

5

(Pañcaka) Niraya Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on the Hells | A 5.145

Theme: Moral virtue defines our karma

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2016, 2021

1 Sutta summary and sources

1.1 SUMMARY

The **(Pañcaka) Niraya Sutta** (A 5.145) is a very short statement that breaking any of the 5 precepts, especially habitually, will bring us hellish sufferings, again and again. When we abstain from breaking the 5 precepts, we create the karmic habits that fruit in living in the heavens or in heaven-like joy.

To keep the 5 precepts properly, we need to understand what they are, what they are about, and how we should keep them.

1.2 THE SOURCES OF THE 5 PRECEPTS

The 5-precept formula is given in the following texts:¹

Vinaya	Mv 6.15.8 (V 5:194) ²		<i>upāli,pañcaka</i>
Kūṭa,danta Sutta	D 5,2.63/1:146,19-21	SD 22.8	
Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	D 22,26/2:312,11-14	SD 13.2	
Āṭānāṭiya Sutta	D 32,6-15/3:195	SD 101.1	<i>veramaṇī dhammā</i>
Saṅgīti Sutta	D 33,2.1(9)/3:235		the 5 training rules
Mahā Sakul'udāyi Sutta	M 77,24/2:5	SD 49.5a	<i>pañca,sikkhāpada</i> ³
Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta	M 142,3.4/3:253	SD 1.9	
Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta ⁴	M 129,3/3:163	SD 2.22	
Pañca Vera Bhaya Sutta 1	S 12.41/2:68-70 = A 10.92	SD 3.3(4.2)	
Gandha,jāta Sutta	A 3.79,2/1:226	SD 89.13	
Samvāsa Sutta 1	A 4.53,4+5/2:58	SD 70.10	
(Atta,hita) Sikkhāpada Sutta 4	A 4.99/2:99	SD 64.9	
(Sappurisa) Sikkhāpada Sutta	A 4.201/2217	SD 47.3b	
Sikkhāpada Sutta 1	A 4.234,2+3/4:233	SD 89.14	
Sikkhāpada Sutta 2	A 4.234,8/4:235	SD 89.14	(abbreviated)
(Pañcaka) Niraya Sutta	A 5.145,2+4/3:170 f	SD 59.5	
Sārajja Sutta	A 5.171,3/3:203	SD 84.13	
Gihī Sutta	A 5.179,3/3:212	SD 70.10	
(Pañca,sīla) Bhikkhu Sutta	A 5.286/3:275 f	SD 84.16	
Dīgha,jānu Sutta	A 8.54,13/4:284	SD 5.10	<i>sīla,sampadā</i>

¹ In the 5 precepts, as part of the novice's 10 precepts (*dasa,sikkhāpada*), the 3rd becomes *abrahmacariyā veramaṇī ...* : Khp 1/1 f (KhpA 22-37); Mv 1.1.56 (V 1:83 f). The 1st 3 precepts are also listed under "right action" (*sammā kammantā*) and its opposite, and the first 4 precepts form part of the 10 course of karma (*kamma,patha*) and its opposite: these are not listed here. For the occurrences of the 5 precepts in the Aṅguttara, see SD 47.3b (2.2.2).

² Cf 6th *veramaṇī* at Nuns' Pāc 63, *sikkhamānā cha dhammā* (Bhī Pāc 63.1/V 4:319,24-29).

³ M 77 only mentions "the 5 training rules" (*pañca,sikkhāpade*), without listing them.

⁴ The one who breaks the 5 precepts is called a "fool, (weak) boy" (*bāla*).

Velāma Sutta	A 9.20,6(9)+7/4:395	SD 16.6
Paṭisambhidā,magga	Pm 1:41,13-15	the 1 st 4 precepts as <i>sammā kammanta</i>
Vibhaṅga	Vbh 285-293 ⁵	Abhidhamma & sutta exegeses
Kathā,vatthu	Kvu 10.10/2:440,17-441,10	Abhidhamma apologetics

2 The 5 precepts

2.0 THE 5-PRECEPT FORMULA

2.0.1 In this and the following sections [2.1-2.5], we will examine the 5 precepts based on the suttas, the Vinaya, the commentaries and **the Upāsaka,jan’ālaṅkāra**.⁶

The 5 precepts (*pañca,sīla*) or 5 training rules (*pañca,sikkhāpada*) are textually laid out as follows:

(1) <i>pāṇātipātā</i>	<i>veramaṇī sikkhā,padaṃ samādiyāmi</i>
(2) <i>adinn’ādānā</i>	<i>veramaṇī sikkhā,padaṃ samādiyāmi</i>
(3) <i>kāmesu micchā,cārā</i>	<i>veramaṇī sikkhā,padaṃ samādiyāmi</i> ⁷
(4) <i>musāvādā</i>	<i>veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi</i>
(5) <i>surā,meraya,majja,pamāda-ṭ,ṭhānā</i>	<i>veramaṇī sikkhā,padaṃ samādiyāmi</i>

and translated as follows:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| (4) I undertake the training rule to abstain from killing living beings [from taking life]. | [2.1] |
| (2) I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking the not-given. | [2.2] |
| (3) I undertake the training rule to abstain from sexual misconduct. | [2.3] |
| (4) I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech. | [2.4] |
| (5) I undertake the training rule to abstain from liquor, brews, intoxicants, the bases for heedlessness. | [2.5] |

2.0.2 The 5 precepts are the first half of **the novice’s 10 precepts** (*sāmaṇera dasa sikkhāpadā*). **The 3rd of the 10 precept** is the training in the abstention of all kinds of sexual activity, that is, the practice of celibacy, since the novice is training to become a monk in due course. **The lay follower’s 3rd precept** is the training to abstain from sexual misconduct, which is basically appropriate sexual behaviour at the right time without exploiting anyone and with self-restraint and respect for the other [2.3].

2.0.3 Why keep the 5 precepts?

2.0.3.1 According to **the Khuddaka,pāṭha Commentary**, we should keep the 5 precepts for the simple reason that doing so is naturally good:

These precepts are the first 5 of the novice’s 10 precepts [2.0.2], and are abstentions from natural faults (that is, wrongs on the account of **natural morality**) [2.0.3]. In other words, killing beings and so on (the breaking of the 5 precepts), arise from a completely unwholesome mind. The rest of the 10 precepts⁸ are blamable on account of prescribed morality (that is, on being prescribed by the Buddha as a part of monastic training in renunciation).⁹

⁵ See also Vbh 105,5, 235,14-19 for the 4-precept listings.

⁶ Upāsaka,janālaṅkāra (Upās:Ee 174-182; Upās:SLTP 33-44); tr Upās:A tr G Agostino, *The Ornament of Lay Followers*. See K R Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983b:170.

⁷ Upās: *tatiyassa idha micchācāra,vasena vattabbato*: The 3rd one here (for lay followers) should be understood in terms of “wrong conduct” (as opposed to full sexual abstinence or celibacy).

This is not to say that monastics are not bound by the 5 precepts. Although *the word* of the precept differs, they are closely connected in the spirit of moral virtue, being rooted in the Vinaya and renunciation. When a monastic is unable to keep even the 5 precepts, clearly then, he is worse than a lapsed layman, morally and psychologically fallen into the subhuman state here and now. [2.3.3.3]

2.0.3.2 The Buddha teaches the 5 precepts for the benefit of **lay followers**, busily engaged in household activities (*gihī,kamma*, that is, worldly work). Hence, we, as lay followers, are likely to find it a great burden, for example, in not accepting gold and silver (the use of money). Indeed, the 10 precepts are not easy for anyone to observe.

2.0.3.3 Another reason for the Buddha’s teaching lay followers to keep (at least) the 5 precepts is because we, as lay followers, are often “**first-timers**” (*ādi,kammika*, that is, beginners). In other words, we are still “**outsiders**” (*bahira* or *bāhiraka*)¹⁰ when we have not yet attained the path that frees us from worldliness, the supramundane path (*lok’uttara,magga*). We have not yet become even a streamwinner (*sotāpanna*), the 1st stage of development on the path of awakening.

2.0.3.4 A 3rd reason for the Buddha teaching the 5 precepts for lay followers is this. If we are told that we should guard all the 10 precepts, then, we may fear breaking any of them, since we think that we are likely to do so. Thus, it is as if we are overwhelmed by danger from all 10 sides. As a result, we would not dare to even undertake a single precept for fear of breaking them all!

Hence, only 5 are introduced for the sake of our taking up **moral training**, for the “sake of getting down” (*otār’attha*) into a boat that goes against the worldly currents, moving upstream away from a dangerous place to a safe place; or, at least, for entering the path of moral training.

This is an imagery showing how we can and must grow in moral strength. In due course, we will be able to observe an even fuller morality, that of the 10 precepts, should we choose to.¹¹

2.0.4 The universal precepts of basic morality

2.0.4.1 It is also vital for us to understand that keeping **the 5 precepts** constitutes the basic and essential exercises for the moral health of our body and speech. Through our body, we kill, steal or commit sexual misconduct; through speech, we lie; and when we get intoxicated, we are likely to break any or all of the precepts. All these wrong actions are compelled by the 3 unwholesome roots: greed (*lobha*), its opposite, hate (*dosa*), and by our delusion (*moha*).

⁸ The last 5 of the 10 precepts are those against: (6) taking food outside the proper times; (7) against dancing, singing, watching unseemly shows; (8) against beautifying oneself; (9) against taking high and luxurious couches; (10) against the use of money. See Khp 1 f; Comy: KhpA 34-37 (KhpA:Ñ 32-36).

⁹ *Paṭhamā c’ettha pañca ekanta,akusala,citta,samuṭṭhānattā pāṇātipāt’ādīnaṃ pakati,vajja,veramaṇiyo, sesā paṇṇatyi,vajjato’ti evaṃ.* (KhpA 24,13-16)

¹⁰ On ***bahira***: **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2); **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5(11)) + nn, SD 1.9; SD 47.1 (1.1.2). On ***bāhiraka***: SD 10.16 (1.2.3.2); SD 51.17 (3.4.2.3).

¹¹ This whole section is based on an untraced quote in Upās 175 (Upās:A 68). It is based on an untraced passage, quoted by Young (2011:93 n147) as “ItA 2:49,” based on Saddhatissa’s own remark, which Agostino notes “is mistaken” (2015:68 n3). The passage runs thus: *Ādikammikassa upāsakassa vasena pañc’eva vuttāni. So hi dasa,sikkhāpadāni akhaṇḍaṃ rakkhitabbāni ti khaṇḍane ādīnavaṃ dassetvā vuccamāno samantato veṭṭitaṃ viya attānaṃ maññaṃāno na kiñci rakkhituṃ ussaheyya, rakkhito vā sikkhāpadabhedāṃ pāpuṇeyya, tasmā tassa otāratthaṃ pañc’eva vuttāni ti.*

These are **the 3 unwholesome roots** (*akusala mūla*) of karma.¹² We create bad karma when we break any of the precepts. Every time we break a precept (whether we “officially” observe them or not), it is our unwholesome mind acting on us. As a result, we channel more bad or evil down those unwholesome roots, which flow deeper and faster into our **unconscious**,¹³ feeding the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) of lust (*kāma,rāga*), aversion (*paṭighā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).¹⁴

2.0.4.2 We have noted above that **the universal precepts** are the expression of natural morality, that is, they constitute the basic goodness for everyone [2.0.3.1]. The 5 precepts, in fact, respectively reflect the 5 universal values of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom*.¹⁵ In other words, these are the qualities which any wholesome culture or right-minded individual would agree on as basically defining what is “good.” These values are the bases for a good society which, in turn, conduces to the evolution of the wholesome individual. The good society and the wholesome individual work together, *pari passu* benefitting one another.

2.0.4.3 Since the 5 precepts are the universal precepts of basic morality [2.0.4.2], they are naturally binding on **monastics**, too. Hence, we cannot rightly say that a monastic who breaks any of the 5 precepts have no moral or karmic consequences. They *do*, since the mind behind the breach of any of them is rooted in greed, hate or delusion.

Monastics who break any of the 5 precepts are culpable on account of **the Vinaya**, since it defines the monastic (they have taken the vows to uphold the precepts), and from **the Dharma**, which define our natural goodness (they have openly declared that they want to seek “escape” (*nissaraṇa*) from the world, that is, freedom from suffering).

Hence, monastics who break any of the 5 precepts entails a “double fault”: the natural and the legal! They have gone against both the Vinaya and the Dharma. When, as monastics, we habitually break such precepts, or worse, renounce the Vinaya altogether, it means that we are not serious about our training. We have resorted to the monastic life for the wrong reasons or with false pretences! [2.3.3.4]

2.0.4.4 Furthermore, **the 5 precepts** are also a kind of summary, in layman terms, of the monastic rules and Dharma training. The monastic code or Pātimokkha of the monks comprises 227 fundamental rules, and of the nuns 311 rules. In other words, the 5 precepts, properly observed by the laity, keep them from falling into any subhuman state psychologically while they still live, and existentially in future lives.

Monastics who breach any of the rules entailing “**defeat**” (*pārājika*)—*those involving sexual activity, taking the not-given, killing another human, and making false claims to attainments*—automatically fall from their monastic state, reverting to their lay state, or they are simply wearing the robes pretending to be what they are not. Moreover, they will not be accepted into the sangha again in this life.¹⁶

Hence, we need to start over with the 5 precepts to build up our good karma by way of moral virtue. With our body and speech in joyful restraint, we are then ready to take up vital mindfulness training by way of the constant perception of impermanence, a simple but highly effective practice that will bring us

¹² On the 3 *akusala,mūla*, see **Mūla S** (A 3.69), SD 18.2; SD 4.14 (1.5); SD 50.20 (3.1.3).

¹³ See SD 17.8a (6.1); **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b (1).

¹⁴ See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3.

¹⁵ On the 5 values (*pañca,dhamma*) underlying the 5 precepts, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

¹⁶ On the monks’ 4 defeat rules (Pār 1-4: V 3:23, 46, 74, 91), see *The Pātimokkha* (ed Pruitt; tr Norman), 2001:8-11; on the nuns’ Pār 1-8 (V 3:23, 46, 73, 133, 4:213, 216, 218, 220), 2001:116-123.

streamwinning in this life: this is clearly stated, for example, in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), SD 16.7, or any of the other 9 suttas in **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25).

2.1 THE PRECEPT AGAINST KILLING

2.1.1 Living beings

2.1.1.1 In the precept beginning with *pāṇātipāta verāmaṇī* and so on [2.0.1], the phrase “**living beings**” (*pāṇa*) refers to the continuity (*santati*) of the aggregates (*khandha*)¹⁷ bound by the life-faculty; or what is designated as “a being” (*satta*) based [subsisting] on that continuum. “The killing of living beings” (*pāṇātipātā*) is an intentional destruction or causing death, that is, one is aware that it is a living being, which brings about the act of cutting off the life-faculty of that living being, executed through either the body door (personally done) or through the speech door (by a proxy, hinting or other means), resulting in the destruction of sentient life.¹⁸

2.1.1.2 There are these **5 constituents** (*sambhāra*) **of killing a living being**:¹⁹

- (1) a living being (that is, a being with breath and consciousness),
- (2) the awareness that it is a living being,
- (3) the intention to kill,
- (4) the effort made (by self, indirectly, or by proxy), and
- (5) the consequent death of the being.²⁰

2.1.2 The taking of life

2.1.2.1 The technical aspects of the precept against killing are found in the Old Commentary (*pada,-bhājanīya*)²¹ attached to the Sutta, vibhaṅga (the Vinaya analyses of the monastic rules). It should be noted that these Old Commentary definitions refer specifically to the Vinaya (V 3-4); hence, allowances should be made when those terms are applied to the suttas.

We usually think of such killing as being done intentionally, knowingly, perceptively and purposively. “**Intentionally**” (*sañcicca*) refers to a breach committed “knowingly, perceptively, deliberately.” Basically, “**knowingly**” (*jānanto*) means one knows what one is doing; “**perceptively**” (*sañjānanto*) means one acts well perceiving [recognizing] the object of one’s action; “**purposively**” (*cecca*) means mindfully, with an idea of the consequences of one’s actions.²² However, habitual killing, such as the slaughtering of animals or killings by professional assassins may be done almost “reflexively,” that is, unconsciously.

¹⁷ The 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) are form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness: SD 17.

¹⁸ V 3:73,17-74,23; VA 2:439,14-17; DA 1:69,20-70,4; MA 198,9-26; ItA 2:48-49,10. On the 5 constituents defining killing, see SD 10.16 (4.4.1.2).

¹⁹ These nn on killing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (1). For technical details, esp concerning monastics, see 3rd defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pār 3 @ V 3:68-86) + V:B 185-217.

²⁰ This list of criteria on killing is from Comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:198**. For details, see SD 10.16 (4.4.1). For the first 4 precepts, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7) @ SD 1.5 (1); **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41), SD 5.7, defs SD 5.7 (2.2.1).

²¹ *Pada,bhājanīya* actually means “word analysis” (or almost word by word analysis) of each of the Pātimokkha rules: V:H 1:xi (index: Old Comy), 2:xxv f (where she points out a few omissions). See Norman 1983b:19.

²² *Sañciccāti jānanto sañjānanto cecca abhivitaritvā vitikkamo* (V 3:73,19 f; VA 2:436,23-437,8). Comy explains *cecca* as meaning “by way of an intention to murder, having thought it, having planned it” (*cetanā,vasena cetetvā pakappetvā*, VA 2:437,8 f)

I have deliberately avoided translating *sañjānanto* as “consciously” (*sa,cittaka*) for a very significant reason. We can and often create karma unconsciously. In fact, as unawakened beings who lack whole-some mindfulness and wisdom, we habitually do so. This important fact has been discussed elsewhere.²³

“**Human being**” refers to the sentient state from the mind’s first arising (or the 1st rebirth consciousness, *paṭhamam paṭisandhi,cittam*).²⁴

“**Killing**” (*jīvitā voropeyya*, “were to deprive (another) of life,” V 3:73,24) means that one cuts off the life-faculty [2.1.2.2];²⁵ destroys it; breaks its continuity.²⁶

2.1.2.2 Traditionally, killing may be committed in any of these **6 ways** or undertakings (*payoga*): (1) by oneself, (2) by command, (3) by missile, (4) by fixed contrivance, (5) by science, and (6) by psychic power.²⁷

(1) **By oneself** (*sahatthika*), literally, “by one’s own hand,”²⁸ that is, directly or indirectly. Directly (*uddisa*) means that killing was done by oneself, “by one’s own hand.” Indirectly (*anuddisa*) means that the killing is effected, for example, by one suggesting, “Let anyone die” (*yo koci maratu*). In either case, when the victim dies, whether by one’s action, or later, due to a ill health (arising from one’s action), with the person’s death, one is accountable.

In the case of concerted killing, many trying to kill one, the actual responsibility will be with the person by whose authority the killing is ordered [following], and the one who actually effects the victim’s death.²⁹ (This aspect of direct and indirect execution of the deed also applies, mutatis mutandis, to the other ways of killing.)

(2) **By command** or authority (*āṇātika*), that is, where one gives the order, or uses one’s authority to get the killing done. Such an instruction may be defined in any or all of 6 ways: by object, time, location, weapon, posture and manner of execution. Object (*vatthu*) may be any kind of breathing being (human or non-human). Or one determines the time (*kāla*) of killing, or the location (*okāsa*), or the weapon (*āvudha*) to be used, or the posture of the victim (*iriyā, patha*),³⁰ or the manner of the killing (*kiriya, vivesa*).³¹

(3) **By missile** or projectile (*nissaggiya*) means that the killing blow is delivered by one throwing something or one’s initiating some effort that will effect the blow or cause its deadly effect on the victim. Hence, one creates bad karma, for example, by throwing a sizable stone at the intended victim, who dies as a result. Even when the victim does not die or will survives, one creates some level of bad karma on account of one’s unwholesome intention.

(4) **By a fixed contrivance** (*thāvara*) refers to an in situ manner of killing someone, such as digging a pitfall, or placing some poison (such as on some fixed sharp point) on which the victim will lean, putting something lethal in the victim’s vicinity, giving some wrong medicine, bad prescription or poison, or using

²³ Unconsciously (*acittaka*) : SD 7.9 (2.1); SD 57.25 (3.1.2.2). Opp *sa,cittaka*.

²⁴ VA 2:437,16 f.

²⁵ Cf Vbh 123.

²⁶ *Jīvitā voropeyyāti jīvit’indriyam upacchindati uparodheti santatim vikopeti* (V 3:73,24 f).

²⁷ ItA 2:50,9-15.

²⁸ KhpA 29,7-24; cf VA 1:239,3, 241,26-36, 242,40-243,11.

²⁹ This is an interesting case of group karma. Although the others of the group did not kill, they are also indirectly creating some bad karma according to the nature and intensity of each member’s unwholesome intention, unless one is forced to join, but has no unwholesome intention at all.

³⁰ Ie, when the victim is standing, walking, sitting, lying down, or doing some kind of action.

³¹ Ie, by an act that ends his life, incl any kind of torture, such as those mentioned in **Mahā Dukkhā-k,khandha S** (M 13,12-14/1:87), SD 6.9.

some kind of mechanical device to kill the victim. This method is similarly twofold: the direct and the indirect, as already mentioned [1 above].

(5) **By means of science** (*vijjā,maya*): *vijjā* in this context means some kind of “magical” incantation for the purpose of causing death. Hence, this includes a range of killing methods from voodoo to any kind of modern scientific or science-related means, such as using some kind of toxic substance or food on the victim. The karma is accrued once the process is started; and as it worsens (such as the victim getting sick), one karma also commensurately worsens, and so on.

(6) **By psychic power** (*iddhi.maya*), such as using one’s mental powers to sharpen an object, such as a tusk, so that it becomes lethal. Even when we do not have the traditional psychic powers mentioned in the suttas, the thought of wishing another’s death, especially when constantly done, creates bad karma for oneself. For a monastic to even to say that someone should be killed, bad karma is created, and he also automatically entails the offence of defeat, by which he falls from his state of monkhood.

2.1.2.3 According to **Dhammapāla**,³² as a result of an intention to kill, the great elements (the physical or organic aspects of being), constituting the current life-faculty’s support about to come into existence do not do so. The killing causes a different physical process to occur, one that is not as pure or efficacious as the preceding one.

For a sentient being, from the time of birth to death, every moment of the life-faculty arises from karma working with the life-faculty that has arisen in the previous moment. However, with the occurrence of an opposing condition, such as the stroke of a weapon, or the like, the co-arising life-faculty begins to produce a progressively weaker force (*samatthi*).

This leads to a point when this force is so weak that the life-faculty, though it has the potential of arising, does not do so, on account of the loss of that force. With the cessation of the physical aspect of the life-faculty, the non-physical (mental) aspect, due to its connection with the physical aspect, ceases, too.

This is an interesting attempt to suggest that the victim’s life is ended by the killing, by way of some kind of breakdown of bodily or organic process that supports life. For example, a major blood-vessel is ruptured; the heart stops beating or does not restart; the brain is unable to communicate with the rest of the body, and so on, so that the person dies.³³

2.1.3 Degrees of blame in moral lapses

2.1.3.1 The early Buddhist texts—the suttas, the Vinaya and canonical Abhidhamma—basically teach that “killing is morally wrong” (*akusala*). Even killing the smallest being should be avoided, as much as the killing of parents or of arhats. There is no **theodicy** (literally, “justifying God”), the justification for the existence of evil in the world, in early Buddhism. The closest we come to this is in the commentaries.

The Vibhaṅga Commentary, for example, seems to lay out a “**progressive scale of blame** (*sāvajja*),” thus:³⁴

- killing a smaller animal is less blamable than killing a larger one;
- killing a human of bad conduct is less blamable than killing one naturally good;
- more blamable is to killing one who has gone for refuge; more than that, one who keeps the 5 precepts;
- more than that a novice; more than that an ordinary monk;
- more than that, a streamwinner; more so a once-returner; more so a non-returner;
- worst of all, an arhat.

³² KhpA 29,8-30,35 (detailed); ItA 2:49,2-6.

³³ Further on “refraining from taking life,” see SD 10.16 (4.4.1).

³⁴ VbhA 382,29-383,5 abridged.

2.1.3.2 This seems to be a curious categorizing the moral worth of beings by **status**. Early Buddhist morality is, however, rooted in lovingkindness, boundless love. This means that there is *no* measuring of the worth of a person or a being, where one life could be worth more than another. This is, at best, a social perception of the worth of life, animals and humans; hence, harming or killing them is said to be “blamable” (*sāvajja*), and considered relatively “bad or evil” (*pāpa*), the pre-Buddhist idea of morality. The Buddha’s teaching, however, is that respecting and protecting even a tiny (*aṇuka*) life is a wholesome (*kusala*) act, especially when done with lovingkindness.³⁵

2.1.3.3 On the other hand, the suttas do mention certain kinds of people or individuals who should be shown great respect on account of their having given us life (as humans) and raised us (into humanity), that is, our parents or guardians; and those who, by their own effort, have attained various levels or states of the noble path, especially the arhats.

The Parikuppa Sutta (A 5.129), for example, lists the 5 heinous act “with immediate effect” (*ānantarika kamma*), that is, they have karmic retribution in immediately following existence (rebirth in hell). These 5 heinous offences are as follows:³⁶

(1) matricide	<i>mātu,ghāta</i>
(2) patricide	<i>pitu,ghāta</i>
(3) killing of an arhat	<i>arahanta,ghāta</i>
(4) drawing blood from a buddha	<i>lohit’uppāda</i>
(5) schism	<i>saṅgha.bheda</i>

Karmically, it is said that a buddha can never be killed; he will pass away in his own time. Causing a **schism** in the conventional sangha is very serious because the schismatic would be one with very strong unwholesome, bad karma, and infect others with it, causing widespread negative effect on the Buddha’s teaching, so that countless people would be deprived from benefitting from it.³⁷

2.1.3.4 Another point worth considering is that we cannot really categorize karma according to **numbers**. For example, we cannot, in true reality, say that killing 1 big animal is better than catching and killing a large catch of fish.³⁸ The consciousness that defines life cannot be measured, and is considered a process of conscious moments moving at lightning speed.³⁹ In other words, consciousness or the mind is something that cannot be quantified: it is *impermanent, still evolving and has no abiding essence*.⁴⁰

2.2 THE PRECEPT AGAINST STEALING

2.2.1 Adinn’ādāna

2.2.1.1 The word **adinna**, “the not-given” [2.2.1.2], in the compound, *adinn’ādāna*, means what belongs to someone else, or is in another’s possession. In other words, that person (the owner) had

³⁵ See eg **Karaṇīya Metta S** (Khp 9.4d/8 = Sn 1.8,4d/25); comy KhpA 246,8-12.

³⁶ On the 5 heinous acts, see **M 115**,13 + SD 29.1a (2.2); SD 46.19 (3.1); SD 2.17 (1.3.2); SD 10.16 (5.5.5.2 n).

³⁷ Cf **Sn 396**: One should neither destroy life nor cause killing, | nor approve of others killing. || Putting aside the rod towards all beings, | be they moving or still in the world. (*Pāṇam na hāne na ca ghātayeyya | na cānujaññā hanataṃ paresaṃ || sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ | ye thāvarā ye ca tasanti loke.*)

³⁸ Further on moral issues regarding killing, see P Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 2000:52-59.

³⁹ On consciousness, see **Viññāṇa**, SD 17.8a.

⁴⁰ These are the 3 universal characteristics: *anicca, dukkha, anaṭṭā*; see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).

freedom with it or rightful access to it, doing what he liked with it, doing so rightly and blamelessly.⁴¹ When such an object is taken away by another, and has not been freely given personally or verbally, directly or indirectly, then, that object is “not-given,” that is, stolen.

2.2.1.2 The phrase *adinn’ādāna* (resolved as *adinna*, “the not-given,” + *ādāna*, “taking away”) means the taking away of the not-given [2.2.1.1], of what belongs to another. This means that one is aware that it is another’s property, and initiates the act of appropriating it either through the body door (by himself) or the speech door (by communicating, directly or indirectly): this is the act of **stealing**.⁴²

2.2.1.3 These are the 5 constituents of taking the not-given:⁴³

- (1) another’s property,
- (2) the awareness that it is another’s property,
- (3) the intention to steal,
- (4) the effort, and
- (5) the consequent removal of the object.⁴⁴

2.2.1.4 The modern idea of **copyright** developed after the invention and use of the printing press in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. There were no such notions in the Buddha’s time and in the centuries that followed. There was no commercial value to the teachings which are sacred, practical and the common property to all, especially the practitioners.

Even the idea of **authorship** is unclear then, since, as a rule, nothing of the Buddha’s teachings were written down until just before the start of the Common Era. Even then, such writings were not “copyrighted” (in the modern sense). In fact, it was regarded as *meritorious* to make exact copies of such scripture for the benefit of others, and for the dissemination and preservation of the teaching.

Even the classic works on Buddhist doctrines, stories, exegesis, grammar, prosody, and so on, by the great Buddhist teachers, thinkers and writers did not always mention an author. Often they were written anonymously; or their authorship was attributed to an arhat from the Buddha’s time, invoking their respective Dharma acumen.

Often, such writings bore the very names of **the great arhats** like Sariputta, Moggallāna, Anuruddha, Kaccāyana, and so on.⁴⁵ The inspiration behind such writing, that of elucidating and spreading the Buddha’s teachings, outweighed these writers from seeing themselves as the “authors” of such wisdom. At best, they saw themselves merely as mirrors reflecting the light of the Buddhas and the great arhats.

⁴¹ KhpA 26,6-10.

⁴² ItA 2:51,20-25.

⁴³ These nn on stealing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (2). For the rule concerning monastics, see 2nd defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pār 2 @ V 3:41-67) + V:B 137-184.

⁴⁴ This list of criteria on stealing is from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:198 f**. For details, see SD 10.16 (4.4.2).

⁴⁵ One way to identify such authors is by prefixing their originating placenames (usually a village or town) to their names. This is a common practice even today with names of monastics from Sri Lanka, and the Sayadaws of Myanmar (who are not referred to by name out of respect for them). Thai monks often use their original name (often without their family name), suffixed with the *chāyā* (“reflection”), ordination name. Non-Thais may have longer names. When I was a monk, my full monastic name was “Beng Sin Piyasīlo sae Tan” (*sae* is the Thai word, same as the Chinese, for “surname”).

2.2.1.5 The modern concept of **copyright** developed after the invention, improvement and increasing use of **the printing press** in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries.⁴⁶ The printing press made it easy and cheap to produce and reproduce works. However, since there was no copyright law then, anyone, with the means, could buy or rent a press and print any text.

Popular new works were immediately reset and reprinted by competitors. To remain in business, a printer must produce a constant stream of materials. Authors received high fees for their works, thus significantly supplementing the incomes of many academics.⁴⁷

Monastics who are true to their vows would renounce any royalties. This, as a rule, should bring down the prices of such publications, or even make them freely available, especially online as soft copies. Moreover, pious Buddhists with surplus income or out of mere faith, or some friendly foundations,⁴⁸ would donate to or sponsor the printing of sutta translations. Even where they renounced royalties, writers and translators would still reserve the copyright of their works for themselves by way of authorship accountability, and also for proper referencing by students and others who cite those works.

2.2.1.6 Although there are **copyright laws** today, especially for books, writings, compilations and researches (which are our special concern here) in developed countries, copyrighted publications tend to be more freely used or available in the less developed societies, especially where most are unable to afford to buy books which are often very expensive.⁴⁹

Even articles by academics or offprints from reputed scholars are marketed at exorbitant prices by specialist publishers. An article like this, for example, when copyrighted to some publishing corporation, may be charged, say \$50 Singapore dollars per copy or download! Exasperated academics, who feel that their works are being exploited by such commercial concerns, would often send us a free copy of their papers when we write to them properly mentioning our purpose and need for them. Since they are the original authors, such transactions are regarded as gifts.⁵⁰

2.2.1.7 Then, there are well organized “**online libraries**,” especially those based in Russia, that give free public access to books (including rare works like old and rare encyclopaedias) and journal articles for practically free (except for an occasional small donation).⁵¹ Despite international copyright agreements, such online libraries operate freely. If those concerned want to overcome such rampant “piracy,” then,

⁴⁶ L R Patterson, *Copyright in Historical Perspective*, Vanderbilt Univ Press, 1968:36 f; J Kostylo, “From gunpowder to print: The common origins of copyright and patent,” in R Deazley et al, *Privilege and Property: Essays on the History of Copyright*, Cambridge: Open Book, 2010:21-50, [Privilege and Property - 1. From gunpowder to print: the common origins of copyright and patent - Open Book Publishers \(openedition.org\)](https://www.openbookpublishers.org/works/privilege-and-property-1-from-gunpowder-to-print-the-common-origins-of-copyright-and-patent).

⁴⁷ Frank Thadesuz, “No copyright law: The real reason for Germany’s industrial expansion?” *Spiegel Online*. 18 Aug 2010. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/no-copyright-law-the-real-reason-for-germany-s-industrial-expansion-a-710976.html>.

⁴⁸ Bh Bodhi’s commercial translation series published by Wisdom Publication, Boston (a non-profit, charitable organization) affiliated to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), eg, received generous donations as follows: *The Numerical Discourses*, 2012 (the Hershey Family Foundation; donations in memory of Gan Chin Hong and Young Cheng Chu); *The Suttanipāta*, 2017 (the Hershey Family Foundation).

⁴⁹ A paper like this one may, by a conservative estimate, cost say US\$30 per download!

⁵⁰ Actually, it all depends on the agreement between the author and the publisher. Authors may receive some (usually 50 or 100) printed copies of their papers free distribution. Any extra copies beyond this need to be paid for. Now with PDF copies, authors are allowed to distribute, say, 50 copies free of charge. There is, of course, no way for the publisher to count, but it is hard to exceed the free limit any way. Many publishers prohibit posting published articles on any on-line platform or social media. (My thanks to Looi Soo Chin for this comment, 21 Sep 2021)

⁵¹ International copyright agreements are administered by WIPO (World Intellectual Properties Organization), whose HQ is in Geneva, Switzerland. It currently has 193 member states, and Russia is a member state.

they have to consider and introduce some ways of making books and related materials (such as journal articles), easily and freely or cheaply available both in libraries and online.

For journal articles and specialist writings generally, the trend today is give the public “open access” to them. An author pays to publish (often sponsored by their institutions or funding agencies), and the copyright remains with him. There are also platforms (like a vendor) through which authors sell their publications online at an affordable cost; or we can self-publish and sell our ebooks through our own websites.⁵²

2.3 THE PRECEPT AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

2.3.1 *Kāma* as objects of sense-pleasures

2.3.1.1 In connection with the 3rd precept, against sexual misconduct, we need to examine the key component, *kāmesu*, the locative form of *kāma*, which has 2 senses: sense-pleasure and the object(s) of sense-pleasures.⁵³ In the phrase *kāma-c, chanda* (the 1st of the 5 hindrances), for example, *kāma* can be translated as “sensual desire,” and clearly implied so in *kāma, raga* (the 4th of the 10 fetters), “sensual lust”—both terms have the same sense of “desire for sensual pleasures.”⁵⁴

In the context of the 3rd precept, *kāmesu* (locative) means “in sensual pleasures.” In other words, this precept is about training oneself “to abstain from misconduct “in” (towards) sensual pleasures” (*kāmesu micchā, cārā veramaṇī*).⁵⁵

2.3.1.2 “Sensual pleasures” (*kāma*) here refers to how the 5 sense-objects, through the sense-faculties, *please* the mind, but which when not properly understood or restrained, will induce us to want more of them without end. Hence, they are also called “the 5 cords of sense-pleasures” (*pañca kāma, guṇa*).⁵⁶

A weak or clouded mind is easily fed and bound by these cords of sense-pleasures, so that it gets addicted to them. Hence, **the 5th precept**—that of *abstaining from intoxicants*—is included in the 5 precepts to help keep the lay followers mindful or, at least, clear-minded. As lay followers, we face the 5 cords, as a rule, most of our waking life. We thus need to train ourselves not to be overwhelmed by them even though we may not be celibate.⁵⁷

2.3.1.3 “**Misconduct**” or wrong conduct (*micchā, cārā*) is rooted in any of the 3 unwholesome roots [2.0.4.1], that is, we are induced to conduct ourselves *wrongly* (in an unrestrained manner) towards sense-pleasures arising through visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes and touches; in short, the physical body. This precept, then, is about wrong conduct in **treating another merely as sexual objects**. What does this mean?

The Saññoga Sutta (A 7.48) records an interesting and instructive observation by the Buddha on how we are attracted to our own sensual nature: *our looks, pride, desires, voice, adornments*. We are aroused

⁵² See eg <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/make-money-selling-ebooks-online-4122181>.

⁵³ On the 2 senses of *kāma*, see SD 32.2 (1.2).

⁵⁴ On *kāma-c, chanda*, see SD 32.2 (1.3). On *kāma, raga*, see SD 6.11 (2).

⁵⁵ On the 2 senses of kāma, subjective sensuality and sense-desire or objective sensuality (the 5 physical sense-objects): SD 32.2 (1.2.2). On its 3 important senses: the subjective, the objective and the sense-based: SD 55.17 (2.1.1.2) n.

⁵⁶ On the 5 cords of sense-pleasures, see SD 32.2 (2.3).

⁵⁷ The practice of celibacy means that we abstain from any kind of conduct that would arouse sensual pleasure, especially in the training of monastics: see eg **Methuna S** (A 7.47), SD 21.9. A wholesome celibate life is best sustained by mental joy, esp that arising from Dharma learning and meditation practice.

by them and delight in them. Then, we notice these same things in another of the opposite sex, and we are struck by the differences of those *looks, pride, desires, voice, adornments*.

Perceiving this as what we lack, we *want* them. Psychologically, this is the desire for another **body** for its *physicality* (bodily features or qualities): we seek union with the other so that we can enjoy and *have* what we lack. This, basically, is the nature of **sexuality**.⁵⁸

Interestingly, this lack is only a perception: we *recognize* from our own personality and past experiences that we lack what we see in others. In other words, these are really *psychological and emotional lacks*. This explains why sexual attraction is not always between opposite sexes, but rather between or amongst individuals.

2.3.1.4 The reality is that **we are attracted to like** (we literally “like” it) and we want it all. Hence, when we see this *likeness* [2.3.1.3] in others, whether in one of the opposite or the same sex, we desire it: we want to have what we *recognize* as our “self” in that otherness: we see others in our own image.

It is not the difference that attract us, but the apartness, that gap, that lack, that we want to have and to fill up the hollowness of our own being. **Sexual attraction**, then, is our profound sense of inner lack or incompleteness, that a part of us is missing and found in *that other* or *others*. It is possible that we have never been really loved as children; hence, we never learned to love.

What we did not get, we do not have; so we feel this. What we do not have, we cannot give; so we think this. But what we only get in sex is **lust**, which is our desperate cry for our image in the other, like Narcissus and his image on the water surface. We can never have this lust because it is *not* there: It is merely our own projection of an inner lack.

2.3.1.5 While lust takes and wants more, **love** fills and gives and gives. When we have been loved when young, we learn to love: we are filled and runs over with love so that we freely give. To love, then, is to give. Only in giving love, we are loved. More than what we get, love is what we truly *have*, what we really *are*. This is the emotional grammar of **the present moment**, seeing it as it really is.

Love, then, is rooted in **joy**. It is a joy that lives forever in the present, *seeing it as it really is*, with need for neither the past nor the future. It is a profound and powerful curiosity of the present moment, a total interest in it, being present with it, living it.

It is Narcissus when he learns that he is that image in the water; that, even without looking into that image he *is*. There is no lack; without *lack*, there is no *want*; without want there is no *lust*. He is happy with himself because he *is*. He is able to see others in the same manner: that they, too, are really like him.

2.3.1.6 **Love**, as Plato (quoting Aristophanes) says in *The Symposium* (189c-193e) is simply the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole. Primordial man, says Greek mythology, was whole, with 4 arms, 4 legs, 2 sets of genitals, and a head with 2 faces. Fearing their power, Zeus splits them all into two. When one half meets the other, they are lost in amazement of friendship, intimacy and love. **Love** calls back the halves of our original nature together. It tries to make *one* out of two, and heal the wound of human nature.

On a deeper level, in Buddhist terms, when **the mindheart** is two, it is beside itself. The Buddhist cultivation (*bhāvanā*) is that of making the two one, mating mind with heart, transcending thinking and feeling. Hence, when this oneness is gained, there is joy, the joy of oneness, the mindheart is whole: the whole in one, the one is whole.

2.3.1.7 Love, then, is the vision of ourself as truly and fully *a part* of the other; we are both self and other, mother and child. It is like **a mother** who, after bearing her child for 9 months in her womb, frees

⁵⁸ A 7.48 (SD 8.7).

him to have his own life. The happy mother sees the child as forever a part of her, even though they are both *apart*. She does not need to *have* him because *he is her*, the same flesh and blood, as it were. She is happy even to see him just as he is: this is **lovingkindness**, unconditional love.

2.3.2 Wrong sexual conduct

2.3.2.1 Misconduct (*micchā,cārā*) [2.3.1.3] refers to unwholesome intention expressed through bodily action (bodily karma). **The Vinaya** is very clear, by way of legal technicality and case histories, in its definition of **a sexual act**, thus:

“**Indulges** (*paṭisevati*) [‘has’ (V:B 120)] means (meeting of) organ with organ, genital with genital, even to the depth of a sesame seed: this is called *indulges*” (*paṭisevatīti nama: yo nimittena nimit-taṃ aṅga,jātena aṅga,jātaṃ antamaso tila,phala,mattaṃ pi paveseti, eso paṭisevati nāma, V 3:28,-11 f*).

Immediately following this definition, the Vinaya adds: “Even with an animal ... how much more so with a woman.” (V 3:13-15)

The chapter on the 1st defeat rule regarding sexual intercourse (Pār 1) closes with permutations to include every aspect of “sexual intercourse,” in great detail.⁵⁹ All this is fully listed out (revised with corrections) in Brahmali’s updated version (V:B) of Horner’s dated *The Book of Discipline* (V:H).

These comprehensive definitions of sexuality given by the Vinaya may be summarized as follows: the sexual act is committed with the meeting of **male, female or hermaphrodite** partners, human, non-human or animal, involving the engagement of the sexual organ (male or female) with any of the 3 orifices: the mouth, the vagina, the anus. The sexual object may be *alive or dead* to constitute sexual misconduct.⁶⁰

2.3.2.2 Although **masturbation** of any kind is prohibited for monastics,⁶¹ there is no such prohibition for the laity. However, a lay person should try to understand the conditions leading to such an act, whether it is symptomatic of other underlying issues that need to be addressed, and to be mindful of his or her health.

He should see and reflect on the reality of impermanence in such pleasures, how it is merely a momentary relief between feelings of unsatisfactoriness, and that there is no way of “owning” (the nonself of) such pleasures. For that reason, it is never fully satisfying; for, if it is really fulfilling, one does not need to do it any more.

2.3.2.3 Traditionally, as defined in the Vinaya and the suttas, based on the ancient Indian context, sexual misconduct is any kind of sexual act with “protected” women and other prohibited objects of desire. There are the following **20 prohibited objects of desire**, that is, the 10 kinds of women (*dasa itthi*) and the 10 kinds of wives (*dasa bhariyā*), that is, a woman (a few with explanations from the Old Commentary):⁶²

⁵⁹ V 3:28-40, tr in V:H 1:49-63, rev in V:B 120-136.

⁶⁰ All the permutations entailing **wrong sexual conduct** as defined in the Vinaya (Bh Pār 1.9.1-1.10.27 @ V 3:28-40) are mutatis mutandis applicable to the lay context: V:B 1:121-136.

⁶¹ **Saṅgh’ādi,sesa 1** (V 3:112,17 f); V 3:110-119; V:B 257-263. Related offences (incl acting as a go-between) incl **Saṅgh 2** (V 3:120,33-36); V 3:119-127; V:B 264-279; **3** (V 3:128,21 ff); V 3:128-131; V:B 280-287; **4** (V 3:133,12-16); V 3:131-134; V:B 288-293; **5** (V 3:139,7 ff); V 3:135-144; V:B 294-310. On the bonds of sexuality, see **Methuna S** (A 7.47), SD 21.9.

⁶² V 3:139,21-140,8 (V:B 301-303); **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,8(3)/1:286), SD 5.7 = **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,5.7(6)/-3:47), SD 39.8, list 11 kinds: the 1st 8 as here; then, *sa,sāmikā* (one with a husband), *sa,paridaṇḍā*, *antamaso mālā,-guḷa,parikkhattā* (one betrothed to a younger brother; one adorned with a string of garland, ie, betrothed). (**Dasaka**)

- (1) protected by her mother;
- (2) protected by her father;
- (3) protected by her parents;
- (4) protected by her brother;
- (5) protected by her sister;
- (6) protected by relations;
- (7) protected by the clan;
- (8) protected by the law or tradition (*dhamma,rakkhitā*);⁶³
- (9) under protection (*sārakkhā*), appropriated while still in the womb (even if she is later betrothed);⁶⁴
- (10) protected with punishment (*sa,paridaṇḍā*);⁶⁵

Or a wife, that is:

- (11) one bought with money (*dhana-k,kītā*);
- (12) one kept for passion (*chanda,vāsinī*): the beloved dwells as a lover (*piyo piyaṃ vāseti*);⁶⁶
- (13) a kept woman (*bhoga,vāsinī*), giving her wealth, he makes her stay;⁶⁷
- (14) one who receives clothes (*paṭa,vāsinī*), giving her a garment, he makes her stay;⁶⁸
- (15) one who provides water (*oda,pattakinī*);⁶⁹
- (16) one who takes off the head-pad (for burdens she carries on the head) (*obhata,cumbaṭā*): taking down the pad, he makes her stay;⁷⁰
- (17) a slave (*dāsī,bhariyā*);
- (18) a servant (*kamma,kārī bhariyā*);⁷¹
- (19) a flag-brought (*dhaj'āhaṭā*), a wife who was a captive in war or in a raid;⁷²
- (20) a temporary wife (*muhuttikā*).⁷³

Cunda S (A 10.176/5:264), SD 79.12, gives the 1st 5, then *dhamma,rakkhita* (with vl to insert *gotta,rakkhita*), *sa-s,samikā*, etc, as at M 41 + M 114; cf A:W 5:177 nn1-2. PvA 72,30-73.5 follows V list.

⁶³ *Dhamma* (Skt *dharma*) here prob has a broad non-Buddhist sense, referring to the social mores or custom (incl what we today call “common law marriage,” ie a partnership without formal marriage). However, Upās: “coreligionists protect her,” foll Comy, which seems to take it in a religious sense: VA 3:555,7-11 (see V:H 2:237 n6 = V:B 302 n1).

⁶⁴ She is appropriated when she is a baby [“even in the womb,” *gabbhe pi*, V 3:139,34], (with the words,) “(if she is a woman,) she will be my wife,” incl a betrothed woman (Upās 178).

⁶⁵ Upās 179: A punishment is placed (to protect her) so that “if anyone goes to such-and-such a woman, one is given such-and-such punishment,” qu subcomys: *yassā gamane raññā daṇḍo ṭhapito sā sa,paridaṇḍā* (a punishment is sanctioned by the king for going to her) (VAṬ 2:328 = DAṬ 3:346 = MAṬ 1:301 = DhsAṬ 80; all refs Be). Cf Skt *paridāyin*, a father (or another relation) who marries his daughter or ward to a man whose elder brother is not yet married (SED pari-√1. dā).

⁶⁶ Comy: *chanda,vāsinī* means “kept for delighting one with passion” (*chandena attano ruciyā vasatīti chanda,-vasinī*): “this is explained as that she is not only passionate herself, but by his accepting her as wife; thus it is said that the beloved dwells as a lover (*piyo piyaṃ vāseti*)” (VA 3:555,18-21).

⁶⁷ Comy: “having received the household implements, a country woman gains the state of a wife” (VA 3:555,31-33)

⁶⁸ Comy: “Receiving just a garment, a poor woman rises to be a wife” (VA 3:555,23-25).

⁶⁹ CPD *odapattakinī*: A woman taken as a wife after the ceremony of the couple putting their (*āmasitvā*) hands on a bowl of water [VA 3:555,29 *udaka,pattam*]; see VvA:M 108 n113.

⁷⁰ Comy: “He removes the pad on the head of a firewood gatherer and so on, and keeps her in his house” (VA 3:500,30-32). Even today, we see Indian women, esp labourers, placing a coiled pad of cloth or some soft material on their heads on which they balance various kinds of load to be transported to their destinations.

⁷¹ Comy: “She works in the house for wages; the man running the house lets her dwell with him, dissatisfied with his own wife” (VA 3:555,33-556,2).

⁷² Comy: “Having gone with an army, flag raised, plundering another region, she is brought back. When someone makes her his wife, she is called **flag-brought**.” (VA 3:556,4-6).

Note that these Vinaya rules merely apply to the realities of the day without actually approving of them. Indeed, the Buddha’s teachings on personal freedom and training for women are very clearly human-centred, although not as “liberated” as the views of some modern advocates of sex-based equality.

2.3.2.4 The list of 20 forbidden women belongs to a traditional culture of patriarchalism, which the Buddha responded with pragmatism and good sense. Since his teaching reflects a social reality of his own times, it is clearly an “implicit” teaching “whose implications (or sense) need to be drawn out” (*nī’t’attha*).⁷⁴ In other words, where the situation is inapplicable or irrelevant, it should be rejected, or revised to measure up to or cope with the realities of our own times.

Interestingly, with sexual equality, and the widespread economic independence of **women**, we could also well have revised mutatis mutandis a sort of “list of 10 forbidden men.” Further, we may need to work on a similar “list of forbidden persons” in the case of homosexual relationships.⁷⁵ Such lists should, of course, be humane, person-centred and dignified in the spirit of the Buddha’s teaching of social responsibilities, personal happiness, emotional independence,⁷⁶ and spiritual growth.

2.3.2.5 According to **the Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra**, sexual relationship with any of the first 8 kinds of women without guardians’ permission entails misconduct (the precept is broken). With the guardian’s permission, both are blameless (so long as it is a consensual act). In the case of the remaining 12 kinds of women, so long as they are not “released” (*pariccāga*) by the husband, anyone else having sexual relations with any of them commits misconduct (which similarly applies to the other 8 protected women who should be permitted to marry).

The Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra then quotes another work, **the Paṭipatti, saṅgaha** (the compendium of practice), by an unknown author,⁷⁷ thus:

For if a woman whom the husband has not divorced,⁷⁸ even though she has come from another region [into a region where she is not known], without declaring her status, cohabits with a man, [then] even though he cohabits [with her] under the blameless [but erroneous] awareness [that she is not married], since her husband has not divorced her, both incur karmic bondage⁷⁹ all the same, as [some] say.⁸⁰ This is stated in the *Compendium of Conduct (Patipatti, saṅgaha)*.

(Upās:A 76)

The Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra continues:

“The statement that ‘both incur karmic bondage (*kamma, bandha*) all the same’ [which clearly is quoted from Patips] looks *wrong* because of an unacceptable implication: if such were the case, one who takes others’ goods under the assumption that they are rags from a dust-heap or the like would also incur karmic bondage; one should examine it before accepting it. If the husband divorces her, neither incurs wrong conduct. (Upās 179; Upās:A 76)

⁷³ Upās 179: Although her status is indefinite, for that duration, she is prohibited.

⁷⁴ See **Neyyattha Nī’t’attha S** (A 2.3.5+6), SD 2.6b.

⁷⁵ On homosexuality, see SD 8.7 (3).

⁷⁶ See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

⁷⁷ **Paṭipatti, saṅgaha** (Paṭips, CPD 2.9.43; Upās 123, 18*) (c 10th cent) was known to Ānanda, author of Upās, who wrote the latter to supersede Patips. See Saddhatissa 1965:49-51; Hinüber, 1996:178 §385.

⁷⁸ Meaning “released,” since the legal concept of divorce was unknown then.

⁷⁹ “Karmic bondage” *bamma, bandha*. This is Agostino’s tr (2015:76), while Young (2011:98 f) uses the hyphenated “karmic-bond,” which lacks the full nuance of the Pali term. The 2 parties not only share one karma, but are each burdened by its fruitings, each in their own way.

⁸⁰ Upās n: For the meaning of *lakkhaṇa*, see Horner, BA:H, 1978:xxv.

This insightful remark is in keeping with the sutta teachings that the above conditions regarding the 10 kinds of women are “implicit” (*neyy’attha*): the context should be understood and its significance noted.⁸¹ All these women are controlled by others in a patriarchal society, where the man, as it were, decides the fate of the women. As such, according to the social mores of such a society, an “unreleased” woman, in communing with another man (both as non-monastics), especially when they love each other, might be conventionally guilty of “adultery,” but not *sexual misconduct*. In other words, as free individuals, they have the right to love another.

2.3.2.6 Putting together what we have discussed so far, let us look at the traditional teaching on how the 3rd precept is broken, that is, **the 4 constituents of sexual misconduct**.⁸²

- (1) there is a forbidden person (such as any of the 10 mentioned above); [2.3.2.3]
- (2) the mind to enjoy;
- (3) the effort to engage; and
- (4) enjoying the object, or consenting to the union of sexual organs.⁸³

2.3.3 Right sexual conduct for the laity

2.3.3.1 Conversely, the keeping of the 3rd precept—abstaining from wrong conduct regarding sexuality—entails **right conduct** (**sammā, cārā*). This right conduct is rooted in **respect** (*gārava*), which should be shown by way of mind, body and speech, to *self* and to *others*. The Pali word ***gārava*** is closely related to *garu*, “heavy, burdensome,” and *guru*, “one worthy of respect, a teacher.”

The implications of these words and their senses are that our right conduct towards others begins with knowing as much about **ourselves** as possible. We should at least be aware of our common weaknesses, and see that these are neither fed by the negativity of others nor misled by their apparent goodness. We are, in the end, responsible for our own actions. No matter how bad or how good others are, we are, in the end, always left with ourselves: this is our burden, the task that we must bear ourselves.

We must know ourselves or we will know no one.

Just as we should respect ourselves, we should respect **others**, too. Just we must know ourselves, we need to know others, too. Knowing ourselves, we will know others, too; knowing others, we will know ourselves better. To respect others, then, means that we start by accepting others as they are: they are the result of the conditions they have grown up in and are now living in. We should be respectfully curious about this so that we know them better.

2.3.3.2 Basically, then, this **right conduct** implies action of body and speech that are rooted in respect for one another, that is, self-respect and other-respect. Respect is basically accepting ourselves as we are, others as they are; starting there, we move on to be curious and engaging with others, and watching how we fare in all this.

By **self-respect** is meant moral fear (*hiri*), that is, a healthy understanding of karma: we create our own karma and are accountable for it. We should treat others as we would like others to treat

⁸¹ See **Neyy’attha Nī’t’attha S** (A 2.3.5+6), SD 2.6b.

⁸² On sexual misconduct, see SD 1016 (4.4.3). For details regarding monastics, see 1st defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pārājika 1: Mv 3.1.5 = V 3:11-21) + V:B 100-136.

⁸³ Comy on *Sammā Ditthi S* (M 9) at MA 1:200. Comy adds that if the unwilling victim gives “consent” (*adhivāsana*) during the course of union, the victim would thereby break the precept, too (MA 1:199). Technically, in such cases, the precept is broken only when the person is a *forbidden* one. If the erstwhile unwilling partner (who mid-way consents) is a free adult, then he or she does not break the precept. For details, see SD 10.16 (4.4.3).

us, that is, in a happy and wholesome manner. We should first of all accept ourself as we are—warts and all—being honest and sincere with others in a manner to know ourself better.

By **other-respect** is meant moral shame (*ottappa*), that is, we are neither alone nor can we live alone all the time. As lay Buddhists, we are somehow connected with other people at different levels of social and emotional engagement. Such engagements should be friendship rooted in *learning to love, loving to learn*. Our relationship with others should bring out our better side, or we learn to cultivate this through social intercourse.

2.3.3.3 Buddhist training is of 2 kinds: **for monastics**, which is Vinaya-based, with the Pātimokkha and other rules, and meditation; **for lay followers**, which is morality-based, centring on the 5 precepts and mindfulness. These trainings teach us to live wholesomely with others. Both trainings are further based on the Buddha Dharma that teaches us to *know ourself, tame ourself and free ourself* from all negative states or defilements.

The key difference between **monastic training** and lay training is that the former is mainly mind-based, in the sense that the Vinaya keeps the monastic safe from the world so that he well focuses on cultivating his *mind* in calmness and clarity for the direct seeing of true reality leading to nirvana. **Lay training**, on the other hand, is mainly body-based, in the sense of refining our *body and speech* so that we live and act as humans, and do not fall into any subhuman state even as we live. The more skillful lay practitioner can, of course, rise to train his mind in the way a monastic does.

Both monastic and lay need to be educated in the suttas so that we better understand the nature of the Buddha's awakening and emulate him in our own lives. An understanding of the suttas also helps us with self-knowledge and wisdom, guiding us towards the path of awakening even in this life itself.

2.3.3.4 The special nature of the lay life that clearly differentiates it from the monastic life is that the laity is often involved in **the enjoyment of sense-pleasures**. While sensual pleasures in themselves do not harm us—they, in fact, give us sensual joy and worldly happiness, which are regarded as our good karma. However, they “take time,” they are “time-consuming” (*kālika*), they distract us from our spiritual practice, and keep us longer in samsara and its suffering.⁸⁴

However, when we understand the nature of **the 5 precepts**, and keep them diligently, and learn the nature of our human weaknesses when we do breach any of them, then, we can safely enjoy sensual pleasures as lay followers, with our own friends, loved ones, families, occupations and businesses. In fact, **the Māha Vaccha, gotta Sutta** (M 73) lists 10 kinds of Dharma practitioners of the path of which, even the least developed of them is a streamwinner. The 10th and last kind of lay practitioner is not only a streamwinner but is said to be **one who enjoys sensual pleasures** (*kāma, bhogī*).⁸⁵ [2.3.3.5]

2.3.3.5 Among **the laymen** who are at least **streamwinners** are these foremost disciples:⁸⁶

Tapassu [Tapussa] and Bhallika⁸⁷

the first to go for the 2 refuges *saraṇaṃ gacchantānaṃ*

⁸⁴ SD 10.16 (4.5.1); SD 31.7 (6.2); SD 32.2 (3.1.3).

⁸⁵ See **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73, 10/1:491), SD 27.4; SD 47.1 (1.1.2.4); SD 52.11 (1.2.3.3); SD 54.9 (4.2). See also **Kāma, bhogī S** (A 10.91), SD 100.8; **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (12,3; 15.2.6).

⁸⁶ On these 10 laymen, see A 1.248-257/1:26.

⁸⁷ Their 1st meeting with the Buddha after the awakening, when they offer him his 1st meal, and then goes for refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma (the sangha has not yet arisen then): V 1:4, 1-27. Comy: Upon their request, the Buddha gives them some hair from his head, which they bring back to their home-city, Asīṭ'āñjanā (said to be in Uk-

the houselord Sudatta Anātha, piṇḍika ⁸⁸	the donors	<i>dāyakānaṃ</i>
the houselord Citta of Macchika, saṇḍa ⁸⁹	Dharma speakers	<i>dhamma, kathikānaṃ</i>
Hatthaka of Āḷavī ⁹⁰	the 4 means of welfare ⁹¹	<i>saṅgha, vatthu</i> ⁹²
Mahānāma the Sakya ⁹³	the donors of exquisite meals	<i>paṇīta, dāyakānaṃ</i>
the houselord Ugga of Vesālī ⁹⁴	the donors of agreeable meals	<i>manāpa, dāyakānaṃ</i>
the houselord Uggata ⁹⁵	the sangha supporters	<i>saṅghūpaṭṭhākānaṃ</i>
Sūra Ambaṭṭha ⁹⁶	those with wise faith	<i>avecca-p, pasannānaṃ</i>
the doctor Jivaka Komara, bhacca ⁹⁷	those with faith in a person	<i>puggala-p, pasannānaṃ</i>
the houselord Nakula, pitā ⁹⁸	those with trust	<i>vissāsākānaṃ</i>

The laywomen streamwinners are these foremost disciples:⁹⁹

Sujātā, daughter of Senāni ¹⁰⁰	the first to go for refuge	<i>saraṇaṃ gacchantānaṃ</i>
Visākhā Migāra, mātā ¹⁰¹	the donors	<i>dāyikānaṃ</i>
Khujj'uttarā ¹⁰²	the learned (heard much)	<i>bahu-s, sutānaṃ</i>

kala, modern Orissa) and enshrine it in a stupa (*cetiya*) they build specially for it. (AA 1:383,19-27). The Burmese claim that this is the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Yangon.

⁸⁸ For details, see Nyanaponiks & Hecker, 2003: ch 9.

⁸⁹ He is the protagonist of S 41. For details, see Nyanaponika & Hecker 2003:365-372.

⁹⁰ Comy: Hatthaka is the son of the king of Āḷavī country. On hearing the Buddha teach, he becomes a non-returner. (**Tika**) **Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34) records a conversation between the Buddha and him (SD 4.8). Suttas that hold up Citta and Hatthaka as model lay followers: **Citta Hatthaka S** (A 2.132), **Āyācana S** (A 4.176,3); and **Eka, puttaka S** (S 17.23-2:235,20-25), SD 82.2. He is praised by the Buddha: **Hatthaka S 1+2** (A 8.23 + 8.24). After his rebirth as a deva, he visits the Buddha: (**Tika**) **Hatthaka S** (A 3.125), SD 86.24.

⁹¹ The 4 means of welfare (*saṅgha, vatthu*) are (1) generosity (*dāna*), (2) pleasant speech (*peyya, vajja*), (3) beneficent conduct (*attha, cariya*), (4) impartiality (*samāna'attatā*): **Saṅgha Bala S** (A 9.5.6), SD 2.21; **Saṅgha S** (A 4.32).

⁹² Fully, "of those sustaining the company with the 4 means of welfare" (*catūhi saṅgha, vatthūhi parisam gaṇhan-tānaṃ*) (A 1.251/1:26).

⁹³ Mahānāma is a Sakya prince, Anuruddha's elder brother, and a cousin of the Buddha. The suttas record many of Mahānāma's dialogues with the Buddha and with other monks: **Mahānāma Sakka S** (A 3.73); (**Chakka**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), SD 15.3; (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Mahānāma S** (A 8.25), SD 6.3; (**Ekādasaka**) **Mahānāma S 1** (A 11.11), SD 99.3; and (**Ekādasaka**) **S 2** (A 11.12), SD 99.4.

⁹⁴ Ugga of Vesālī is praised by the Buddha in **Manāpa, dāyī S** (A 5.44).

⁹⁵ From his Comy account, it is likely that he is the same as Ugga of Hatthi, gāma: **Ugga S 1** (A 8.21), SD 70.3; **Ugga S 2** (A 8.22), SD 45.15.

⁹⁶ Comy relates how Māra appears to Sūra in the guise of the Buddha, trying to shake his faith. Sūra, however, at once sees through the deception and exposes Māra (AA 1:397,14-398,22).

⁹⁷ Jivaka is a court physician to king Bimbisāra, and also to the Buddha and the sangha. On his early life and service to the Buddha: V 1:268-281. Comy only resolves the cpd *puggala-p, pasannānaṃ aggo* without any explanation. The phrase can mean either or both of these: (1) he is inspired by the noble "individuals" (*puggala*), or (2) that his service and skill in healing others, and kindness as a person (*puggala*) inspire faith in others. See (**Majjhima**) **Jivaka S** (M 55), SD 43.4; (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Jivaka S** (A 8.26).

⁹⁸ See n below under "Nakula, pitā and Nakula, mātā."

⁹⁹ On these 10 laywomen, see A 1.258-267/1:26.

¹⁰⁰ Sujātā offers the Bodhisattva his last meal before the awakening. Comy identifies her as Yasa's mother (ad V 1:15-18), which is improb. Sujātā is from Uruvelā (near modern Bodhgayā), but Yasa is from Benares, over 5 days walk eastwards.

¹⁰¹ Visākhā is the Buddha's chief female supporter. See (**Tad-āh'**) **Uposatha S** (A 3.70), SD 4.18; (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Visākhā S** (A 8.43), SD 89.11c; **Idha, lokika S 1** (A 8.49). See Nyanaponika & Hecker 2003:247-255.

(queen) Sāmā, vatī ¹⁰³	those dwelling in lovingkindness	<i>mettā, vihārīnaṃ</i>
Uttarā Nanda, mātā ¹⁰⁴	the dhyana attainers	<i>jhāyīnaṃ</i>
Suppavāsā the Koliya daughter ¹⁰⁵	the donors of exquisite meals	<i>paṇīta, dāyakānaṃ</i>
the laywoman Suppiyā ¹⁰⁶	those attending to the sick	<i>gilānūpaṭṭhakānaṃ</i>
Kātiyānī ¹⁰⁷	those of wise faith	<i>avecca-p, pasannānaṃ</i>
the housewife Nakula, mātā ¹⁰⁸	those with trust	<i>vissāsakānaṃ</i>
the laywoman Kālī of Kurara, ghara ¹⁰⁹	those with faith through hearsay	<i>anussava-p, pasannānaṃ</i>

Amongst **the early Buddhist couples** are these foremost disciples:

Nakula, pita and Nakula, mātā,¹¹⁰

Sigāla, pitā and Sigāla, mātā,¹¹¹

Many of them progressed to attain non-returning, even arhathood.¹¹²

2.4 THE PRECEPT AGAINST FALSEHOOD

2.4.1 Definition of the precept against false speech

2.4.1.1 The Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra explains:¹

In the phrase “**false speech**,” “false” (*musā*) means “an unreal, untrue matter.”

“**Speech**” (*vāda*) means “suggesting that it is real, true” (*tassa bhūtato tacchato viññāpanaṃ*).

As for its **characteristic** (*lakkaṇato*): when one, intentionally, wants to suggest to someone else that

¹⁰² Khujj’uttara (the hunchback Uttarā) is queen Sāmā, vatī’s servant. The queen, unable to leave the palace, sends her to listen to the Buddha teaching, and repeat them to Sāmā, vatī and her entourage. In **Āyācana S 5** (A 1.12.5/-2.133) and **(Catukka) Āyācana S** (A 4.176,4), she is held up, with Veḷukaṇṭakī Nanda, mātā as the ideal model for a female lay follower. See also **Eka, dhītā S** (S 17.24).

¹⁰³ Queen Sāmā, vatī, orphaned as a girl, becomes the 3rd queen to Udena, king of Kosambī. Māgandiyā (the 2nd queen), bearing a grudge against the Buddha for rejecting her, and learning of Sāmāvatī’s faith in him, has the latter’s quarters burned down, killing all therein: U 7.10/79. See Nyanaponika & Hecker 2003:285-293.

¹⁰⁴ Uttarā here is prob the same as Veḷukaṇṭakī Nanda, mātā, who, though not mentioned in this list, is declared as an ideal laywoman [Khujj’uttarā n, above]. In **(Sattaka) Nanda, mātā S** (A 7.50), she speaks of 7 remarkable qualities (SD 102.3).

¹⁰⁵ Suppavāsā is the arhat Sīvalī’s mother. She has a long pregnancy: **Suppavāsā S** (U 2.8/15-18), SD 76.10. **Suppavāsā S** (A 4.57) records the Buddha teaching her on the benefits of offering almsmeal (SD 22.13).

¹⁰⁶ Suppiyā slices flesh from her own thigh to feed a sick monk who needs meat. This prompted the Buddha to prohibit monks from taking human flesh, even when willingly given (V 1:216-218).

¹⁰⁷ Comy: Kātiyānī is a close friend of Kālī or Kurara, ghara. Once, while listening to a Dharma teaching in her own house, thieves broke in. Even though she is aware of this, unconcerned, she calmly continues listening. The thieves, moved by her response, repented. With her help, they renounced and became arhats. (AA 1:456,8-457,8)

¹⁰⁸ Wife of Nakula, pitā. On her wisdom: **Nakula, pitu S** (A 6.16), SD 5.2. **Nakula, mātā S** (A 8.48), records the Buddha’s teaching about her (SD 5.3). See n below under “Nakula, pitā and Nakula, mātā.”

¹⁰⁹ Kālī is a supporter of Mahā Kaccāna: **Kālī S** (A 10.26), SD 80.3. Comy: She gains faith on hearing 2 yakshas speaking in praise of the 3 jewels, while they are moving in the sky above her, attaining the fruit of streamwinning.

¹¹⁰ Comy says that Nakula, pitā and Nakula, mātā have been parents to the Buddha for 500 past lives; hence, they still recognizes him as their son. Clearly, for this reason, they are said to be foremost amongst those with trust (*vissāsakānaṃ aggo*). Suttas about the couple: **Sama, jivī S 1** (A 4.55), SD 5.1; **Nakula, pitu S** (A 6.136), SD 5.2. See also Nyanaponika & Hecker 2003: 375-378.

¹¹¹ On Sigāla, pitā and Sigāla, mātā, see SD 4.1 (5).

¹¹² For the foremost attainments of almost all of these lay disciples, see A 248-267/25 f.

what is not the case is the case, even by prompting such a suggestion (through body language) (*viññatti*), this is “false speech.” (Upās 180)

2.4.1.2 Technically, **the 4 constituents of false speech** are as follows:¹¹³

- (1) a false situation;
- (2) the mind to deceive;
- (3) the appropriate effort (verbal or physical);
- (4) the communicating of that intention to another.

2.4.2 The respect for truth

2.4.2.1 The significance in avoiding false speech is based on the universal value of **truth** (*sacca*): without truthfulness neither useful nor wholesome communication is possible amongst humans. A lie is unwholesome for at least 2 common reasons: (1) it is not true or not real; (2) seemingly, it benefits or serves the purposes of only a small group or a single person to the disadvantage of the majority or at the cost of the greater good.

2.4.2.2 Thirdly, there is the special reason for **the value of truth**, that is, it is the vehicle for any kind of useful learning, especial one that will free us from ignorance and suffering. Hence, the word *dhamma*, as in *buddha, dhamma* means both the Buddha’s teaching as well as “**the truth**,” that is, both the theory and the practice of self-reliance, self-understanding and self-liberation. It begins with the truth of the path and ends with the truth of awakening, regarding nirvana.

2.4.2.3 Truth (*sacca*) is especially *valuable* when it reflects **reality** (*tathā* or *bhūta*); then, we call it “true reality” (*yathā, bhūta*). True reality is the actual state of things: that *all conditioned states* are impermanent and suffering; that *all states* (the principle underlying the first 2) are nonself: they operate just as they are as a cycle and network of endless causes and endless effects.

When we **lie**, we turn away from what is true, what reflects a certain reality. Notice how “truth” and “lie” relate to what we say or communicate, while “real” and “false” refer to a state or situation. When something is **real**, it either exists or happens. We, of course, need to qualify that this *is*, or *was* or *will be* so (in terms of time); that it is also *real* for ourself and for others (or at least for the party we are addressing). It may only be known to us (at the moment), or it is common knowledge. It may be **true** here, or it is true in some other situation, or at a certain time—it depends on how we perceive such a reality.

In this case, we are speaking of a socially conditioned or conventional reality. We are communicating on a personal, human, social or even universal level, but it is a worldly reality, conditioned and defined by a common convention or experience, but in a limited personal, human, social or cultural way. We may even speak of this as a human reality.

2.4.2.4 On a higher or spiritual level, there is a broader conditioned reality: this is not a conventional, but a universal or spiritual reality. This is the kind of **reality** expressed in such teachings as those of the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness), which are characterized by *impermanence, suffering and nonself*.

This **universal reality**—that of the 5 aggregates, for example—is described or stated in “the totality formula,” that is, it is real “whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior

¹¹³ On false speech, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41), SD 5.7 (2.2.1 (4)). On the monastic aspects of false speech, see the defeat (*pārājika*) rule regarding false declarations on one’s attainments: Pār 4 (V 3:87-123) + V:B 218-271.

or superior, far or near” (*atītānagata, paccupannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷarikaṃ vā sukhumarā vā hīnarā vā panītarā vā yaṃ dūre santike vā*).¹¹⁴ They are real in terms of time, physical experience, mental states, in self or other, here and anywhere else in the universe.

Our task is to directly, albeit gradually, see this true reality for ourself, an experience that instils **wisdom** through calm and clarity of mind, that refines itself until it is fully free from the virtual reality that we project as our own self-centred virtual world. In this sense, **to speak the truth** means that what we say reflects such a reality in some way. When we **lie**, we are not reflecting the true reality that we have seen, heard, known or thought just as it is.

2.4.3 The karmic fruits of breaking the 4th precept

2.4.3.1 Dhammapāla, the commentator on the Khuddaka, pāṭha, commenting on the 4th precept, writes:

The fruits of abstaining from false speech are such things as clarity of the sense-faculties, distinct and sweet speech, evenly placed and pure white teeth, being neither too fat nor too thin, being neither too tall nor too short, pleasant to the touch, a lotus-scented mouth, desire in one’s company to listen to one, loving speech, a slender red tongue like a red lotus petal, undistractedness [lack of pride], no personal vanity, and so on. (KhpA 34,11-16)

Dhammapāla’s comments on karma here reflect a consequential view of karma, thus: “As we sow, so we reap.”¹¹⁵ A similar teaching on karma is given by the Buddha to queen Mallikā in **the (Catukka) Mallikā Sutta** (A 4.197), where she asks the Buddha why amongst women,

- (1) one is ugly, poor, with little influence,
- (2) while another is ugly, rich, with great influence,
- (3) yet another is beautiful, but poor, with little influence, and
- (4) finally, one is very beautiful, rich, with great influence.

The Buddha replies that as follows

- (1) one is often angry, miserly (does not offer alms), full of jealousy of others;
- (2) one is often angry, but offers alms, and has *no* jealousy of others;
- (3) one is *not* habitually angry, but not a giver, and is full of jealousy of others; and
- (4) one has *no* anger, is a generous giver, and is free from jealousy.¹¹⁶

2.4.3.2 The problems with Dhammapāla’s consequentialist remarks on karma is that it seems as if when our countenance is not radiant, or our speech unclear and rough, or we have bad teeth, or we are too fat or too thin, too tall or too short, without a pleasant touch, bad breath, unpopular, unrefined in speech, or with an ugly tongue—that any or all of this is due to our past karma!

We may imagine that the karmic potential is there, but there must be other conditions to bring about any of these unhappy features in us. In fact, a better explanation for the occurrences of such features is that they are more likely to have arisen from our present conditions, such as our emotional tendencies, oral and dental hygiene, diet and health, body care, education, genes and so on.

The reverse is true, too: that one’s pleasant features may be rooted in past karmic potential, but they arise from present conditions. In other words, karma does not, as a rule, work by itself in a fixed manner: karma works dependent on prevailing conditions and our present habits. Even when we do not have such

¹¹⁴ See **(Dve) Khandha S** (S 22.48) + SD 17.1a (3); **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17-21), SD 1.2.

¹¹⁵ See **Isayo Samuddaka S** (S 903*) + SD 39.2 (2); SD 3.5 (1); SD 4.16 (2.5).

¹¹⁶ A 4.197/2:202-205 (SD 39.10).

features, we can correct them in various ways with some diligence and determination. Not everything is due to karma.¹¹⁷

2.4.3.3 Karma has been compared to seeds. The **(Kamma) Nidāna Sutta** (A 3.33) describes the seed-like nature of karma in that a plant only sprouts when the seed is viable, planted in good well-prepared ground, with sufficient water (rain), and sun. Even so, bad karma arises rooted in *greed, hate and delusion*; good karma, on the other hand, is rooted in *non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion*.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, we are all differently affected by our karma. Those who are habitually evil are more likely to feel a worse impact of a similar karma in a more drastic way than those who are habitually good. So long as the karma of the evil has not ripened, they seem to prosper and get away with their evils. It is like putting **a large lump of salt** into *a small bowl of water*, and stirring it: the water will be very salty.

On the other hand, someone who is habitually good may fall into a moral lapse, but just as a lump of salt thrown into a river does not make its water salty, the good person is unlikely to feel the full impact of the karmic fruit. Just as our negative habits will feed and worsen some bad karmic fruit we are facing, our wholesome habits (especially lovingkindness) will starve and weaken the effects of such bad karma and shorten the duration of its effect.¹¹⁹

2.5 THE PRECEPT AGAINST BEING INTOXICATED

2.5.1 The 5th precept

2.5.1.1 The 5th precept formula reads *surā,meraya,majja,pamāda-ṭ,ṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhā,padam samādiyāmi*. Its verbal phrase, *veramaṇī sikkhā,padam samādiyāmi*, is quite straightforward, and may be rendered as: “I undertake the training rule to abstain from ... ,” but its noun phrase, *surā,meraya,majja,-pamāda-ṭ,ṭhānā*, is a polysemous compound which may be translated in a number of ways, such as:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| (1) “liquor [strong drinks], brews, intoxicants, [and] the bases for heedlessness” | [2.5.2.2] |
| (2) “liquor, brews, [and] the bases for intoxication and heedlessness” | [2.5.2.4] |
| (3) “strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, the bases for heedlessness.” | [2.5.3] |

Note the elective “and” within square brackets denoting [an alternate translation]. We thus have at least 4 possible translations for the Pali sentence. Interestingly, their differences are merely for the debate and delight of the philologist and pride of the pedantist. In the ultimate analysis, their different grammatical nuances fall into a common denominator of semantic sameness that reflects the spirit of the precept *against intoxication*.

Briefly, the different grammatical senses or interpretations of these 2 (pairs of) translations (and a 3rd) are as follows:

- (1a) “liquors, brews, intoxicants[,]”¹²⁰ that are the bases for heedlessness: these drinks may be taken so long as they do *not* make us inebriate;
- (1b) “liquors, brews, intoxicants, and the bases for heedlessness”: these drinks *and* whatever brings on heedlessness (and addiction) should *not* be taken;

¹¹⁷ Not everything is due to karma: **Sīvaka S** (S 36.21,13/4:230) + SD 5.6 (2); **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206), SD 3.9 (4.2). On how we become our karma, see **Virtue ethics**, SD 18.11; SD 37.8 (2.2.2).

¹¹⁸ A 3.33/1:134-136 (SD 4.14); see also SD 4.13 (2.4).

¹¹⁹ On karma being relative to the doer’s moral level, see **Loṇa,phala S** (A 3.99), SD 3.5.

¹²⁰ This sentence is asyndetic, with any “and,” which may be inserted here.

- (2a) “liquors, brews, [and] the bases for intoxication and heedlessness”: any strong drink or brew that brings on intoxication and heedlessness should *not* be taken;
- (2b) “liquors and brews that are the bases for intoxication and heedlessness”: these drinks may be taken so long as they do *not* make us inebriate; (*without* the comma:) abstain (only) from drinks that make us inebriate.
- (3) “strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, that (which) causes heedlessness” should not be taken [2.5.2.5].

In terms of latitude or broadness of interpretation of the 1st 2 pairs or translations, we have (approximately) the following scale from the broadest (the freest) to the narrowest (the strictest):

- (1a) drink but stop before we get drunk;
- (2a) drink only when we will not get drunk or addicted;
- (2b) do not consume any inebriating drink or drugs;
- (1b) neither drink nor take drugs.

The Dharma spirit of the 5th precept is reflected in this famous pithy Japanese saying:

一杯は人酒を飲み、	Ippai wa hito sake o nomi,	First,	a man takes a drink,
二杯は酒酒を飲み、	Nihai wa sake sake o nomi,	Second,	the drink takes a drink,
三杯は酒人を飲む	Sambai wa sake hito o nomi,	Third,	the drink takes the man.

2.5.1.2 One of the practical difficulties for western Buddhists has to do with the 5th precept, especially where they are a **drinking culture**. The safe middle way here is to start with alternative (1a) above [2.5.1.1]. The guiding principles for this are:

- (1) Drink only on very special social or cultural occasions.
- (2) Drink in moderation: sip and savour the drink, not gulp it down.
- (3) Stop drinking early, well before any sign of inebriation.
- (4) No drinks at all for precept days, retreats or Dharma occasions.
- (5) Avoid any addictive or harmful drugs.

2.5.1.3 Often enough, we see only the first 4 precepts (*catu sīla*) without the 5th precept, the one against taking intoxicants, such as in **the Sāḷhā Sutta** (S 3.66,3 passim)¹²¹ and **the (Catukka) Niraya Sutta** (A 4.64). This is an ancient set. For example, after listing the first 4 precepts in the familiar manner, the Sutta closes with this verse on these precepts (notice the omission of the 5th precept):¹²²

*Pāṇātipāto adinn’ādānaṃ
musā,vādo ca vuccati
para,dāra,gamanañ cāpi
na-p,pasamsanti paṇḍitā’ti*

Destroying living beings, taking the not given,
speaking false words, and
resorting to the women of others, too,
the wise do not praise.

(A 4.64/2:71), SD 47.3b(2.1.1)

Another ancient text, **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7) lists the 4 precepts and the 4th precept on abstinence from lying is complemented by the 3 other kinds of right speech, those against divisive speech,

¹²¹ On the “4 precepts,” see S 3.66/2:217 (SD 47.3b (2.1)).

¹²² Other suttas with the 4 precepts incl: **(Catukka) Pāṇātipātā Sutta** (A 4.81/2:83 = A 4.214), SD 47.3b(2.1.2).

against harsh speech and against idle chatter. The Sutta closes with the attaining and benefits of stream-winning.¹²³

All this suggests that during the early years of the Buddha's ministry, there were only the 4 precepts. However, as Buddhism grew in popularity and spread, and more lay followers turned to the Buddha's teaching, the Buddha saw it helpful to add the 5th precept, as a reminder of the purpose of the 1st four, and also how they all can be easily broken when our mind is clouded, and we are deluded.

2.5.1.3 The 5th precept—as a teaching proscribing or warning against the dangers of drunkenness—is found in a significant number of ancient and important suttas. **The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31), for example, lists only the 4 precepts, but unequivocally speaks on the dangers of taking drinks and drunkenness, and that one should avoid intoxicants. **The dangers of drunkenness** include the following: *the immediate loss of wealth; increase in quarrels; being prone to illness; a source of disgrace; indecently exposing oneself; one's wisdom is weakened.*¹²⁴

The Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54), like the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta (D 31), warns of the danger of the addiction to drinking, that it is one of ways of **losing wealth**, and that one should abstain from it. Furthermore, it also lists all the 5 precepts, describing them as constituting the “accomplishment of moral virtue” (*sīla,sampadā*).¹²⁵

The Patta,kamma Sutta (A 4.61), like the Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54), too, mentions the keeping of the 5 precepts as the accomplishment of moral virtue. Further, it states that a small portion of one's wealth may be used for offerings for:

all those recluses and brahmins

who refrain from intoxication and heedlessness (*mada-p,pamādā paṭiviratā*),

who bear all things with patience and restraint,

each taming himself,

each cooling himself [working to attain nirvana].

(A 4.61,13/2:68), SD 37.12

The Ādiya Sutta (A 5.41), too, speaks of the very same worthy offerings to such religious practitioners working to attain the path of awakening.¹²⁶

2.5.2 The constituents of intoxicants

2.5.2.1 Our discussion on the 4th precept and the nature of truth can be summarized in the traditional formula of **the 4 conditions constituting a breach of the precept against intoxication**, thus:¹²⁷

- (1) there is some form of strong drinks, etc [any kind of intoxicant] (*surādinañ ca aññataram hoti*);
- (2) the mind is established in the desire to drink an intoxicant (*madanīya,pātu,kamyatā,cittañ ca paccu-paṭṭhitam hoti*);
- (3) one makes the appropriate effort (*tajjañ ca vāyāmam apajjati*);
- (4) and one takes the drink (*pīte ca pavisati*).

(KhpA 31)

¹²³ S 55.7/5:352-356 + SD 1.5 (2).

¹²⁴ D 31,7+8 n (SD 4.1).

¹²⁵ A 8.54/4:281-285 (SD 5.10).

¹²⁶ A 5.41,6/3:46 (SD 2.1).

¹²⁷ SD 47.3b (2.2.1).

2.5.2.2 The components of the phrase, *sura, meraya, majja, pamādaṭṭhāna*, “liquor [strong drinks], brew, intoxicants, the bases for heedlessness,” have been analyzed in **the Vinaya, the Khuddana, pāṭha Commentary** and **the Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra**, and be summarized as follows:¹²⁸

“**Liquor** [strong drink]” (*surā*) is so called a forester (*vana, caraka*) named Surā first discovered and drank it. There are 5 types of liquors, from their main ingredient, that is:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| (1) liquor made from crushed seeds, | <i>piṭṭha, surā</i> |
| (2) liquor made from cakes. | <i>pūva, surā</i> |
| (3) liquor made from cooked rice, | <i>odana, surā</i> |
| (4) liquor fermented with yeast, and | <i>kiṇṇa, pakkhita, surā</i> |
| (5) a blend of ingredients. ¹²⁹ | <i>sambhāra, saṃyutta</i> |

Although, as a rule, monastics are prohibited from taking intoxicants, there are special occasions when a bit of such drinks are allowable, that is, when the drink is cooked along with food, or as a part of a concoction (such as a health tonic or rum cake) (V 4:110).¹³⁰

2.5.2.3 Analogously (*tad-anuḅaṇam*), **the 5 kinds of “brews”** (*meraya = āsava*), which should not be taken, are made by **fermenting** (*āsavati*) the following:¹³¹

- (1) from flowers (*pupph’āsava*),¹³² that is, the juice of the fruits of the honey tree (*Bassia latifolia* PED), the palmyra (sago) palm (*Borassus flabellifer*), sap from the cut shoot of a coconut tree (called toddy), and so on, after a period of infusion;
- (2) from fruits (*phal’āsava*), from jak [jack] fruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*);
- (3) from honey (*madhav’āsava*), from the juice of the fruit of the honey tree (*Bassia latifolia*);
- (4) sugar (*gul’āsava*), from the sugarcane juice (called rum);
- (5) a blend of ingredients (*sambhāra, saṃyutta*),¹³³ said to be a blend of the yellow myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*), emblic myrobalan (*Phyllanthus emblica*),¹³⁴ pungent spices, and various other ingredients, after a period of infusion.

2.5.2.4 We may add floral juice and other ingredients mentioned above to our drinks, and stirring them, but are not in themselves intoxicants. Often enough, when we take a small amount of such intoxicants, we are not likely to be inebriated; we may even feel invigorated by it. The problem here is that such drinking is *habit-forming*, and usually end up us addicted to it, or may resort to it when we are mentally or emotionally upset.

For this reason, says the Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra, *majja* is here used to refer to both *surā* and *meraya*. They may not seem to be intoxicants when taken only occasionally in small amounts, but this is to warn us that it would surely bring on intoxication or addiction in due course, as described above. Moreover, many of us are attracted to the colour, the smell, and the flavour of an intoxicant. Hence, if anything can lead to intoxication and heedlessness, it should, in all cases, be taken as **an intoxicant** (*majja*). (Upās 180)

¹²⁸ V 4:110; DA 3:944; KhpA 26; VvA 73; VbhA 381; Upās 180-182.

¹²⁹ The blend comprises the essences of the fulsee flower tree (*Woodfordia fruticosa* or *Grislea tomentosa*), mustard, etc. (Upās 181)

¹³⁰ On when the precept against intoxicants is not breached, esp by monastics, see **Pāc 51** (V 4:110). Further see SD 47.3b (2.2.1.2). For a contemporary scholarly analysis, see P Trafford, “Avoiding *pamāda*,” 2009 esp 11 f: The significance of *pamādaṭṭhāna*.

¹³¹ V 4:110; DA 3:944; KhpA 26; VvA 73; VbhA 381; Upās 180-182.

¹³² Mentioned at J 4:117 as *meraya*.

¹³³ Comys state that this has 5 ingredients: DA 944; KhpA 26; VvA 73; VbhA 381.

¹³⁴ Also called the Indian gooseberry, the Malacca [Melaka] tree; or amla (from Skt *āmalaka*).

Dhammapāla adds: “Both of these are ‘besotting’ (*majja*) in the sense of causing intoxication (*mada-nīya*); alternatively: whatever that causes intoxication by drinking which one becomes maddened (*matta*) and heedless (*pamatta*), is called ‘besotting’.” (KhpA 26,22-24)

2.5.2.5 The Upāsaka, janālaṅkāra, quoting the Commentaries, take *majja* as a broad term for “drinks that intoxicate” [2.5.2.4]. In fact, this may well be the case when we read *majja, pamāda-ṭ, ṭhānā* as a compound meaning, “the bases for intoxication and heedlessness.” This compound highlights 2 negative effects of falling under the influence of “liquors [strong drinks] and brews” (*surā, meraya*). [2.5.1.1]

However, it is likely that while *surā* is the strongest of the 3, *majja* is the weakest. Hence, the precept is that of abstaining “**from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, the bases for heedlessness.**” This is my preferred translation because it clearly refers to the different kinds of intoxicating drinks and also includes any kind of inebriating and addicting effect which should be avoided so that our mind is unclouded and clear.

2.5.3 Pamāda-ṭ, ṭhānā

2.5.3.1 The phrase *pamāda-ṭ, ṭhānā*, “the bases for heedlessness,” refers to our intention of drinking; so called because they are the conditions for heedlessness: when an intoxicant is consumed, it will, in due course, make us heedless. Thus, in the case of one wishing to take intoxicating drinks and so on, that *intention* of taking intoxicants is expressed through the body-door. This is what the phrase “the bases for heedlessness” refers to: an opportunity or occasion for heedlessness due to taking intoxicants. The idea of abstaining “**from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, the bases for heedlessness**” is to prevent this from arising.

2.5.3.2 Just as a wise person avoids a rough, uneven, unsafe path haunted by fierce animals and other dangers, lined by inedible plants and trees with poisonous fruits, and instead takes a safe even path through good terrain, even so, the Blessed One shows us how to renounce wrong views, points out the path, mundane and supramundane, leading to nirvana. He instructs us to start with abstaining from killing living beings; then, abstaining from taking the not-given, and so on through the 5 precepts, and then on to the 10 precepts.¹³⁵

2.5.4 The 5th precept and Buddhist practice

2.5.4.1 The 5th precept is broken through the body-door, and frequently drinking too much can also harm **the body** in the following ways:¹³⁶

- (1) Drinking causes excess fat build-up in **the liver**, alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis (bleeding) of the liver.
- (2) Drinking can lead to **pancreatitis** (inflammation of the pancreas).
- (3) Chronic drinking can lead to various kinds of **cancer**, such as those of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, stomach, liver, colon, rectum and breast. Along with smoking brings higher risk of cancer of the upper gastrointestinal tract and respiratory tract.
- (4) Heavy drinking can cause problems with the **digestive system**, such as stomach ulcers, acid reflux, heartburn and inflammation of the stomach lining known as gastritis.
- (5) Habitual drinking weakens **the immune system**, making one vulnerable to infectious diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis.

¹³⁵ Further on the purpose of keeping the precepts, see Upās 2.65-87/194-204. For the precept’s case history and technical details on its breach, see **Pācittiya 51** (V 4:108-110); also 47.3b (2.2.1.2).

¹³⁶ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/297734#liver-disease>.

- (6) Heavy drinking can lead shrinking of **the frontal lobe** whose functions include inhibition, decision-making, problem-solving and judgement, and also cause brain damage.
- (7) Drinking can lead to **malnourishment** and vitamin deficiencies.
- (8) Those who start drinking young increase risks of **bone problems** such as osteoporosis, increasing the risk of fractures.
- (9) Excessive drinking raises the blood pressure, and has long been linked with **heart problems**, including angina and heart failure.
- (10) Drinking leads to intoxication often linked to **dangers** such as car crashes, domestic violence, falls, drowning, occupational injuries, homicide and suicide.
- (11) Drinking weakens and clouds the mind making it difficult, even impossible, for us to **meditate**.

2.5.4.2 Mental clarity is the basis for Buddhist training, especially in keeping the precepts in moral training, for mental cultivation, and the attaining of insight wisdom. Drinking, even without being intoxicated, often leads to addiction. It then clouds up our minds, affecting our mental clarity and alertness, which prevents us from **meditating** effectively. Mental clouding also affects our ability to study the suttas, and ability to keep up our spiritual stamina for any kind of Dharma practice. In short, a sober mind is the basis for Buddhist training and progress.

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(Pañcaka) Niraya Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on the Hells

A 5.145

1 “Bhikshus, one having **5 qualities** is, as it were, carried away and cast into hell.¹³⁷
What are the five?

2 BREAKING THE 5 PRECEPTS

- (1) One destroys life.
- (2) One takes the not-given.
- (3) One engages in sexual misconduct.
- (4) One speaks falsely.
- (5) One indulges in liquor, wine and intoxicants, the basis for heedlessness.

2.2 One having these 5 qualities is, as it were, carried away and cast into hell. **[171]**

3 Bhikshus, one having **5 [other] qualities** is carried into heaven as if brought there.
What are the five?

4 KEEPING THE 5 PRECEPTS

- (1) One abstains from destroying life.
- (2) One abstains from taking the not-given.
- (3) One abstains from sexual misconduct.

¹³⁷ On this hell imagery, see **Mahā Sīha, nāda S** (M 12,21.1) n, SD 49.1.

- (4) One abstains from false speech.
- (5) One abstains from liquor wine, and intoxicants, the basis for heedlessness.

4.2 One having these 5 qualities is carried into heaven as if brought there.”

— pañcamam —

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