

## **Vinaya: The First Meaning of Training**

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The three-fold training is the most important means of training in Buddhism: training in higher morality; training in higher mentality; and training in higher wisdom. In training in higher morality, there are four training principles: discipline [vinaya], sense restraint [indriyasamvara], conduct in connection with the necessities of life [paccayapatisevana] and right-livelihood. Vinaya, as the first means of training in morality chiefly includes the Patimokkha Discipline for bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, respectfully, as well as personal discipline for daily living.

Vinaya is the laying down of a system or regulations on life-conduct and for living together as human-beings – in order to prepare life, society, and the environment, including related characteristics appropriate for improving living and training. This is also for the life of the sage, individuals, organizations, community and society – at all level. It is very important to help individuals train and develop their own elaborate and noble lives, so they gain the greatest benefits. The basic Vinaya for human-communities are the five precepts:

*Abstain from killing*

*Abstain from stealing*

*Abstain from sexual misconduct*

*Abstain from false speech*

*Abstain from consuming intoxicants*

This basic code-of-conduct is simply called the 'Five Precepts' which ensure security and safety, adequately, for human-society to live happily together.

This Vinaya should not be considered as a constraint or restriction. Instead, it should be considered as an opportunity, providing environmental and physical arrangements that support practice and the performance of various activities effectively. Examples are: arranging furniture, such as a table or chair, in the house where the object can be used easily without obstructing walk-ways. This also means, arranging the operational instruments of the doctor before an operation, and the arrangement of street traffic rules for highway travelers. Broadly, economic systems, social systems, political systems – including all customs that become the culture – are included into the word, '*vinaya*'.

The substance of vinaya is dependent on knowledge of Dhamma, the truth of all things according to their nature, then lay down regulations in order for humanity to benefit from Dhamma, the truth.

The Buddha formed the Sangha [order of disciples] with the aim to enable humanity to benefit from Dhamma by laying down regulations for the Sangha – known as the Patimokkha. It is the only way to set up: the way of life, duties, system of living together, activities, and relationships within the Sangha, as well as between other people; in addition to the means for seeking for, distributing and consuming the four requisites and arrangement for supportive and appropriate surroundings. This also includes blocking a hiatus that leads to deterioration and arranging items supportive for the individual in training. The ordained disciple, will, therefore be able to grow up with the three-fold training, progress and attain determined stages in the noble life: wisdom, purity, peace, happiness and liberation. Moreover, this is the way to make the Sangha into a source for spreading the Dhamma widely for well-being and happiness throughout the world.

Through this significance, the Vinaya becomes the starting point for the process of training and human development, which is the basic process in moral training and for providing the surroundings to prevent immorality: but supportive for good and desirable conduct. Vinaya also trains individuals conversant with moral conduct to become accustomed to higher conduct until finally it becomes his way of living, including prescribing various rules, regulations and social system that supports one's way of living. Whenever this training is successful and in accordance with the Vinaya, and one becomes accustomed to the noble conduct – stability, this becomes the way of living with morality – *sila* arises.

Vinaya, is therefore, a basic training principle of morality, which is important for the improvement of individual life. In this present world of consumerism, Vinaya alone, may be not sufficient for training. We must consider other training principles to support training: the sense of restraint, conduct in connection with the necessities of life, and right-livelihood.

Indriyasamvara is sense-restraint, which means mindfully using the sense-organs to prevent greed, hatred and delusion; instead, knowingly using them to develop wisdom, knowing the truths and information that leads to solving problems and to enable creative activities. Normally, sense-organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body have two functions:

1. To know what is being: seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched
2. For determining: good, bad, comfortable, uncomfortable, beautiful, ugly, etc...

In order to develop oneself, the practitioner needs to use the sense organs more for learning and greater comprehension. An undeveloped person uses sense-organs mostly for 'feeling' instead of using them for 'knowing'. When one is busy seeking desirable feelings, life is

pursued seeking desirable things and running away from undesirable things. Additionally, when one does not have time to concentrate on personal training – nothing beneficially results for the one in training, for the larger society and the world. Instead of having attachments to feelings as a simple consumer, if a person uses their sense-organs to know and understand – wisdom will definitely be developed and grown up – finally one becomes a productive and creative person. Then, the person, will find new and elaborate happiness for his own usage, as well as society in general.

Paccayapatisevana is conduct in connection with the four requisites: food, clothing, shelter and medicines – and perhaps, other consumer goods, including certain technologies, today. It is through training, in which one knows how to consume the requisites and other consumer goods. Starting from consuming food, one must mindfully consider the intake of food as necessary only to maintain the body, to have a healthy life, and to develop one's life.

Mindful consumption is called moderate, sufficient, or worthy consumption with full benefits: not wasting and not harmful. It is necessary, at the time of consumption, to consider or ask oneself why the substance is being consumed and for what benefit. Here, consumption, as well as all economic conditions is a supportive factor for developing a moral life. One who knows how to live life in this manner, is considered a moral person.

Samma-ajiva is the right-means of livelihood. For a Buddhist monk, this means purity of conduct, connected with right-livelihood (avija-parisuddhi). Debatably, it is the faithfulness to or seeking the necessities of life. It means refraining from wrong, illegal, and immoral livelihood. Substantially, it means avoiding occupations that lead to harming life and society, or lowering the conditions of life, mind and society. Buddha, therefore teaches, his lay disciples to abstain from employment, involving: trades with weapons, trades with humans, trades with flesh [animals for meat], trade in intoxicants and poisons. Apart from being beneficial for life and society, right livelihood also leads to training the individual, improving behavior, developing communication skills, etc. The profound meaning of right livelihood includes perseverance and carrying out that righteous livelihood, successfully, such as having no debts.

Though the Vinaya is considered to be the first training principle of morality, which is important for improvement of the life of the individual, but to successfully train the individual, one needs to pay more intensive attention to other moral training principles: sense-restraint, conduct in connection with the necessities of life, and right-livelihood. In the current-day context, the Vinaya is slightly distorted. The Buddha mainly teaches about the inner problems of the mind and about wisdom. The teachings on solving moral problems are taught moderately in accordance with the law of nature, such as: not to harm life, body, and

the property of others, and with physical and proper verbal actions, and assisting others in humanity. While the details apart from these may be different, depending upon other conditions; in order to solve these problems – prescribing the rules with procedures to solve what is done in accordance with the concerned conditions, not just to prescribe for humanity ‘permanence’. If we understand the essence of the Vinaya, we would realize the Buddhist view on external social problem-solving. Finally, those who understand the essence of the said principles – they would be able to arrange systems that fit, to solve the problems or cases occurring in their respective periods of time.