepted by remaining silent. She prepared a porridge with milk for him to eat and she thought: “Perhaps the śramaṇa, after eating this gruel, would feel cold.” Therefore, she took a distillate that had the same colour of water and gave it to him. Svāgata, without due attention, drank the liquor, expounded the Dharma to his host and left, directed toward his temple. A soon as he reached the doors of the temple, the strength of the alcohol manifested and he felt down, completely drunk, all his belongings scattered around, the robe, the water strainer, the bowl, the stick, the bag of oil, the shoes, the box of needles. At that time the Buddha together with Ānanda arrived at the place, and seeing that bhikṣu, purposely asked Ānanda: “Ānanda, who is he?”, Ānanda answered: “World Honoured One, he is the elder Svāgata.” The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Prepare here my seat,

⁶⁶ The text gives the names of three different cakes that are only transliterations from Sanskrit.

⁶⁷ They are sweet cakes made with grapes, honey, nuts, etc., that were used for worship. (See Ding Fu Bao Dictionary).

carry some water, and summon the saṃgha.” Ānanda, after receiving the instructions, prepared the seat, carried the water, and summoned the saṃgha. Then, he informed the Lord: “World Honoured One, I prepared the seat, carried the water, and summoned the saṃgha.” The Lord, informed, washed his feet and, sat on the prepared seat, said to the bhikṣus: “You know there was a dragon, whose name was Anpalatita, whose fierceness and brutality brought great harm; no man could approach his den, neither could elephants, horses, cows, sheep, donkeys, mules or camels get near his place; not even birds dared fly over his dwelling place; at the harvesting time all the crops were destroyed. The virtuous Svāgata succeeded in subduing him and leading him toward the path of virtue, so that men, birds and wild beasts can now approach his den.” Someone in the assembly said: “I saw it, World Honoured One,” or “I heard it, World Honoured One.” The Buddha continued: “What do you think? Might now the virtuous Svāgata subdue even a toad?” The bhikṣus answered: “He cannot, World Honoured One.” The Buddha replied: “If even a saint, after drinking alcoholics, can completely loose himself, even more common people. All kind of transgression can derive from drinking alcoholics. From now on, whoever claims to be a disciple of the Buddha, cannot drink alcoholics; even a small drop cannot be drank.”

The Buddha, after having rebuked in many ways the fault of drinking alcoholics, said to the bhikṣus: “The liquors which are forbidden to a lay person fall into two categories: first, distillates made from grains; second, distillates made from trees, that is by using the roots, the stems, the leaves, the flowers, the fruits (of the trees), liquors blended from many kinds of seeds or officinal herbs. If a substance has the colour, the flavour, the taste of alcohol and can drive a man drunk, this is called alcoholic; if a lay person drinks a draught of it, this is called a transgression of this rule. Drinking liquors made from grains is a transgression at every sip; toasting a guest with liquor is a transgression at every sip; drinking sweet wine is a transgression at every sip; drinking brewed spirits which can drive a man drunk is a transgression at every sip; drinking fermented liquors is a transgression at every sip; drinking the dregs of wine is a transgression at every sip; drinking beverages which have the colour, the flavour and the taste of liquors and can drive a man drunk is a transgression at every sip. If a beverage has the colour of wine, but neither the flavour nor the taste (of an alcoholic drink) and does not drive a man drunk, drinking it is not an offence.”

End of the Sūtra