



## The Pātimokkha :The Code of Conduct for the Buddhist Monks

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### Abstract

*Vinaya Pitaka being the most revered text of the Pāli in Buddhism, opens with the code of conduct for the bhikkhus or the monks. The opening part is called the Pātimokkha, or the way to purification of the order of the Saṃgha (monastery). It contains more than 227 rules which are categorized in accordance with the heinousness to the less severity of the fault committed by the bhikkhu/s. Although some faults are not directly referred to as the part of the 227 rules, they find expression and are important for the purpose here. Bhagvat, in the Early Buddhist Jurisprudence says, "There are also two kinds of offences which come under thullaccaya and dukkaṭa which are a later addition" (29). Still what is very clear in the Pātimokkha is that the rules are very subtle observations as to covering all the probabilities that may fall under the ambit of a fault and the proper remedy for each fault is enumerated to maintain the order of the monastery.*

### Key Words:

*Bhikkhu - A wandering ascetic of high order initiated into Buddhism, Bhikkhunī – female bhikkhu, Desanā - It is the continuous process of purification of the faults that might have been committed without the knowledge of the bhikkhu. It is performed every full moon day and the new moon day by reciting three verses before the recitation of the Pātimokkha and the bhikkhus, after confession, feel relieved of all the Burdon of the faults. Pārājika and Saṃghādisesa are the kinds of faults not covered under Desanā, Dubbhāsita - a fault rising from du (evil) bhāsita (language), Dukkaṭa - a fault rising from evil action, Pātimokkha - the way to liberty from an offence, Pitaka - basket, Saṃgha – the communion of the monks, Theravāda - The oldest sect of Buddhism, Thullaccaya - made up of two words joined together "thula" meaning important and "accaya" meaning fault, thus an important fault.*

### Introduction

At the very outset Buddhism seems to be only one word, but as we proceed further, it is the name of at least two broad sections. The first is the Buddhism of the Monks, i.e., the Saṃgha; and the other is the laity, i.e., practiced by the lay people. Very minute study of the two sections is feared to lead to an abyss of complexities of an inexplicable void. This work studies the rules as laid down in Pātimokkha ordained to be observed by the order of the Saṃgha and the relation with the lay people. The laws for the people (Monks, both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs) of the Saṃgha are chiefly the proclamation of the Vinaya Pitaka and that of the laity are found in scattered form in the various texts of Buddhism including the three pitakas.

In fact the status of the Saṃgha was like that of a state itself endowed with all autonomy, and in ancient times even the

kings did not interfere in the matter of the culprits that, committing crime in a state, had joined the Saṃgha. Bhagvat puts this fact in her Early Buddhist Jurisprudence, in the following words:

This means, in a simpler language, that all legal matters were settled in the Saṃgha, not through the interference of a supreme authority, but through the appeal to the whole body of inmates regarding their idea of the common good. Thus no individual was crushed under the wheel of law nor was any individual vested with supreme authority. All stood on the same level and the Saṃgha ruled over them. (4)

Here it is important to note in the context of Buddhism, in particular, whenever this term Buddhism is used, it shall be construed that the work is not keeping in view only the present map of India, but the map that of the time of Buddha, i.e., down from about 620 B. C, and to about 543 B. C. advised by AdvinArnold in the Light of Asia (7-8), and



also the geographical area where the Buddhism has made its emphatic presence being one of the world wide religions.

### The Pātimokkha

The very core of Buddhism lies in the three Pitaks (baskets), which are, VinayaPitak; SuttantaPitak; and AbhidhammaPitak. Still some other works, profuse in number, also contain very useful information. The three pitaks of the Pāli canon are the greatest and the germinal source of the Buddhism and the Theravāda Buddhists are known to be the most orthodox followers of these norms. Not going far away towards the different dimensions of Buddhism which were added to it with its spread in many countries, this work concentrates only on the texts of the Pālicanon, the most authentic and authoritative ones. These texts of the Pāli canon are revered throughout the Buddhist world equally.

The VinayPitak contains rules for the Monks (both male and female) who make the order of the Saṃgha or the communion in the Monastery. All the members of the Saṃgha are ordained to live a life of celibacy, strictly obeying the rules as contained in the "Pātimokkha", implying the way for salvation of the degraded through penance. But some of these rules out of the 227 (for monks) do not allow the transgressor to remain the member of the Saṃgha. There are, generally, seven to eight types of transgressions enumerated in the most of the texts of the Pālicanon.

According to The Manual of the Bhikkhu, the following are the kinds of faults (āpattis) in descending order as to their severity:

All possible faults are classified into seven kinds, according to their degree of gravity. In the classification of the Pātimokkha, there are eight kinds of faults, grouped according to the type (way of purification and degree of gravity). Within all categories, we find similar kinds of faults. However, some kinds of faults are absent from the eight categories expounded in the Pātimokkha. (8)

Although some faults are not directly referred to as the part of the 227 rules yet

they find expression and are important for the purpose here. Bhagvat, in the Early Buddhist Jurisprudence says, "There are also two kinds of offences which come under thullaccaya and dukkaṭa which are a later addition" (29). Still what is very clear in the Pātimokkha is that there are several categories of the faults meant to treat the bhikkhuorder of the saṃgha, and one for the settlement of disputes among the bhikkhus in the monastery. These are, as the following:

Pārājika(parajita, i.e., defeated or fallen from the path of virtue): the gravest fault resulting in the loss of bhikkhuhood. These are four in number;

Saṃghādisesa(requireing the verdict of the saṃgha, the members of the communion): having lesser severity than the former but requiring a congregation of the bikkhus for confession and redemption thereby. These are thirteen in number; Aniyatā(not fixed as a direct fault but has an inference thereof): a fault having no defined feature but is circumstantial and situational, still requiring confession and the decree for acquittal. These are two in number.

Nissaggiyapācittiya (wrong possession without the permission): fault of possessing what ought not to, leading to the confiscation of such possession. These are thirty in number; Pācittiya (deliberate carelessness): fault of transgressing under negligence the set rules of conduct leading to expiation. These faults number ninety-two; Pāṭidesanīya (confession in camera): fault is admitted before the presence of the bhikkhu and is relieved thereof by proper prescription. Pāṭidesanīyas are four in number; Sekhia (conduct): fault related to bad conduct with fellow people, nature or anything around, which has to be confessed and begged for redemption. Seventy-five in number, these are of moral values; and Adhikaraṇasamatha(settlement of disputes): There are seven ways of settling the disputes among the order of the monks in the monastery.



Referring to the statement of S. Coles, Rhys Davids, in his introduction to the Vinayatexts expresses his displeasure on the way of inappropriate categorization of the faults as enumerated in the order of their severity, in these words: "It has been pointed out that, in the Pātimokkha, the offences are arranged in certain classes, called, with reference to the heinousness of the act committed, Pārājika, Saṃghādisesa, Pācittiya, Pāṭidesanīya, and Sekhia. In other parts of the Vinaya, other offences are called Thullaccaya and Dukkaṭa" (xxiv).

Thus we have three additional types of the faults not mentioned in the category of the earlier described faults, i.e., Thullaccaya, Dukkaṭa and Dubbhāsita. Thullaccaya is a serious fault redeemable by confession and following the formula of the Desanā. The fault Dukkaṭa results from bad action/s. But Dubbhāsita, a fault caused by a bad speech likely to entail others' criticism. One must be curious to know as to what is the formula of Desanā. The explanation for the expiation known as Desanā is prescribed by Sāmi, Dhamma in The Manual of the Bhikkhu as the following:

Performing desanā is a means to purify the offences (excluding the pārājikas and the saṃghādisesa) that bhikkhus commit. This is done regularly or whenever becoming aware of having committed an offence. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to the bhikkhu to perform this daily in order to purify the multitude of minor transgressions that most of them commit without noticing. Thus one abides always at ease with oneself. It is imperative to do desanā just before the pātimokkha recitation (on every full moon and every new moon day) so that, through this, all the bhikkhus develop a pure sīla at that time.

To do this, with the robe folded around the left arm (traditional although not obligatory), the more senior kneels, with bare feet, and the most junior bhikkhu does the same placing himself in front or aside. Desanā can be done in twos or threes. In the case of a desanā in threes, the two more junior place

themselves facing or to the side of the most senior and unveil their faults together. At that moment, the most junior bhikkhu addresses the more senior to purify his faults. (74)

## Conclusion

Thus, as per the aforementioned details, it is established that there are eight and three added to them equal to the eleven categories of faults that are described in the Vinaya texts purely for the order of the monastery and its communion, which is its monks. Proceeding further shall lead us to a wider and more complicated vast of the regulations for the order of the Buddhist monasteries. These eleven categories are further divided into 227 rules of punishment in accordance with the severity or minority of the transgressions falling there under.

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