

## **General View of the Significance of the Vinaya Set by the Buddha – in the Modern Day Context**

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### **1. Definition of the Vinaya**

The term '*vinaya*' can have different [but similar] meanings: discipline, training rules, morality, monastic regulations, the code of monastic discipline, or the rule of discipline of the Order. It refers to abstaining from evil volition and the extinction of defilements – leading to happiness, prosperity and nibbana. Lower moral practices [five precepts] can lead to higher moral practices [227 rules of monastic training] – thus, the discipline can lead to higher practices in morality, the realization of truths and noble discipleship.

### **2. Nature and Aim of Vinaya**

The abstaining from bad volition or bad behavior is the aim of the Vinaya. Delight stemming from no remorse in the mind is the function and manifesto derived from discipline. Goodness in three ways of action is the proximate cause. The three wholesome actions are, to good through: bodily actions, speaking and thinking.

Cleanliness or purity is the aim of the Vinaya. Purification of discipline is cleanliness. Discipline can be divided into two kinds: discipline for households, and discipline for the homeless monks and nuns. Generally Buddhist followers observe five precepts [*panca-sila*] or eight precepts [*attha-sila*]; but novices and samaneri undertake ten precepts [*dasa-sila*]; while monks observe 227 regulations and nuns observe 311 rules of training.

### **3. Four Purifications of Morality**

To support the purification of morality, we as Buddhist followers should practice the four purifications of morality; namely:

- *restraint in accordance with the Patimokkha training rules*
- *Controlling the six-sense bases: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind*
- *Purity of conduct as regarding livelihood – avoiding wrong livelihoods*
- *Wise use of the four requisites: food, robes, residence, and medicine.*

If undertaken, these four purifications of morality lead one to become well-trained. One should avoid wrong livelihoods, employing oneself in a proper livelihood. Buddhist followers should consume the necessities of life while considering their true and artificial values. Additionally, the Buddha states in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, that when meditative-concentration is undertaken by one with virtuous conduct – then great benefits or attainments further occur; the mind becomes freed from the taints or cankers of: sensual pleasure, becoming and ignorance.

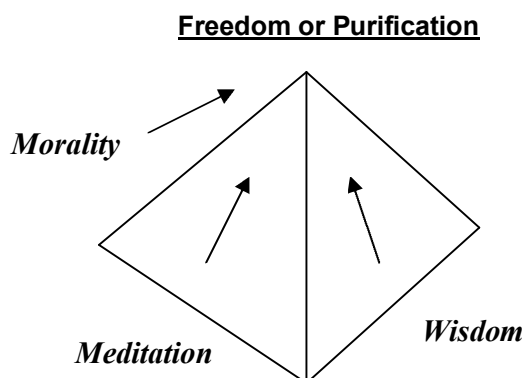
#### **4. Discipline as the Foundation of the Holy Life supporting Wholesome Behavior among Humans**

The holy-life can be interpreted as a living-religion [applicable] as a way of practice – securing and strengthening the religion. Buddhism depends upon the good discipline of all Buddhists, without – the religion becomes weak.

In the Samyutta-Nikaya, Mahavagga – the Buddha points out that setting out [practicing] the Eightfold Noble Path is: practicing the holy-life. Striving towards the elimination of lust, hate and delusion is the holy-life. The fruits of the holy-life are known as: the stream-enterer, the once-returner, the non-returner, and the Arahant. The components of the Eightfold Noble Path can be grouped together, into: *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna*. Having right-speech, right-action, and right-livelihood are considered as *sila* – or ‘discipline’. Therefore, discipline is a main pillar of the Buddhist holy-life.

#### **5. Discipline or Morality is the way to the Extinction of Suffering**

The Three-fold Training is known as the Path of Purification [*Visuddhimagga*] and the Path of Freedom [*Vimuttimagga*]. This 'system' of training, can be drawn in the style of a three-sided pyramid: *morality, meditation and wisdom lead to purified freedom.*



Discipline of morality is beautiful in the beginning. Meditation is beautiful in the middle and the wisdom is beautiful in the end – on the way to the absolute purification or absolute freedom, which is the extinction of suffering. Without discipline, meditation and wisdom, human beings cannot attain the extinction of all suffering.

## 6. Ten Benefits of Discipline

If anyone asks: “In how many reasons was the training rule laid down by the Buddha?” The answer can be found in the Parivara of the Vinaya Pitaka:

*For the excellence of the Order*

*For the comfort of the Order*

*For the control of shameless, evil-minded people*

*For the living in comfort of well-behaved monks*

*For the restraint of the cankers in the present, preventing temporal decay and troubles*

*For warding off of the cankers in the hereafter, for the protection against spiritual decay and troubles.*

*For the confidence of those who have not yet gained confidence*

*For the increase of the confidence of the confident*

*For the lastingness of the true doctrine*

*For the support of the discipline*

The construction of the Sangha cannot be done without discipline. The monastic communities in the past had lived in harmony and peace with discipline. We hope that even in the future, the monastic communities will be in harmony and bliss with discipline.

## **7. Vinaya or Discipline in the Modern Day Context**

Simply, the training rules in the Vinaya - Patimokkha can be summarized as:

- *Harmlessness: Such as no murder, no killing, and no destroying vegetation*
- *Relationships: prohibiting sexual intercourse, intimacy, touching, flirting, proposition, match-making, being alone with a woman, etc...*
- *Possessions and Offerings: these concern the use of the four requisites: food, robes, shelter and medicine, and other rules concerning money and various types of exchanges*
- *Right-Livelihood for a Bhikkhu:*
- *Miscellaneous: on disputes, schools of Buddhism and etiquette...*

## **8. Modern Discipline Standards**

It has been almost 2500 years since the Vinaya rules were originally set down or completely formulated – and many things in society have changed remarkably since that time. Should Vinaya regulations be brought up to date, and how can this be done?

Already during his lifetime, the Buddha made special allowances for different regions [*desa*] outside the ‘Middle Country’ of northern India – where he lived and taught. These adaptations dealt with the workings of the monastic community – for example: a smaller quorum is allowed in distant parts where there are fewer monks; and practical measures, such as a special dispensation for footwear and bathing. Definitely, there are existing precedents for adapting to conditions, but this does not mean the abolishing of any rules.

The Lord Buddha also left a set of principles that can still be used as a standard to judge new circumstances. These are known as “The Great Standards”,

and if properly used, they should protect against a wholesale dilution of the Monastic Code of Discipline. Here are the 'Great Standards':

*Bhikkhus, whatever I have not objected to, saying: 'This is not allowable' – if it fits in with what is not allowable, if it goes against what is allowable, that is not allowable for you.*

*Whatever I have not objected to, saying: 'This is not allowable' – if it fits in with what is allowable, if it goes against what is allowable, that is not allowable for you.*

*And, whatever, I have not permitted, saying: 'This is allowable' - if it fits in with what is not allowable, if it goes against what is allowable, that is not allowable for you.*

*And, Whatever I have not permitted, saying: 'This is allowable' – if it fits in with what is allowable, if it goes against what is not allowable, that is allowable for you.*

*These Great Standards should, with care, enable bhikkhus to live according to the Vinaya Rule, in – for example: isolated communities in non-Buddhist countries with non-tropical climates. They form a touchstone for modern conditions and substances.*

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