

The following articles by Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso were taken from the website of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. For more articles see www.bswa.org

VINAYA
Ownership and Administration of Monasteries
Ajahn Brahmavamso

Vinaya is the name for the body of monastic rules and traditions that are binding on every Buddhist monk and nun. The Vinaya was established by the Buddha himself and is now preserved in written form, both in the ancient Indian languages and in English translation.

With so many new people having come into the Society in the last few years, many of our members and friends know very little about the rules of discipline of the monastic community. It is important for the lay community to have an understanding of these rules to ensure that we do not behave in any way which is offensive to the Sangha nor which could create difficulty for them. We have therefore decided to reprint a series of articles in this and forthcoming newsletters, which were written by Ajahn Brahm a number of years ago.

Ownership and Administration of Monasteries:

In the time of the Buddha, when a lay Buddhist offered lands of buildings, or money for such things, to establish a monastery, they would dedicate it to The Sangha of the Four Quarters Present and Yet to Come. The Sangha of the four quarters present and yet to come means ALL properly ordained monks and nuns. This would include all legitimate Buddhist monks and nuns, of all nationalities and sects. Today it would probably include most Chinese Mahayana monks and nuns (bhiksus and bhiksunis) but it would exclude some Tibetan lamas and most Zen roshis, the married ones at least! Thus the owners of the monastery are the worldwide and "timewide" community of monks and nuns.

The administrators of the monastery were those monks or nuns who lived there. They would meet regularly to make any decisions concerning their monastery and all such decisions had to be unanimous. But there are many rules of Vinaya which restrict what the resident monastics may do, in order to safeguard the monastery from corrupt monks. For example, they can't decide to give Sangha property away (unless it is trifling), nor to divide up the goods among themselves, (then disrobing, selling up, and moving to Majorca!). The community at a monastery is bound to preserve and maintain in good order all Sangha property, holding it in trust for the monastics now and in the future.

In large monasteries, and some had thousands of monks and nuns, the community would delegate some of its responsibilities to competent monks and nuns. Thus there would be a monk in charge of allocating lodgings, and one in charge of building and maintenance. Ven. Maha Moggalana, one of the Buddha's two chief monk disciples, was perhaps the most effective of the building monks. Once the Buddha commissioned him, with the assistance of 500 monks, to build the grandiose dwelling called the "Migaramatu Pasada" at Savatthi, with funds donated by the foremost female lay disciple Visakha. This monastic dwelling had two stories, each with 500 rooms pinnacled with gold! Because of Ven. Maha Moggalana's psychic powers (they didn't have cranes and bulldozers then) it took only 9 months to complete. It makes our efforts at Bodhinyana look puny.

In conclusion, in the time of the Buddha, the resident monastic community ran their monastery in every respect, maintaining it in good order for the benefit of all monks and nuns, now and in the future. And monastics did get involved in the building, although only now and again. The famous monasteries in ancient India, such as the Jeta Grove outside of Savatthi where the Buddha spent 19 rains retreats, were owned by the Sangha and run by the monks -- there was no Buddhist Society of Savatthi! Then there was no need.

Ajahn Brahmavamso
(BSWA Newsletter, October-December 1995)

VINAYA
Monks and Money
Ajahn Brahmavamso

This is the second article in the series about the Vinaya, the body of monastic rules and traditions binding on every Buddhist monk and nun. In this article I will be concerned with the controversial issue of a monk's or nun's dealings with money.

The issue has been controversial for over 2,000 years. Around 200 years after the Buddha's final passing away, there arose a great quarrel in which "both endless disputations arose and of not one speech was the meaning clear" [1]. This dispute arose because a large community of monks were accepting money in defiance of the Vinaya. The proceedings of the dispute became known as the Second Council and it sowed the seed of the first great schism in the Buddhist world, which happened soon after.

Then, as now, there is no excuse for uncertainty on this point, for the Buddha's own words make it plain...

On Monks and Money

Buddhist monks (bhikkhus) and nuns (bhikkhunis) are not allowed to accept money for themselves. Nor are they allowed to tell a trustworthy layperson to receive it on their behalf and keep it for them (e.g. keeping a personal bank account). Such practices are explicitly prohibited in the 18th rule of the section of Vinaya called Nissaggiya Pacittiya.

Nor may monks or nuns buy and sell things for themselves using money. This is prohibited by the 19th rule in the Nissaggiya Pacittiya.

Some people argue that these two rules refer only to gold and silver but such a view is indefensible. The Vinaya specifically states that these rules cover "whatever is used in business" [2], i.e. any medium of exchange.

Other people try to get around this rule by saying that it is only a minor rule, inapplicable to monastic life today. Indeed, the Buddha once did say that the Sangha may abolish the "lesser and minor" rules.

But is this rule a minor one?...

'Monks, there are these four stains because of which the sun and moon glow not, shine not, blaze not. What are these four? Rain clouds... snow clouds... smoke and dust... and an eclipse. Even so, monks, there are these four stains because of which monks and priests glow not,

shine not, blaze not. What are these four? Drinking alcohol... indulging in sexual intercourse... accepting gold or money... obtaining one's requisites through a wrong mode of livelihood. These are the four stains, monks, because of which monks and priests glow not, shine not, blaze not.' [3]

Obviously, the Buddha thought that the rule prohibiting the acceptance of gold or money was, indeed, a very important rule.

The non-acceptance of money has always been one of the fundamental observances of those who have left the world. Money is the measure of wealth and to most people material wealth is the goal of life. In the renunciation of money by monks and nuns, they emphatically demonstrate their complete rejection of worldly pursuits. At one stroke they set themselves significantly apart from the vast majority of people and thus become a constant reminder to all that a life based on the struggle to accumulate money is not the only way to live. Through giving up money they give up much of their power to manipulate the world and to satisfy their desires. Thus, as the Buddha once said when asked whether money was permissible to the monks and nuns:

'Whoever agrees to gold or money, headman, also agrees to the five strands of sensual pleasure, and whoever agrees to the five strands of sensual pleasure, headman, you may take it for certain that this is not the way of a recluse, that this is not the way of a Buddhist monk.'[4]

References

- [1] Book of the Discipline, volume 5, page 424.
- [2] Book of the Discipline, volume 2, page 102.
- [3] Anguttara Nikaya, volume 2, page 53. (my translation)
- [4] Samyutta Nikaya, volume 4, page 326. (my translation)

Ajahn Brahmavamso
(BSWA Newsletter, January-March 1996)

VINAYA **The Four Disrobing Offences** **Ajahn Brahmavamso**

This is the third article in the series about the Vinaya, the body of monastic rules and traditions binding on every Buddhist monk and nun. In this article I will discuss the four Parajika - the disrobing offences.

The core of the monastic discipline is a list of rules called the Patimokkha. In the bhikkhu-patimokkha (for the monks) there are 227 rules, while in the bhikkhuni-patimokkha (for the nuns) there are 311 rules. The first four rules in the patimokkha, for both monks and nuns, are the four Parajika. The word parajika (in the ancient Indian language called Pali) is usually translated as 'making the doer defeated'. In effect it means that the offender **MUST DISROBE**. No ceremony or trial is required. From the instant the transgression is completed, the perpetrator automatically loses his or her status as a Buddhist monk or nun. Obviously these four rules were considered by the Buddha to be extreme violations of the spiritual ethic

and a major obstacle in the path to enlightenment. They considered such gross behaviour on the part of a monk or nun that the penalty of disrobal was for life! Such a one could not simply re-ordain after a period of grace.

The four transgressions which incur a Parajika, the penalty of automatic disrobal, are as follows:

1. Engaging in sexual intercourse with another being of either sex.
2. Stealing something of value (which includes smuggling, cheating or deliberately avoiding payment of a tax).
3. Purposely killing a human being or encouraging him or her to commit suicide (this includes inciting another to murder somebody and it also includes convincing a woman to have an abortion).
4. Boasting that one has realised a high spiritual attainment, knowing that one is lying. For example, claiming to be enlightened, to be Maitreya Buddha, to have entered Jhana (deep meditation-ecstasy) or that one can read minds when one knows that one hasn't reached any of these states.

Should any monk or nun do any of these then you may know them as no longer holding the status of Buddhist monk or nun. They must disrobe. Should they attempt to hide their transgression and not disrobe then it is said that the bad karma produced is extreme indeed!

In these four disrobing offences there is no excuse for ignorance. In a story related in the Buddhist scriptures [1], a newly ordained monk who had not as yet been instructed in the Vinaya was cajoled by his former wife into having sexual intercourse with her. When he told the other monks of this, they approached the Buddha and asked what should be done. The Buddha decreed that the offending monk had to disrobe and in future all monks were to be told of the Four Things Not to be Done, the four Parajika, immediately after they have been ordained. Indeed, instructing the new monk in these four rules has now become part of the Ordination Ceremony itself. So there can be no excuse!

References

[1] Book of the Discipline, volume 4, page 124.

Ajahn Brahmavamso
(BSWA Newsletter, April-June 1996)

VINAYA Wrong Livelihood Ajahn Brahmavamso

This is the fourth article in the series about the Vinaya, that body of monastic rules and traditions binding on every Buddhist monk and nun. In this article I will discuss "wrong livelihood".

Buddhist monastics are called bhikkhus (monks) and bhikkhunis (nuns), which literally means men and women who rely on alms for the necessities of life. That is, they depend solely on the generosity of lay supporters. However, some monks, dissatisfied with the amount and uncertainty of alms, have tried to secure a more comfortable lifestyle by practising various crafts or trades and expecting a fee. This is called wrong livelihood.

An exhaustive list of examples of wrong livelihood can be found in the discourse of the Buddha called "Brahmajata Sutta" which is in the section of the Tipitaka called "Digha Nikaya". It includes such "priestcraft" as: palmistry, fortune-telling, interpreting dreams, determining propitious dates or sites, exorcism, reciting protective charms, incanting malevolent spells, foretelling a person's remaining lifespan, running errands for laypeople, casting astrological charts and so on.

Even earning a living in, what would be for a layperson, a good way such as practising medicine, is for a monk wrong livelihood. There is a story in the Dhammapada Commentary of such a monk who did very well out of practising as a doctor. One day, this monk received the most delicious almsfood from a man whom he had just successfully treated. On the way back to the monastery, he met Ven.Sariputta, one of the leading disciples of the Buddha, proudly told of his doctoring and offered some of his delicacies to him. Ven.Sariputta was dismayed and walked away without saying a word. Ven.Sariputta loved the simple tradition of depending on alms and he would not eat what was obtained by breaking the precepts, in this case through practising a craft for personal gain. When he returned to the monastery and related this incident to the Buddha, the Buddha recited the following stanzas:

"Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is shameless is coarse in thought, word and deed. He is arrogant like unto a crow. He will secure a comfortable living through unlawful means. On the other hand, life for a monk who has a sense of moral shame is not easy." (Dhammapada 244-245)

It is allowable for a monk skilled in medicine to treat people staying at the monastery, even to help those visiting -- but not to make a business out of it.

In the texts there are several stories where the Buddha, seeing an occasion to be of service, stopped while on almsround to give an inspiring teaching to a layman. The layperson would then run into the house and get some food to offer as a "reward" but the Buddha would always refuse it. He explained that Enlightened Ones do not teach for a fee. Teaching for personal gain is also wrong livelihood. Teaching is a monastic's way of giving, of serving, and it should never be regarded as a profession, selling the teachings for material gain.

A corrupt monk who tells fortunes for money, gives talks in exchange for gifts or practises any similar form of wrong livelihood has a special name in Buddhism -- he is called allajji (rhymes with Apache), meaning "shameless". Good monks are advised to shun shameless ones and if a group of allajji monks congregate in a neighbourhood the good monks are to go there and send them away (as in Sanghadisesa 13).

To emphasise the seriousness of the offence of wrong livelihood there is a well known quote from the Suttas. (The quote should be well known anyway, for it was printed in our newsletter two issues back!)

"There are, monks, these four stains because of which the sun and moon glow not, shine not, blaze not. What are these four?"

Rain clouds ... snow clouds ... smoke and dust ... and an eclipse. Even so, monks, there are these four stains because of which monks and nuns glow not, shine not, blaze not. What are these four? Drinking alcohol ... indulging in sexual intercourse ... accepting the use of gold or money ... and obtaining gifts through the wrong livelihood." (Anguttara Nikaya 2.53)

It is clear, then, what the Buddha thought of allajji monks who predict lottery numbers, give astrology readings and so on, for personal gain. They are grouped along with a monk who gets drunk, has sexual intercourse or keeps money. Monks who practise wrong livelihood are a stain on the Sangha should be known as such by the laypeople.

Ajahn Brahmavamso
(BSWA Newsletter, July-September 1996)

VINAYA
Monks and Women, Nuns and Men
Ajahn Brahmavamso

One of the important rules of Vinaya, for Buddhist monks as well as nuns, is the prohibition of a monk to be alone with women, and a nun to be alone with men. This is not just a rule for strict monks and nuns, but a rule which the Buddha made obligatory for all monks and nuns. Since this is a rule which often comes up, I will explain it at length in this Vinaya article.

In the introduction to one of the rules ("Aniyata" 1) found in the Vinayapitaka, there occurs the following story:

"At one time the Enlightened One, the Lord, was staying at Savatthi in Anathapindika's Park, in the Jeta Grove. Then the Venerable Udayin approached this girl (a newly married daughter of one of Ven Udayin's supporters) and having approached her, he sat down together with that girl, one man and one woman, in a secret place on a secluded, convenient seat, conversing at the right time, speaking Dhamma. at the right time ... Visakha (the famous lay woman disciple) saw the Venerable Udayin sitting together with that girl, one man and one woman, in a secret place on a secluded convenient seat. Seeing this, she said to the Venerable Udayin: "This is not proper, honoured sir, it is not suitable, that the master should sit together with womenfolk, one man and one woman, in a secret place on a secluded, convenient seat. Although the master has no desire for that thing (sexual intercourse), unbelieving people are difficult to convince." The Venerable Udayin took no heed of Visakha.... Visakha told this matter to the monks ... The monks became vexed, annoyed and angry and told the matter to the Lord ... The Lord rebuked Ven. Udayin: "How can you, foolish man, sit together with womenfolk, one man and one woman, in a secret place on a secluded, convenient seat?"

..."(The Lord Buddha then laid down a rule explaining...)

'A secret place' means secret from the eye, secret from the ear. Secret from the eye means if (the monk) covering his eye, raising his eyebrow, raising his head, he (the onlooker) is unable to see (the monk). Secret from the ear means he (the onlooker) is unable to hear ordinary speech. 'A secluded seat' means it is secluded by a wall, or by a door, or by a screen, or by a

screen wall or by a tree or by a pillar or by a sack or it is concealed by anything whatsoever. 'Convenient' means it is possible to indulge in sexual intercourse."

(from the Pali Text Society's Book of the Discipline, Vol 1, p 330ff)

The following rule, "Aniyata" 2, is similar to the first, which I have just described, with the only change being that this time Venerable Udayin sat down with that same girl, just the two of them, in a secret place (secret from the eye, secret from the ear), that was not a secluded place (by a wall etc) nor a convenient place (for sexual intercourse). Again when Visakha spotted Venerable Udayin and the girl alone together, she rebuked the monk:

"This, honoured sir, is not right, it is not suitable for the master to sit together with womenfolk, one man and one woman, in a secret place. Although, honoured sir, the master has no desire for that thing (here referring to flirting), unbelieving people are hard to convince."

Again Ven. Udayin took no heed of Visakha's complaint, so she told the monks who told the Lord Buddha. The Buddha then rebuked Ven. Udayin and condemned such behaviour by establishing another rule for monks.

The above quotations, directly from the Vinayapitaka, show the danger of a monk being alone with women, especially inside a room, car or building. These rules were repeated in the nuns' Vinaya, prohibiting a nun being alone with men for similar reasons. In today's society where allegations of sexual abuse are rife, and are often just one person's word against another's, keeping these important rules is more than just a protection from the opportunity for abuse, but also a guard against the suspicions spread by the malicious. Suspicions, even when untrue, are so difficult to disprove. As the wise laywoman Visakha said "Even if the Venerable monk or nun has no desire for that thing, unbelieving people are hard to convince".

Knowing this rule now, may we help all Buddhist monks and nuns keep their precepts well and thus help prevent allegations that are damaging to all. Please avoid being alone with a monk if you are a woman and if you are a man, avoid being alone with a nun. Thank you.

Ajahn Brahmavamso

(From: Newsletter, July-October 1997,

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia, Perth, Australia)

VINAYA
Ordination of Women
Ajahn Brahmavamso

Sister Rocana left Bodhinyana Monastery recently to take a 'higher' ordination in England. As I mentioned in the 'Sangha News' article, she visited Thailand en-route and was rather disappointed at what she saw of the opportunities for nuns there. The place of women in Theravada monasticism is a problem no less prickly than some of the native bushes here in the monastery! But it cannot be avoided. It can only be understood in relation to the Vinaya,

the body of monastic rules and regulations established by the Buddha which are binding on every Buddhist monk and nun. Thus in this fifth article in the series I will discuss the ORDINATION OF WOMEN.

'Bhikkhu' is the name which denotes a fully ordained Buddhist monk. The term literally means one who depends on alms. Correspondingly, a 'Bhikkhuni' is a fully ordained Buddhist nun. During his lifetime, the Buddha established thriving communities of both bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. However, not only did the Buddha lay down more rules of discipline for the bhikkhunis, 311 as against the bhikkhus' 227, but he also made it more difficult for them to be ordained.

To become a bhikkhuni a woman had to begin by asking for 'ordination' as a sikkhamana (meaning a woman in training) before an assembly of at least 5 bhikkhunis. Her training consisted of 6 rules: the Five Precepts, the third of which being extended to complete celibacy, plus abstaining from eating outside of the morning time. Only when she had kept these six rules UNBROKEN FOR TWO YEARS could she, with the permission of her parents and husband, take higher ordination as a bhikkhuni. Should she break a precept then she would begin her period of training anew. Having completed her training, she should then seek an experienced bhikkhuni of at least 12 years standing to be her preceptor. A preceptor has to be agreed upon as such by the local community of bhikkhunis before she may ordain another and even then, she may only ordain one candidate every other year. the candidate is first ordained in a formal meeting of at least five bhikkhunis and afterwards this 'ordination on one side' is confirmed before a formal meeting of at least five bhikkhus. Only then is she a fully ordained nun according to Theravada tradition.

The Bhikkhuni Sangha flourished for many centuries and spread throughout South and East Asia. It seems to have died out in Sri Lanka in the 11 th century C.E. (according to Professor Malalasekera) mainly due to the civil turmoil coming from invasion and war. The fact that the Bhikkhuni Sangha was not re-established in the last decades of the 11 th century when Sri Lanka was again peaceful strongly suggests that there were few if any bhikkhunis in neighbouring lands, such as India or Burma, who could be invited to Sri Lanka to re-establish the tradition. For, as explained above, to ordain another bhikkhuni one requires a minimum of five existing bhikkhunis; once their number drops to below five then the Institution is doomed.

For many centuries the Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma have assumed that the Order of Bhikkhunis died out ages ago and that it is impossible to revive. To compensate for this, other female monastic traditions have been established by the monks to help give the opportunity to women to live a simple meditative life. Such an Order is that of the white robed nuns of Thailand keeping the 8 Precepts and such a nun was Sister Rocana. But being a later addition, this ordination lacks the status of having been established by the Buddha and lacks the authority of an ancient tradition and thus social and cultural prejudices have been able to take root and prevail. For this reason many senior monks, such as Ajahn Sumedho in England for example, have attempted to revive and build upon the female novice ordination. Though still less than a bhikkhuni, a female novice wears brown and essentially keeps 10 precepts, the last of which is abstaining from the use or possession of money. Thus a female novice is more of a renunciant than the white robed Thai nun, and, wearing robes similar in appearance to those of a monk, she may get more of the respect she deserves.

There has even been much discussion recently, that is in the last decade or so, that it may be possible to revive the full bhikkhuni ordination. There are bhikkunis of the Mahayana tradition in Taiwan and Hong Kong. 'Bhikkuni' is merely the Sanskrit (the language of Mahayana) equivalent to our 'Bhikkhuni'. If it turns out that the ordination procedure used by the Mahayana bhikkunis contains the vital ingredient of a formal resolution, put three times to a gathering of at least 5 bhikkunis, informing those gathered that the candidate wishes for ordination as a bhikkhuni and asking their approval, then the ordination is probably valid by Theravada standards. Should this be so, and I have no information on this at present, then we may see the full female counterpart of the monks restored to the Theravada tradition.

Whatever the technicalities, one should always keep in mind the old English proverb: "Where there is a will, there is a way". I am often amazed to see how far rules can be bent under the weight of compassion. All it needs is the motive for doing the bending, and that motive will increase as do the numbers of women who show by their example a willingness to surrender to a renunciant's life.

Ajahn Brahmavamso

(BSWA Newsletter, January-March 1990)

VINAYA
May a Monk Act as a Doctor?
Ajahn Brahmavamso

A recurring misunderstanding standing among some lay Buddhist is that a monk may practise as a doctor to the laity. Some monks do become skilled in herbal medicine and other traditional therapies but when, if ever, are they allowed by their precepts to behave as a doctor?

The Lord Buddha once said "Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick" and this well-known saying has often been used to justify a monk acting as a doctor. However, the saying is taken out of context as will soon be clear. The full passage, found in that section of the Vinaya-pitaka called the Mahavagga, chapter 8, verse 26, relates to the story of the Lord Buddha coming across a fellow monk who was suffering dysentery. With the help of Venerable Ananda, the Lord Buddha cleaned and settled the sick monk. Shortly afterwards, the Lord Buddha addressed the Sangha:

"Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend one another, then who is there to tend you? Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick." (From the Pali Text Society's translation, Book of the Discipline, Vol 4 p 432)

The full passage makes it abundantly clear that when the Lord Buddha said "Whoever would tend me should tend the sick", His meaning was for monks to look after fellow monks who were sick. He was not referring to monks acting as doctors to the laity.

In fact, the Lord Buddha said several times that acting as a doctor to lay people is, for a monk, Wrong Livelihood (miccha-ajiva) directly contrary to the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold

Path and a Debased Art (tiracchana-vijja). For example, in the very first Sutta in the first collection of Suttas, being the Brahmajala Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, the Lord Buddha said:

"Whereas some recluses and brahmins while living on the food offered by the faithful, earn their living by a wrong means of livelihood (miccha-ajiva), by such debased arts (tiracchana-vijja) as: promising gifts to deities in return for favours; fulfilling such promises; demonology; reciting spells after entering an earthen house; inducing virility and impotence; preparing and consecrating sites for a house; giving ceremonial mouthwashes and bathing; offering sacrificial fires; administering emetics, purgatives, expectorants and phlegmagogues; administering ear medicine, eye medicine, nose medicine, collyrium and counter ointments; curing cataracts, practising surgery, practising as a children's doctor; administering medicines to cure bodily diseases and balms to counter their after effects -- the recluse Gotama (the Lord Buddha) abstains from such wrong means of livelihood, from such debased arts." (From The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net Views , p 61, being the Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy's English edition of the Brahmajala Sutta)

Thus the Lord Buddha clearly condemned any monk who makes his living by behaving as a doctor to the laity.

The tradition that has come down to all Theravada Buddhist monks is that described in the Samantapasadika, the great commentary on the Vinayapitaka compiled by Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka in the 5th century C.E. This authoritative work states that a monk may prescribe and supply medicines to his fellow monastics (monks and nuns), to his parents or to those looking after his parents, and to any lay people staying in the monastery or vihara either preparing to go forth as monks or just staying to help the monks. Also, a monk may prescribe but not buy medicines to his brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and to whatever travellers, bandits, people wounded in battle and those without relatives who come to the monastery or vihara for emergency help. Should a monk prescribe or supply medicines beyond his allowance, he commits an offence against his precepts (a dukkata offence). Further, if he prescribes or supplies a medicine to a layperson for a material gift in return, then he incurs another offence against his precepts for "corrupting families" (kuladusaka). That is what is stated in the Samantapasadika Vinaya Commentary, respected in all Theravada Buddhist countries. The passage may be found in the Pali Text Society's edition of the Samantapasadika page 469f (unfortunately this work is in Pali and no English translation is available yet).

This answer from the authoritative texts to the question "May a monk act as a doctor?" shows a wise balance which recognises a monk's duty to his parents, his responsibilities to those monks and lay people staying with him in his monastery, and his compassion to all those visiting his monastery for emergency help. It prevents in any circumstances receiving any material reward for such services. Moreover, it remembers that the role of a Buddhist monk towards the laity is not to act as a doctor to the body but to act as a kind sage, a doctor to the mind.

VINAYA
What the Buddha say about eating meat
Ajahn Brahmavamso

Since the very beginning of Buddhism over 2500 years ago, Buddhist monks and nuns have depended on almsfood. They were, and still are, prohibited from growing their own food, storing their own provisions or cooking their own meals. Instead, every morning they would make their day's meal out of whatever was freely given to them by lay supporters. Whether it was rich food or coarse food, delicious or awful tasting it was to be accepted with gratitude and eaten regarding it as medicine. The Buddha laid down several rules forbidding monks from asking for the food that they liked. As a result, they would receive just the sort of meals that ordinary people ate - and that was often meat.

Once, a rich and influential general by the name of Siha (meaning 'Lion') went to visit the Buddha. Siha had been a famous lay supporter of the Jain monks but he was so impressed and inspired by the Teachings he heard from the Buddha that he took refuge in the Triple Gem (i.e. he became a Buddhist). General Siha then invited the Buddha, together with the large number of monks accompanying Him, to a meal at his house in the city the following morning. In preparation for the meal, Siha told one of his servants to buy some meat from the market for the feast. When the Jain monks heard of their erstwhile patron's conversion to Buddhism and the meal that he was preparing for the Buddha and the monks, they were somewhat peeved:

"Now at the time many Niganthas (Jain monks), waving their arms, were moaning from carriage road to carriage road, from cross road to cross road in the city: "Today a fat beast, killed by Siha the general, is made into a meal for the recluse Gotama (the Buddha), the recluse Gotama makes use of this meat knowing that it was killed on purpose for him, that the deed was done for his sake" [1].

Siha was making the ethical distinction between buying meat already prepared for sale and ordering a certain animal to be killed, a distinction which is not obvious to many westerners but which recurs throughout the Buddha's own teachings. Then, to clarify the position on meat eating to the monks, the Buddha said:

"Monks, I allow you fish and meat that are quite pure in three respects: if they are not seen, heard or suspected to have been killed on purpose for a monk. But, you should not knowingly make use of meat killed on purpose for you." [2]

There are many places in the Buddhist scriptures which tell of the Buddha and his monks being offered meat and eating it. One of the most interesting of these passages occurs in the introductory story to a totally unrelated rule (Nissaggiya Pacittiya 5) and the observation that the meat is purely incidental to the main theme of the story emphasizes the authenticity of the passage:

Uppalavanna (meaning 'she of the lotus-like complexion') was one of the two chief female disciples of the Buddha. She was ordained as a nun while still a young woman and soon became fully enlightened. As well as being an arahant (enlightened) she also possessed various psychic powers to the extent that the Buddha declared her to be foremost among all the women in this field. Once, while Uppalavanna was meditating alone in the afternoon in the 'Blind-Men's Grove', a secluded forest outside of the city of Savatthi, some thieves passed by. The thieves had just stolen a cow, butchered it and were escaping with the meat. Seeing the composed and serene nun, the chief of the thieves quickly put some of the meat in a leaf-bag and left it for her. Uppalavanna picked up the meat and resolved to give it to the Buddha.

Early next morning, having had the meat prepared, she rose into the air and flew to where the Buddha was staying, in the Bamboo Grove outside of Rajagaha, over 200 kilometres as the crow (or nun?) flies! Though there is no specific mention of the Buddha actually consuming this meat, obviously a nun of such high attainments would certainly have known what the Buddha ate.

However there are some meats which are specifically prohibited for monks to eat: human meat, for obvious reasons; meat from elephants and horses as these were then considered royal animals; dog meat - as this was considered by ordinary people to be disgusting; and meat from snakes, lions, tigers, panthers, bears and hyenas - because one who had just eaten the flesh of such dangerous jungle animals was thought to give forth such a smell as to draw forth revenge from the same species!

Towards the end of the Buddha's life, his cousin Devadatta attempted to usurp the leadership of the Order of monks. In order to win support from other monks, Devadatta tried to be more strict than the Buddha and show Him up as indulgent. Devadatta proposed to the Buddha that all the monks should henceforth be vegetarians. The Buddha refused and repeated once again the regulation that he had established years before, that monks and nuns may eat fish or meat as long as it is not from an animal whose meat is specifically forbidden, and as long as they had no reason to believe that the animal was slaughtered specifically for them.

The Vinaya, then, is quite clear on this matter. Monks and nuns may eat meat. Even the Buddha ate meat. Unfortunately, meat eating is often seen by westerners as an indulgence on the part of the monks. Nothing could be further from the truth - I was a strict vegetarian for three years before I became a monk. In my first years as a monk in North-East Thailand, when I bravely faced many a meal of sticky rice and boiled frog (the whole body bones and all), or rubbery snails, red-ant curry or fried grasshoppers - I would have given ANYTHING to be a vegetarian again! On my first Christmas in N.E. Thailand an American came to visit the monastery a week or so before the 25th. It seemed too good to be true, he had a turkey farm and yes, he quickly understood how we lived and promised us a turkey for Christmas. He said that he would choose a nice fat one especially for us and my heart sank. We cannot accept meat knowing it was killed especially for monks. We refused his offer. So I had to settle for part of the villager's meal - frogs again.

Monks may not exercise choice when it comes to food and that is much harder than being a vegetarian. Nonetheless, we may encourage vegetarianism and if our lay supporters brought only vegetarian food and no meat, well...monks may not complain either! May you take the hint and be kind to animals.

Refs:

[1] Book of the Discipline, Vol. 4, p324

[2] *ibid*, p325

Ajahn Brahmavamso

(Newsletter, April-June 1990, Buddhist Society of Western Australia.)

The Meaning of Sangha

By Ven. Ajahn Brahmavamso

Like the young teenagers who delight in doing things differently from their parents, new Buddhists in non-Asian countries seem to be going through their own proud adolescence by challenging the boundaries of traditional Buddhism. Fortunately, for both our youngsters and Western Buddhists, the arrogance of youth soon gives way to the mature, long years of understanding and respect for tradition. It is in order to hasten this growing up of Buddhism in Australia that I write this article on the meaning of 'Sangha' as it was meant to be understood by the Lord Buddha.

In the Tipitika, the recorded Teachings of the Lord Buddha, one finds two main focuses for the meaning of Sangha: the third part of the Threefold Refuge (in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) and the third factor of the to-be-worshipped Triple Gem (The Buddha, Dhamma and Savaka Sangha). On odd occasions in the Tipitika, 'Sangha' is used to denote a 'herd' of animals (Patika Sutta, Digha Nikaya) or 'flock' of birds (Jataka Nidana), but groups of lay disciples, both men and women, are always described as 'parisa', an assembly.

So what is the meaning of Sangha in the first main context, in the Threefold Refuge? Certainly, only an exceedingly eccentric Buddhist would take as their third refuge a sangha of birds (only "one gone cuckoo", as they say!). In fact, the Tipitika is precise in what is meant by the third refuge. In the Canon, on every occasion that an inspired person took the Threefold Refuge as an expression of their faith, it was either in the Buddha, Dhamma and Bhikkhu Sangha, or in the Buddha, Dhamma and Bhikkhuni Sangha. Thus, in original Buddhism, the meaning of Sangha in the context of the Threefold Refuge is unarguably the Monastic Sangha.

The Sangha as the third factor of the Triple Gem worshipped by Buddhists seems to have a different meaning. It is called the Savaka Sangha (or Ariya Sangha) and is defined as those attained to any of the Eight Stages of Enlightenment (the 4 usual stages divided into Path and Fruit) who are "worthy of gifts, hospitality, offerings and reverential salutations, and who are the unsurpassed field of merit in the world". So, in the original texts, who are the "unsurpassed field of merit and worthy of offerings and salutations"?

In the Dakkhinavibhanga Sutta (Majjhima 142), the Buddha said that, "an offering made to the monastic Sangha is incalculable, immeasurable. And, I say, that in no way does a gift to a person individually ever have a greater fruit than an offering made to the monastic Sangha". Consistency proves that the Savaka Sangha, the unsurpassed field of merit in the world, must be a part, a subset of the monastic Sangha -- there is no greater fruit than an offering to the monastic Sangha.

Furthermore, in the world of the Tipitika, offerings and reverential salutations would always be given by the laity to the monastic and never the other way around. Even the highly attained lay disciple Ugga Gahapati who was a Non-Returner is seen to be giving reverential salutations to ordinary bhikkhus and serving their needs with his own hands (Anguttara Nikaya, Eights, Suttas 21 & 22). Thus, those "worthy of gifts, hospitality, offerings and reverential salutations", the Savaka Sangha, are again shown to be a part of the monastic Sangha of both genders.

This proves that the meaning of 'Sangha' in the context of the to-be-worshipped Triple Gem is that part of the monastic Sangha who have attained to a Stage of Enlightenment. This Savaka

Sangha, or Ariya Sangha, is in no way outside of the monastic Sangha but within it, as a subset. To say otherwise is inconsistent with the Suttas.

I have carefully argued these points because today, many young lay Buddhist groups in Australia, Europe and the Americas are calling themselves Sangha, going for refuge to themselves, even worshipping themselves, and presuming this is Buddhism! This is sad, misleading and produces no progress on the Path.

It is far better to go for refuge to the Monastic Sangha and give respect to that Sangha, especially those within the monastic Sangha with attainment on the Path. Why? Because the monastic Sangha is also the physical expression of the Lord Buddha's Middle Way, it is the only authoritative Buddhist teaching organization and, thirdly, it is the flag of Buddhism capable of giving inspiration in the villages and cities of our world.

That the monastic Sangha is the physical expression of the Lord Buddha's Middle Way is easily demonstrated when one investigates the Suttas what the Lord Buddha meant by the 'Middle Way'. In the Aranavibhanga Sutta (Majjhima 139), the Lord Buddha clearly explained that the Middle Way is a celibate way, "Beyond the pursuit of the pleasures of the five senses". Monasticism is the physical expression of celibacy. Every Buddhist should know that sensuality is the first of the three cravings (Kama-tanha) mentioned in the Second Noble Truth as the direct cause of Dukkha. Also, that such sensuality is the first of the attachments (Kama-upadana). So those who are earnest about abandoning such craving and uprooting such attachment would naturally gravitate to the monastic Sangha. Thus, the monks and nuns include all those who are serious enough about Enlightenment to do some serious letting go of their cravings and attachments.

That the authority on Buddhism lies with the monastic Sangha is demonstrated when one considers that only someone who is practicing the Dhamma, and uprooting sensuality has the authority to teach others to do the same. A sexually active lay Buddhist who enjoys good food and entertainment while amassing worldly possessions, and who teaches others to let go of attachments is called a hypocrite; one who doesn't practise what they preach to others. They have no authority. It is true that some monks also qualify as hypocrites here, but they are more easily shown up for what they are than the lay teacher with far fewer rules. In short, a monastic is more reliable.

That the monastic Sangha is the flag of Buddhism refers to the appearance and lifestyle of the Buddhist monk or nun. The simple brown robe and shaven heads are symbols of renunciation and a rejection of fashion. They are a flag to the people that the way to happiness is not through amassing wealth and showing it off to others. The lifestyle of morality and restraint seen in the behaviour of a good monk or nun are a signpost to others that freedom lies within precepts, not beyond them. And the quietness and happiness of a trained monastic indicates the goal of the Noble Eightfold Path, which is the end of suffering. Good monks and nuns stand out as no lay person could, inspiring even non-Buddhists as worthy sons and daughters of the Lord Buddha. Like a patriot feels inspired and uplifted when they see the flag of their country, so a true Buddhist feels the same emotions on seeing the flag of the Sangha in a diligent monk or nun.

So this is the meaning of the word 'Sangha', both in the context of the Tipitika and in the context of modern times. May the monks and nuns who are its members please live up to all these meanings. And may lay Buddhist know better than young Western Buddhists and their

spin doctoring of the Dhamma, and so preserve and support the lineage of the Great Teacher that is the Monastic Sangha.