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The View of Women in Buddhism - From the Comparison between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts

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The View of Women in Buddhism
-From the Comparison between the *Bhikkhu*
and *Bhikkhuni* Precepts

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Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Chapter 1.</u> The Introduction of Vinayas or Precepts.....	6
1. Historical Context and the Creation of Vinayas.....	6
2. Different Schools of Survived Vinaya Texts.....	6
3. Different Categories of Precepts.....	7
4. Exceptions in the Practice of the Precepts.....	10
5. The Importance of Vinaya on Practicing Buddhism.....	12
a) In the Perspective of <i>Karma</i>	12
b) In the Perspective of <i>Nirvana</i>	12
i) Training of Mind.....	13
ii) Training of Body.....	17
c) In the Perspective of Sangha.....	19
<u>Chapter 2.</u> The Bhikkhuni Precepts and Nun’s Sangha.....	21
1. The Rise of Buddhist Monasticism.....	21
2. The Rise of Bhikkhuni Sangha and Precepts.....	22
3. The Rainy Season Retreat.....	24
4. Six Categories of Transgressions.....	25
5. Various Ways of Categorizing the Bhikkhuni Precepts.....	26
a) Rules for Individuals and Rules for the Community.....	26
b) Prohibitions of <i>raga</i> , <i>dosa</i> , and <i>moha</i>	27
<u>Chapter 3.</u> Difference between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts.....	33
1. Difference between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts in <i>Parajika</i> ..	33
2. Difference between the Two Precepts in <i>Sanghadisesa</i>	36
3. Difference between the Two Precepts in <i>Nissaggiya Pacittiya</i>	39
4. Difference between the Two Precepts in <i>Pacittiya</i>	39
5. Difference between the Two Precepts in <i>Patidesaniya</i>	42
6. Difference between the Two Precepts in <i>Sekhiya</i>	43
<u>Chapter 4.</u> The View of Women in Buddhism from the Comparison of the Precepts...	45
1. The General View of Women in Buddhism.....	45
2. The Factors that Constitute the View of Women in Buddhism.....	45
a) Facts.....	46
b) The Buddha Dharma.....	47
c) Social Context.....	49
d) Rhetorical Skills.....	51
e) The Predicted Reversed Position of Women Nowadays.....	52
<u>Conclusion</u>	56
<u>Bibliography</u>	57

Introduction

In Buddhism, monks and nuns or *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhuni* in Pali refer to those who leave their homes to practice Buddhism and live ascetic lives with other monks or nuns. Monks and nuns play important roles in Buddhism, because they are considered to be the successors of the Buddha *dharma* after the death of the Sakyamuni Buddha and therefore are responsible for teaching and passing on the Buddha *dharma*.

Precepts are the rules that the Buddha made to prohibit the behavior that may obstruct the experiencing of enlightenment. By upholding the precepts strictly, people can experience *nirvana*. In order to help monks and nuns, who devote their whole lives to practice Buddhism, to experience *nirvana* sooner, the Buddha made stricter precepts for them than for lay people who practice Buddhism at home while doing secular business. The precepts for monks and the precepts for nuns are called the Bhikkhu Patimokkha and the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, which were made based on the misbehavior of monks and nuns.

However, there are many differences between the Bhikkhu Patimokkha and the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, showing the differences between women and men, such as physical differences, different habits and psychologies, and different social roles, and the view of the Buddha that a greater percentage of women has deeper *vasanas* (subconscious bad habits from previous lives) than men have. For this reason, some people charge Buddhism because they think the Buddha discriminated against women. Nonetheless, the Buddha's view towards women is based on the facts rather than the stereotype of women, which can be seen in the analysis in the following chapters. Moreover, in Buddhism, it is thought that this situation of women is not caused by

women's bodily characteristics but by their psychologies and certain social customs. In other words, these bad habits are not inherent and unchangeable, and can be changed with the change of the time and the social context. Furthermore, the degree of having bad habits does not influence the fact that every sentient being is able to experience enlightenment, so women indeed have the same possibility of experiencing *nirvana* as men have by practicing Buddhism to surpass themselves, which can be found throughout many Buddhist sutras.

In addition, to better explain my arguments, I used some foreign articles in Chinese mainly from Mahayana tradition and translated them by myself. Articles about Vinaya are the *Questions and Answers about Buddhism* by Master Benru, the *Precepts are important? !* by Master Dinghong, the *An Inquiry into the Chinese Tradition of Receiving the Precepts* by Huimin, and the *No.9 of the Lectures about Vinaya* and *No. 10 of the Lectures about Vinaya* by Jinghui,.

Articles about doctrines or sutras are the *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra* by Master Daoliang, the *Samantabhadra Vows Yaoshu Xuandu* and the *Exegesis of Aparimitayur Sutra* by Master Chin Kung, the *Only People who Activate sushumna Can Get the Deep Concentration* and *The Transformation of Body after Effective Meditation for One Hundred Day* by Huaijin, the *Overcoming these Eighty-Four States Can Make Women Experience Nirvana Soon* by Minghua, *The Buddha Said the End of Dharma Sutra* by Tansuo, and *The Truth of the 'Discrimination of Women' in Buddhism*, from the website named Feng Huang Wang. Besides, some English translations of Chinese words are from the *Common Vocabularies in Buddhism* by Xiaoyi.

Chapter 1. The Introduction of Vinayas or Precepts

1. The Historical Context and Creation of Vinayas

The precepts in Buddhism are from two sources, the Sakyamuni Buddha and the Sangha, the monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns. There are two conditions from which the Buddha taught precepts. The first is the condition that the Buddha actively taught sutras about precepts without specific reason in real life. Some of these sutras apply not only to monks and nuns but also to lay people. The second is the condition that when monks or nuns committed crimes, did improper behavior, or raised disputes inside or outside the Sangha, the Buddha gave resolutions from his own understandings of circumstances or by appropriating the lifestyle from the Indian context of his day. These resolutions then became the fixed precepts for monks and nuns later.

“The Buddhist monastic tradition arose in emulation of the lifestyle of Sakyamuni Buddha.”¹ In this way, the Sangha itself also generated precepts by resolving disputes based on the teaching of the Buddha. Especially when the precepts came into other cultures or countries later, the Sangha localized the original precepts and formed new precepts there. However, although some of the original precepts are highly conditional, the spirit behind these precepts is consistent and still crucial for Buddhism practice in general.

2. Different Schools of Survived Vinaya Texts

Three of the eight schools producing of Vinaya have continued until the present day as active schools of Vinaya or monastic discipline. They are the *Dharmagupta* school of

¹ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 8.

the Chinese canon, the *Mulasarvastivadin* of the Tibetan canon, and the *Theravadin* school of the Pali canon.² The Theravada branch is the only one of the original eighteen sects whose disciplinary rules remain the most fully intact. The surviving texts in the *Dharmagupta* school and *Mulasarvastivadin* school are the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the original texts.

The Pali Vinaya of the Theravada is made up by stories about the context of the generation of specific precepts, so each precept is followed by its contextual story. Usually, monks and nuns did something wrong first and the Buddha prohibited these actions later by forming certain precepts. In addition, the precepts that survive from the *Dharmagupta* and *Mulasarvastivadin* schools are more organized because the precepts are categorized based on its application, and stories behind them are omitted.

The branch of Buddhism that is practiced in China and Tibet is Mahayana, which contains some content that is not accepted by Theravada branch. Even though the doctrines of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have some differences, the Vinaya part of the Mahayana practice is almost the same because precepts regulate the behavior that every Buddhist must strictly follow in order to experience *nirvana*.

3. Different Categories of Precepts

Different categories of precepts apply to different types of people, such as monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Another distinction to be made concerning Buddhist precepts is between Patimokkha precept and bodhisattva precepts.³ Patimokkha literally means “individual liberation.” Patimokkha precepts, which mainly regulate behavior, are

² Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 8.

³ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 6.

shared by both Theravada and Mahayana branches, while bodhisattva precepts, which pay more attention to the regulation of mind and thought in more detail, are practiced only in Mahayana tradition. There are seven types of Patimokkha precepts:

Those of a *bhiksu* (fully ordained monk), a *bhiksuni* (fully ordained nun), a *siksamana* (probationary nun), a *sramanera* (male novice), a *sramanerika* (female novice), an *upasaka* (layman), and an *upasika* (laywoman).⁴

Lay Buddhists uphold the Five Precepts: no killing, no stealing, no adultery, no false speech, and no taking of intoxicants. Ordained Buddhists under the age of sixteen, uphold the Ten Precepts that have five more rules than the Five Precepts, abstaining from using neither adornments nor perfumes, performing as an actor, juggler, acrobat, or going to watch and hear them, sitting on elevated, broad and large bed, eating except in regulated hours, and possessing money, gold, silver or precious things. Female ordained Buddhists from the age of eighteen to twenty follow the Six Precepts, which have one rule in addition to the Five Precepts that is no eating except in regulated hours and change no sexual misconduct in the Five Precepts to totally no sexual behavior. Fully ordained monks uphold 227 precepts, while fully ordained nuns uphold 311 precepts.⁵

What's more, there are two types of bodhisattva precepts: those of monks or nuns and those of lay people. Rules for monks and nuns are stricter than the rules for lay people, and Bodhisattva precepts are stricter than Patimokkha precepts, because they require the strict control of even thoughts rather than merely behaviors. Nonetheless, the spirit of Patimokkha precepts and bodhisattva precepts are the same. For example, in Pali Vinaya, the clerics were prohibited from partaking of meat under three circumstances that are thought to make meat impure:

⁴ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 3-4.

⁵ "Precepts for the Seven Assemblies," from a website.

When the cleric saw the animal being killed, when he heard the cry of the animal being killed, and when he was aware that the animal was being killed specifically to feed him.⁶

“The principle behind this rule is the nurturing of compassion.”⁷ In the bodhisattva precepts, eating meat is forbidden under any situation. Similarly, the principle behind the prohibition against meat eating is also thought to promote great compassion, because a bodhisattva considers him [or her] self related to all sentient beings.⁸

In addition, another way of “distinguishing the various types of Buddhist precepts, or rules of training in ethical conduct, is the extent of commitment in terms of time.”⁹ Most precepts are undertaken for a lifetime in Buddhism but there are some exceptions. The Eight Precepts (*attha-sila*), for example, can be observed from as short as only 24 hours to as long as one wants. The Ten Precepts are for tonsured novices, not fully ordained monks and nuns, while the Eight Precepts are for lay people, who do not have a chance to go forth, to experience similar monastic life for a period of time.

What’s more, the Eight Precepts forbid any sexual behavior rather than only sexual misbehavior and have three more additional rules than the Five Precepts, refraining from “eating at the forbidden time,” from “dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics,” and from “lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.”¹⁰ No transgression against the Five Precepts for lay people can only promise the rebirth of three good

⁶ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 56.

⁷ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 56.

⁸ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 57.

⁹ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 6.

¹⁰ “The Eight Precepts,” from a website.

destinies, while the strict obeying of the Eight Precepts is considered to offer a chance to release from the circle of samsara.

4. Exceptions in the Practice of the Precepts

In terms of the nature of precepts, most precepts correspond with the natural law of cause and effect, but some of them are precepts that the Buddha made to avoid any possibility of the breaking of the natural law. For instance, the first four precepts of the basic Five Precepts for any Buddhists, abstaining from killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, and false speech, are the natural moral law.¹¹ If people do things that the first four precepts forbidden, they will get bad fruits naturally, no matter if they receive precepts or not.¹²

Nevertheless, the fifth precept, “to abstain from fermented drink that causes heedlessness,”¹³ is the precept that the Buddha made to prevent Buddhist from doing the first four wrong behavior but the behavior of drinking alcohol itself is neutral in nature. For this reason, the fifth precept can be broken under certain situations when breaking that precept would not cause bad effects and even benefit other people. In some cultures, for example, drinking alcohol at big events is a custom to show respect to the host and to integrate into the community. If people do not drink in this situation, they seem to be disrespectful. Thus, if some Buddhists are confident about their high alcohol tolerance and can promise that they would not lose self-control after drinking, it is better for them to drink several caps in order to show the respect to the host. By doing this compromise,

¹¹ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Five Precepts.”

¹² Chen Xiaoyi, *Common Vocabularies in Buddhism*, under “Er Zui.”

¹³ *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Five Precepts.”

non-Buddhists will have a good impression towards Buddhists because they may think that Buddhists are not stubborn but considerate. In cases like this, to break the precept is allowed and cannot be counted as a sin.¹⁴

No only does the prohibition of drinking alcohol have exceptions, but also every precept has its exception. Although the fourth precept in the Five Precept, to abstain from false speech or telling a lie, is a natural moral law, white lies are allowed sometimes. In a Buddhist sutra, a Buddhist who upheld precepts strictly met with a hunter at the fork in the road. The hunter was chasing a rabbit but lost it at this fork, so he asked the Buddhist which direction the rabbit escaped. To prevent the rabbit to be killed, he told a wrong direction. In this case, the Buddhist was telling a white lie that cannot be counted as the break of the precept because his intention was to protect a life rather than to deceive another person for his own benefit.¹⁵

However, not all exceptions can be elaborated for there are countless situations. To determine if doing a prohibited behavior is the exception for special cases or the real break of the precept, the standard is (1) the motivation or the thought behind the action and (2) whether disobeying the precept can bring a bigger benefit and reduce the harm to other people in special cases. For example, if a mental patient killed a person with the delusion of cutting a cake, then he or she does not commit the sin of killing a person for he or she cannot recognize what he or she does, which is similar to the judgment of secular law. The usual thought or motivation of killing people does not apply here, so this action cannot be counted as a sin.¹⁶

¹⁴ Chen Xiaoyi, *Common Vocabularies in Buddhism*, under “Er Zui.”

¹⁵ Master Chin Kung, “Samantabhadra Vows Yaoshu Xuandu,” 4-9-04.

¹⁶ Master Chin Kung, “Exegesis of Aparimitayur Sutra.”

In conclusion, the expectations to the rules show that the precepts are strict but not rigid and mechanical, and that the real meaning of the precepts is to protect and benefit people rather than to limit them.

5. The Importance of Vinaya on Practicing Buddhism

a) In the Perspective of *Karma*¹⁷

Vinaya is essential in the sense of the theory of cause and effect as well, which is the basis of Buddhism. Many sutras elaborate this theory such as *the Buddhahasita Dasabhadra Karmamarga Sutra*. When someone has a thought, this thought becomes the seed of the sea of consciousness for this person, which brings good or bad fruits when the seed ripens. If the thought of doing an action is to benefit other people, then this thought is good; if the thought of doing an action is to benefit one's self or to harm other people, then this thought is bad. Thoughts other than these two are neutral. Although thoughts are more important than behavior, bad behavior with neutral or good thoughts can still bring bad fruits to some extent, but they are not as serious as bad behavior with bad thoughts.

Therefore, the meaning of forbidding certain behavior is not only to stop bad actions that harm other people but also to protect people who obey the precepts from receiving bad fruits. Even for non-Buddhists who have no wish to experience *nirvana*, some of the precepts are still important for them to live happily in this life and in the cycle of rebirth.

b) In the Perspective of *Nirvana*¹⁸

¹⁷ Melford, *Buddhism and Society*, 31-91.

To achieve *nirvana* and perfect the monastic life, the movement from *sila* or precepts, to *samadhi* or concentration, and to *prajna*, or wisdom is the only pathway. “And *sila*, the culmination of the ethical ideal, is said to be the foundation upon which the other two trainings rest.”¹⁹ Precepts help people to concentrate and concentration brings wisdom and the perfection of wisdom brings the experience of *nirvana*. Since people cannot concentrate because of various desires and tempts, precepts that help people to become released from desires satisfy the essential prerequisite of deep concentration, a calm and peaceful state of mind.

The concept of wisdom in Buddhism does not refer to external knowledge but from an inherent ability of knowing the law of the universe. Most people do not know the truth because of various thoughts that obstruct the application of this ability. Thus, restoring this ability only requires the emptiness of thoughts, which can be done only through the deep concentration. Hence, without precepts, people are unable to achieve the high level of concentration that is required for experiencing *nirvana*. Both in the perspective of mind and of body, precepts play a significant role in preparing for concentration.

i) Training of Mind

In the view of Buddha, desire is the origin of suffering. To pursue the fulfillment of desires makes it worse, and therefore to keep desires away is the only way to happiness. Precepts protect and liberate people from the harm of desires. The precepts

¹⁸ Melford, *Buddhism and Society*, 31-91.

¹⁹ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 8.

regulate every detail that is possible to promote desires, and the fussy rituals required in the precepts make the fulfillment of desires inconvenient.

For the convenience of lay people, the Buddha only permitted monks and nuns to ask for food from lay people before noon, which became the fixed precepts later to imitate the life of Buddha. Only “medicine” can be taken after noon. This means that monks and nuns cannot take food by themselves freely and if they do, they commit the sin of *Payattika*, causing the fruit of the three evil destinies in the cycle of rebirth without confession to another person. What’s more, any food except pure water is not allowed after noon even including water with color. If there are special cases, food after noon can be allowed after certain rituals, and then monks and nuns can receive them from the hand of lay people, which is complicated and troublesome. ²⁰

Moreover, monks and nuns cannot keep any personal belongings without holding certain rituals. If they accept things without holding the ritual, they commit the sin of *Nissaggiya Pacittiya*, which leads to the three evil destinies too. Monks and nuns having personal belongings such as underwear and medicines without holding certain rituals must give up these things to lay people, and repent their sins. Then, lay people give these things back to monks and nuns in a ritual to make them legal. Since the sin of *Nissaggiya Pacittiya* is heavier than *Pacittiya*, to repent it requires the gathering of the Sangha rather than repenting to a random person. In addition, monks and nuns can only keep medicines that taste unpleasant with them, such as those that are bitter, sour, or acrid, because things that taste well would arouse desires. Clothes including underwear must be dyed black or

²⁰Master Benru, “Questions and Answers about Buddhism,” from a website.

brown to detach from desires of materials. Monks and nuns wearing clothes without dyeing commit them the sin of *Pacittiya*.²¹

These fussy rituals and regulations make the fulfillment of desires complicated and inconvenient. Food not given by lay people cannot be eaten; food after noon without holding a ritual cannot be eaten; medicines and clothes without holding a ritual cannot be used. Once monks and nuns neglect or forget to do these things, they commit sins. These detailed regulations do sound troublesome and unnecessary but the inconvenience brought by these precepts help people to keep away desires and live a simple life.

To eat food after noon and gain new clothes are so complicated that people directly give them up at most times. Since food and clothes are the basic needs of the human being, putting down these desires is almost like putting down half of all desires. Furthermore, meditation is the foundation of experiencing *nirvana* and the biggest obstacles of concentration are desires that tempt and stimulate people to be restless and dissatisfied. In other words, subduing desires lead to concentration. Therefore, obeying precepts that help people to keep away from desires are crucial in practicing Buddhism.²²

The second aspect by which precepts help concentration is that they foster caution and carefulness. Since precepts regulate many details in the daily life that people usually do not care, to obey these precepts well requires the cultivation of caution and carefulness. People following these precepts have to be cautious about their actions, speaking, and even thoughts, rather than staying in a state of indolence and impetuosity. The spirit of the precepts is to be respectful and cautious about everything that one does.²³

²¹ Master Dinghong, “Precepts are important?!” from a website.

²² Master Dinghong, “Precepts are important?!” from a website.

²³ Master Dinghong, “Precepts are important?!” from a website.

Common people are usually in the state of unawareness, cannot control their thoughts, and often do not recognize what they are thinking about and doing. However, in order to become concentrated and experience *nirvana*, the most important thing is to be in a state of discipline. From paying attention to the details of daily life to becoming cautious about thoughts, precepts help people to get into that state. Why do people feel that it is difficult to obey these precepts? It is because they are used to living a life of indolence. In one word, following precepts is a way of living; it is to live an uncommon, non-secular life that is the Buddha's life.²⁴

Hence, only the tranquil and calm mind, conditioned with carefulness and cautiousness, can bring concentration. As Master Dinghong, who focuses on the field of Buddhist precepts, said, this principle can be shown in the process of washing a bowl. One day, Master Dinghong, a *bhikkhu*, just finished his meal in the temple that is famous for demanding strict obedience to the precepts. He washed his bowl quickly after meal and was putting it into a cabinet, when another master or *bhikkhu* ran to him and told him:

Watch the water drops sticking in your bowl, what does this mean? You did not clean it up thoroughly. The bowl retains some oil in it so that water drops cannot fall down successfully.²⁵

Then, that master showed his bowl to Master Dinghong, from which water drops fell down successfully, and taught him to pay attention to washing a bowl, because if one does not concentrate on doing this little thing, he or she is not able to concentrate on reciting the Buddha's name Amitabha (one of the ways of practicing Buddhism in the Pure Land of Mahayana tradition).

²⁴ Master Dinghong, "Precepts are important?!" from a website.

²⁵ Master Dinghong, "Precepts are important?!" from a website.

If one is not cautious about details like washing a bowl, he or she will not be cautious about his or her thoughts. This is how precepts help people to concentrate. Precepts are different from secular etiquettes in that they also require caution about one's behavior and about respect to other people. Thus, the precepts have a higher standard that requires people to be highly concentrated. When people are able to pay attention to the details in the daily life and control their actions and speech, they are able to control their thoughts.²⁶

ii) Training of Body

In the Tibetan Buddhism of Esoteric Mahayana Buddhism, the transformation of the body is a crucial factor and the first step in achieving the *nirvana*. *Sushumna* is one of the *nadis* or invisible channels in the body, like a magnetic field, which delivers the energy or vital essence, like magnetics, to go through and transform the whole body. According to a famous Master Huaijin Nan, activating *sushumna*, the invisible channel of vital essence, is the prerequisite or preparation of getting the deep concentration.

If *sushumna* is activated, the body will be in a completely healthy state without any diseases. The color of eyes will become blue; the voice will become appealing and charming; the skeleton will change to a perfect form; the skin will become fine, smooth, and bright. In addition, people who activate *sushumna* have supernatural powers such as

²⁶Master Dinghong, "Precepts are important?!" from a website.

seeing through a wall. Conversely, if one's *sushumna* is not activated, he or she can never get into the deep concentration.²⁷

Usually, the pursuit of desires consumes most of the vital essence so that the vital essence cannot go through the channel to support the transforming of the whole body. Therefore, to activate *sushumna*, the invisible channel in the body, one must meditate effectively for twelve hours per day for hundred days to gather enough vital essence, that naturally emerges from the body, to go through the *sushumna*, because effective meditation for hundred days can clean up desires and emotions, such as greediness, anger, and ignorance, to gather vital essence that is used to transform the body. One can also meditate for less hours each day but the process of activating *sushumna* will be correspondingly longer.²⁸

To meditate effectively, people must follow the precepts strictly to keep away temptations, avoid the generation of desires, and provide a beneficial environment for concentration. What's more, if people uphold precepts strictly, they can easily and naturally get into the state of meditation. In other words, people who disobey the precepts are unable to avoid desires and emotions to build the basis for concentration and get enlightenment. Thus, precepts are also significant in the training of the body that is necessary to prepare for the concentration.²⁹

²⁷ Huaijin Nan, "Only People who Activate Sushumna Can Get the Deep Concentration," from a website; Huaijin Nan, "The Transformation of Body after Effective Meditation for One Hundred Days," from a website.

²⁸ Huaijin Nan, "Only People who Activate Sushumna Can Get the Deep Concentration," from a website.

²⁹ Huaijin Nan, "Only People who Activate Sushumna Can Get the Deep Concentration," from a website.

In conclusion, the importance of precepts is to help people to be deeply concentrated, from which wisdom flows up to bring *nirvana*. In the perspective of mind, leaving behind desires and being cautious and careful are how precepts help it. In the perspective of body, precepts help to gather vital essence to transform the body, which is the prerequisite of getting concentration.

c) In the Perspective of Sangha

“Another function of the prohibitions was to ensure the harmonious functioning of a large and diverse community.”³⁰ The community here can be any community but the community that the precepts especially refer to is the Sangha, the assemblies or communities of monks and nuns. There are many precepts in the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts that are about how monks or nuns should treat each other inside their groups, how the Sangha of monks and the Sangha of nuns should get along with each other, and how the Sangha as the whole should get along with lay people or people without believes. In addition, in the end of the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts, there is *Adhikarana-Samatha*, rules for settling disputes, that is built specifically for the harmony of the Sangha. They are:

1. A face-to-face verdict should be given.
2. A verdict of mindfulness may be given.
3. A verdict of past insanity may be given.
4. Acting in accordance with what is admitted.
5. Acting in accordance with the majority.
6. Acting for her (the accused's) further punishment.
7. Covering over as with grass.³¹

³⁰ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 10

³¹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

Moreover, before the *parinirvana* of the Shakyamuni Buddha, he gathered the Sangha and told them to regard the Vinaya precepts and the sermons as their teacher. As long as precepts remain in this world, the Buddha *dharma* remains, and the harmonious Sangha can be built, and Buddhists can practice Buddhism successfully. If the Vinaya disappears, the Buddha *dharma* no longer exists. This is how important precepts are in Buddhism.

Chapter 2. The Bhikkhuni Precepts and Nun's Sangha

1. The Rise of Buddhist Monasticism

The word Sangha, literally meaning a crowd or gathering, refers specifically to the community of monks and nuns in Buddhism. The preliminary meaning associated with Sangha or *arya-sangha* is the group of spiritual elites who pass one or another of the four stages of “stream-winner,” “once-returner,” “non-returner,” and “perfected saint.”³² In Pali texts, the term Sangha refers to the two monastic groups, *bhikkhu-sangha* (the community of monks) and *bhikkhuni-sangha* (the community of nuns). The two Sanghas together are called *ubhato-sangha*, the “twofold community,” while the whole monastic community everywhere is also called *catudisso-bhikkhu-sangha*, the “community of four quarters;”³³ moreover, the term for the entire Buddhist community including lay people is called *cattaro-parisa*, the “four-fold assembly.”³⁴

The monastic community was first established in Benares in the Deer Park and included only monks. The earliest disciples of the Buddha were five ascetics, Kondanna, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama, and Assaji, who were servants following the Buddha since he left his palace to live the life of renunciation.³⁵ After hearing the Buddha's abandonment of the two extremes of pleasure seeking and strict asceticism, and the enunciation of the Four Noble Truths, Kondanna became the first one who experienced enlightenment. Then, he asked for “the preliminary ordination into monkhood, called

³² Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 3.

³³ Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, 1.

³⁴ Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, 1.

³⁵ Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, 2.

‘going forth’ or *pravrajya*, and the full ordination or *upasampada*.³⁶ Since then, the Sangha of Buddhist community was founded and the other four ascetics were ordained following the ordination of Kondanna. Since there were too many people who wanted to be ordained, the Buddha gave the task of conferring ordination to senior monks and taught the ceremony of ordination to them.³⁷

After the formation of the monastic community, the monastic life was regarded as a social ideal in Buddhism because monks and nuns followed the strictest precepts and devoted their whole time to practicing Buddhism. Therefore, they were models for all Buddhists and other people in society, and their life was the religious ideal that lay people were to imitate.

2. The Rise of Bhikkhuni Sangha and Precepts

Several years later, the Bhikkhuni Sangha was formed under the help of Ananda and the request of Gotami, Pajapati the Great, who was the Buddha's maternal aunt and adoptive mother, raising him after the death of her sister Maya, the Buddha's birth mother. Gotami asked to join to the monastic community three times by saying that “Lord, it were well that women should obtain the going forth from home into homelessness in the *dhamma* and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder,”³⁸ but the Buddha rejected her all the time.

Then, Ananda saw this scene of his aunt and 500 Sakyan women wanting ordination and sympathized her, and thought that women should also have the right to go forth from

³⁶ Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 1.

³⁷ Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 1-2.

³⁸ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, 352.

home into homelessness to experience enlightenment. So he asked the Buddha to allow the ordination for Gotami for three times but the Buddha rejected him as well. After being rejected, Ananda decided to use some other methods to make the Buddha allow the ordination of women and thereby he asked whether women, having gone forth from home to the *dharma* of the Buddha, were able to experience *nirvana* or not. The Buddha said yes. Then, Ananda further said if women were able to achieve the perfection after going forth from home to homeless, and Gotami was the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, she should be allowed to ordain.³⁹ If she can be ordained, then all other women, who are able to experience enlightenment as well, should also be ordained.

This time, since the argument and logic of Ananda was so reasonable, the Buddha had to agree with Ananda. He did, however, give a prerequisite of accepting eight important rules. These rules basically dealt with the relationship between monks and nuns and put the status of nuns lower than monks in the hierarchy of Buddhist monastery. These rules are based in the idea that women are thought to have deeper *vasanas*, more bad subconscious habits from previous lives, than men have, such as the lust or selfish love.

Thus, the Buddha said: “in whatever *dhamma* and discipline women obtain the going forth from home into homelessness, that Brahma-fasting will not last long,” the reason of which will be elaborated in the following third and fourth chapters.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Buddha believed that, although women tend to have deeper *vasanas*, bad subconscious habits from previous lives, than men have, the inherent ability or possibility of becoming Buddhas is the same for all people and thereby women have the same ability to experience *nirvana* as men.

³⁹ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, 353-355.

⁴⁰ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, 356.

For the reason that the Sangha of nuns was established later than the Sangha of monks, nuns should obey the precepts that were made according to the misbehavior of monks as well. After the formation of the Bhikkhuni Sangha, the Buddha started to make precepts that apply only to nuns. Therefore, although *bhikkhunis* do have considerably more precepts to observe than *bhikkhus*, the existence of more rules for nuns does not in itself indicate that the Buddha assumed that nuns have more defilement, as charged by feminist critics. It is, rather, a factor of the later establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha. Moreover, the Buddha made rules according to misbehavior that nuns and monks did rather than making rules based on the imagination or fixed impression of them.⁴¹

3. The Rainy Season Retreat

At first, the Buddha and his disciples had no fixed dwelling, and never stayed long in the same place even during the muddy rainy season. However, the travel during the rainy season made local people criticize Buddhists for destroying the buds of crops and other plants and killing many insects that floated to the surface of the ground because of the rain.

Therefore, the Buddha forbade travel throughout the rainy season and allowed monks and nuns to build shelters. According to the *Mahavagga* the rule was: “a monk observing the Rainy Season Retreat must not travel before he has completed the retreat.”⁴² The rainy season in India lasted four months, roughly from June to October, and each monk or nun had to observe the retreat for three months, at the beginning or the end of that time. Most of the rules concerning the rainy season retreat were established with two intentions:

⁴¹ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 22.

⁴² Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, 20.

that “monks should not stray from a simple way of life, and should not abuse the generosity of their benefactors.”⁴³

4. Six Categories of Transgressions

There are six categories of transgressions and the ways to deal with them, from the heaviest to the lightest degree, which apply both to *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*. “The first category of transgressions, the *Parajika*, includes serious offences that are grounds for expulsion from the community.”⁴⁴ Once nuns commit a *Parajika* offense and disobey the basic doctrines of the Buddha, they forsake the *dharma* of Buddha, so their faults cannot be made up by any means and they must be exiled from the community. The second category of transgression is the *Sanghadisesas* that requires a confession in front of the Sangha, which consists of no less than twenty people. This sin is a little lighter than a *Parajika* because in committing a *Sanghadisesa* a nun can remedy it by confession.

The third kind of transgression is the *Nissaggiya Pacittiya* that requires confession to another nun with the forfeiture of personal properties to the Sangha. The fourth offense is the *Pacittiya*, entailing confession to another nun too. This sin is similar with the *Nissaggiya Pacittiya* but there is no property to be given up, so only confession is enough for purification. The fifth kind of offense is the *Patidesaniyasaniya* that needs verbal acknowledgement of violations by confessing to another person, not necessarily a nun. The sixth type of rule is the *Sekhiya*. These are all the etiquettes that should be learned.

⁴³ Mohan, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, 24.

⁴⁴ Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, 5.

The disobedience of this kind of rules requires only self-confession in the heart. As for the seven *adhikarana-samatha*, they are not the precepts but are ways to settle disputes.⁴⁵

In addition, for the Bhikkhu Precepts, there is one additional category that is the *Aniyata*, indefinite rules, the disobedience of which can be counted as a *Parajika*, a *Sanghadisesa*, or a *Nissaggiya* depending on the particular case.

4. Various Ways of Categorizing the Bhikkhuni Precepts

a) The Rules of the Community

Although most of the Bhikkhuni Precepts are made for personal practice, the initiation ceremony, the eight important rules, some of the ways of dealing with transgressions, and the seven *Adhikarana Samatha* to settle disputes, all require the gathering of the whole Sangha or some groups of nuns. In Pali, the rules of the community are named *kamma* that has three sub-categories of rules.⁴⁶

The first type of rules for the community is called the Motion, which is to report to the Sangha the daily routine, that is unnecessary to ask the masses for permission, by singing. There are twenty-four kinds of conditions under this category. The second type of rules for the community is called the Motion and the Announcement, that is to report to the Sangha what affair the monk or nun will do and ask for permission by announcing the thing once and repeating it once. There are the forty-seven kinds of situations in this type of rules.

The last category is the Motion and the Three Announcements, that is to announce the thing that the monk or nun will do to the Sangha, repeat it for three times, and ask for a

⁴⁵ Jinghui, “No.9 of the Lectures about Vinaya,” 13-15.

⁴⁶ Jinghui, “No. 10 of the Lectures about Vinaya.”

permission every time that he or she repeats. If the Sangha remains silence, it means that the whole Sangha agrees with that motion. There are thirty kinds of situations under this category such as the initiation into monkhood or nunhood by accepting the Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni Precepts in a ritual. Furthermore, the rules for the community in Buddhism is much stricter than the rules in many societies, because it requires the approval by all members in the Sangha rather than a half, one third, or three fourth of agreements in the community, expect the rule to settle a dispute whereby the side that most people support wins.⁴⁷⁴⁸

The rules of individuals provide protection for monastic life, while the rules of the Sangha guarantee the individual practicing of Buddhism. In personal life, individual rules are the focus, while in the life of the Sangha the rules for the community are the emphasis. To be released from the circle of samsara, one must uphold the individual precepts. To keep Buddhism alive and prosperous, monks and nuns must uphold the rules of the community. Only those who uphold the individual rules are real nuns and monks, while only the community that upholds the rules of the community is the no real Sangha. If the Sangha does not behave according to the rules of the community, the nuns and monks' following of precepts cannot be guaranteed neither.⁴⁹

b) Prohibitions of *Raga, Dosa, and Moha*

A *vasana* is the impression of anything remaining unconsciously in the mind, the present consciousness of past perceptions, or knowledge derived from memory. Any

⁴⁷ Jinghui, "No. 10 of the Lectures about Vinaya."

⁴⁸ Huimin, "An Inquiry into the Chinese Tradition of Receiving the Precepts," from a website.

⁴⁹ Jinghui, "No.9 of the Lectures about Vinaya," 13-14.

people who have not experienced *nirvana* still have different degrees of bad *vasanas* in their sea of consciousness or memory. Bad *vasanas* or “wrongful states of mind”⁵⁰ can be categorized into three main kinds-*raga*, *dosa*, and *moha*, which mean lust, anger or hatred, and ignorance respectively. “Ego-oriented desire is identified as the source of these three “wrongful states of mind.”⁵¹ Any thoughts, speeches, and behavior coming from these three bad *vasanas* are things that precepts are meant to prohibit. The actions without these causes are neutral.

To be more general, *raga*, the lust, is the origin of other two *vasanas* because ignorance or confusion arises from the unawareness of desires and hatred arises for the fail of getting the thing that one wants. Besides, all misbehavior come from certain degree of ignorance or confusion. Since these three *vasanas* cannot be separated completely, the categorization of these precepts depends on the deepest or closest *vasana* or *vasanas* that each precept relates to. Therefore, the Bhikkhuni Precepts can be classified according to the prevention of the motive or attached mindset of *raga*, *dosa*, or *moha*. However, it has to be kept in mind that not all motivations which precepts mean to prevent can be clarified, and sometimes several motivations appear in one precept in a mixed fashion.

The way of classifying the Bhikkhuni Precepts here is the same as Clifford John Holt’s way of categorizing Bhikkhu Precepts, according to the motivations of actions, *raga*, *dosa*, and *moha*. In Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, all *Parajikas*, except the third one, can be attributed to *Raga*, while the third one pertains to *dosa* and *moha* and the seventh belongs to *moha*. The third precept is to prevent killing human beings. In the original

⁵⁰ Holt, *Discipline*, 87.

⁵¹ Holt, *Discipline*, 88.

story, the killing of another person was not out of the hatred toward this person but of the hatred of the body. One way of practicing Buddhism is to observe the impureness of the body in order to eliminate the attachment with the body and the self, but some monks who practiced this went astray and aroused feelings of hatred towards the body, so they asked other monks to kill them to get rid of their dirty bodies. The hatred of body and praising death are ignorance. Nevertheless, the usual motivation of killing someone else is still the hatred of this person.

Two precepts in the *Parajikas*, the first and fifth rules, are about sexual misbehavior or the possibilities of sexual misbehavior, so their motives are lust. The fourth and the seventh rules are about telling a lie, the motivations of which are also to benefit one's self or attach to another person.⁵² The last one of them is about admiration of a man or ignorance. In *Parajika-dharma*, based on the number of precepts, the prohibition of sexual desires is most frequently found.⁵³

In *Sanghadisesa*, seven out of seventeen precepts deal with violations expressed mainly through speech to create schism, to defame, or to purposely quarrel. They are the first, the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth precepts. All of them except the fifteenth are out of *dosa*. In the twelfth and thirteenth precepts, the motivation of forming cliques may also involve *raga* and *moha*. In the fifteenth precept, a nun protects the nuns who gang up out of the *vasanas* of *raga* and *moha*. Then, three rules in *Sanghadisesa*, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, are about the improper contact with men or the encouragement of sexual desires.⁵⁴

⁵² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

⁵³ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

⁵⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

The second and fourth precepts prevent ordaining an unacceptable woman and restoring a suspended nun. These misbehavior may come from the favor towards that person or from ignorance, so their motivations can be *dosa* and *moha*. In the third precept and sixteenth precept, going out of the Sangha alone and refusing to be admonished can be out of all of the three *vasanas* but relate to *moha* most closely. The seventeenth precept prohibits nun's corruption of households, the motivation of which can be all three *vasanas*. Overall, *Sanghadisesa-dharma* is mainly made to keep the harmony inside the Sangha and to have a harmonious relationship with lay people.⁵⁵

According to Holt, in *Bhikkhu Patimokkha in Nissaggiya*, “roughly a half of the rules are designed to prevent *bhikkhus* from asking too much from their supporters. The rest are designed to teach *bhikkhus* to use what they have properly and not to use more than [what] is absolutely essential.”⁵⁶ For the reason that most precepts in *Nissaggiya* in the *Bhikkhu Patimokkha* are the same as these in the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*, this conclusion also applies to the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*.

Therefore, all the motives of the rules in *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha in Nissaggiya* can be counted as *raga*. Only the motivation of the second precept, determining an out-of-season cloth to be an in-season cloth, is unclear. It may be out of lust or for attracting other people's attention or for saving fabric. And the motivation in the twenty-sixth precept includes *dosa* as well, which is explicitly said in the precept that the nun is “angered and displeased.”⁵⁷ Finally, the nature of the *Nissaggiyas* is definitely preventive and not retributive. These injunctions are used to encourage the monks and nuns to use goods in a

⁵⁵ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “*Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha*,” from a website.

⁵⁶ Holt, *Discipline*, 97.

⁵⁷ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “*Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha*,” from a website.

proper manner because the attachment to properties only leads to more longing and a more difficult path to the perfectly disciplined state.⁵⁸

Pacittiya is the largest part of the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, for it contains 166 rules, but most of the rules are of an extremely minor nature in brief descriptions and covers almost every aspect of monastic life in extremely details including rituals that have no motivation to avoid, so it becomes very difficult to determine explicit motives for every misbehavior. There are twenty-one precepts concerning the prerequisites of ordaining of women or training of students, thirteen rules that prohibit sensual enjoyment, eleven rules that regulate behaviors that may invoke sexual desires of other people or in themselves, ten rules that set up proper manners of getting along with lay people, *bhikkhus*, and the Bhikkhu Sangha and seven rules concerning the proper using of robes.

For *Patidesaniyasaniya*, all precepts are to prevent nuns who are not ill from asking for delicious food and improper food that promote desires, so the prohibited motive here is *raga*. *Sekhiya* are rules mainly about etiquettes that should be learned in very detail such as how to wear robes, so the motive that the Buddha meant to prohibit should be *moha*. In *Sekhiya*, the first 26 rules focus upon appearance and proper behavior in inhabited areas. Rules from 27 to 56 teach etiquettes during alms rounds. Rules from 57 to 72 are to make sure that the Buddha *dharma* is taught and heard with respectful attitude, while rules from 73 to 75 are concerned with unsuitable ways of urinating and spitting.⁵⁹

In conclusion, selfish desire allows one's will to be influenced by *raga*, *dosa*, *moha* which in turn generate actions expressed through body, speech, or thought bringing

⁵⁸ Holt, *Discipline*, 98.

⁵⁹ Holt, *Discipline*, 102.

karmic retribution. Conversely, “pure expressions of body, speech and thought are reflections of a pure disposition.”⁶⁰ Precepts, except Bodhisattva precepts in Mahayana, mainly regulate actions through speech and body which are easy to be observed from outside, but bad intentions *raga*, *dosa*, and *moha* behind these actions are the origin of these bad actions and thereby the real thing that precepts are meant to avoid. In other words, to get rid of *raga*, *dosa*, and *moha* is to get rid of the circle of samsara, the cage that is made by selfish desires. And discipline of mind is the key to sweep away bad *vasanas* and achieve perfect self-control.

⁶⁰ Holt, *Discipline*, 89.

Chapter 3. Difference between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts

Although the most rules in the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts are the same, there are many rules that apply only to monks or nuns, and the rules that apply only to nuns are much more than the rules that apply only to monks. Since the Sangha of monks formed before the Sangha of nuns by about twenty years, the Sangha of nuns inherited almost all of its original precepts from the Sangha of monks except the rules associated with male body. Since then, the two Sanghas were given more of their own rules according to the special problems of their own groups. Different by gender, nuns certainly had their own specific problems and required additional rules to regulate their behavior.

Therefore, the historical background is the direct reason for the differences, but the underlying reason for these differences is that the monks or nuns have their own unique *vasanas* (bad subconscious habits) and problems, and the reasons behind these differences are complex and various. In addition, although some of the rules that apply only to nuns or monks show the differences between men and women or the different attitudes of the Buddha towards men and women, other rules derive from random events that happened only to a nun or a monk by chance, without special reference to gender. Thus, not every rule has a profound meaning behind it.

1. Difference between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Precepts in *Parajikas*

In the version of the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha or precepts that is translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, the first four rules are shared by both monks and nuns, while the last four rules are precepts that are made only for nuns. The first four rules are

prohibitions regarding sexual behavior, stealing, killing a human being, and boasting of a superior human state, which occur among both monks and nuns and are also forbidden, except the first one, in moral situations among the laity.⁶¹ Among the last four, the fifth and eighth precepts are directly related to sexual desires.

The fifth rule is to forbid any *bhikkhuni* with lusting mind to “consent to a lusting man's rubbing, rubbing up against, taking hold of, touching, or fondling (her) below the collar-bone and above the circle of the knees.”⁶² The story behind this precept is that the nun Sundarinanda fell in love with the layman Salha. In order to further seduce her, Salha planned to give a meal to the Order of nuns. However, the nun Sundarinanda realized his lustful plot, so she pretended to be ill. Then, Salha, who gave the meal only for the sake of Sundarinanda, went to the nunnery to visit Sundarinanda where both of them voluntarily had physical contact with each other. This was observed by another nun and reported to the Buddha. Thus, the Buddha made this rule.⁶³

Although women can also seduce men, women in ancient times usually played more passive roles in the love relationship and marriage, so seduction by women did not normally happen especially in the conservative social atmosphere of early Buddhism. At least, it is not recorded that any monk consented to the seduction by a woman during the life of the Buddha. Instead, the goal of this precept is to curtail sexual desires. Usually, if a woman consents to such behavior of a man, she will experience sexual desires herself.

⁶¹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha” from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁶² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁶³ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 156-164.

What's more, there could be disastrous consequences, for the nun Sundarinanda became pregnant later by Salha.⁶⁴ Thus, it is very important to avoid such serious results from the very beginning. In addition, the eighth rule for lusting nuns who consented to physical contact by lusting men is pretty similar to the fifth rule, so it is also categorized as a *Parajika*.⁶⁵ The reason of making this rule for the Sangha of nuns is the same as the fifth rule: its goal is to prevent sexual desire and love between men and women.

The story of the sixth precept in the *Parajika* category is related to that of the fifth precept. In the narrative context, the nun Thullananda covered up the fault of pregnancy in the behavior of the nun Sundarinanda.⁶⁶ In this case, based on the explanation from the nun Thullananda, she seems to cover the fault of the nun Sundarinanda because of their close relationship. In secular law, although the person who covers up another person's fault also commits a crime, the crime is usually lighter than for principal criminals.

However, the fault of a *bhikkhu*'s concealing of another *bhikkhu*'s serious offenses is only counted as a *Pacittiya*, the fourth category of transgression, but the same transgression falls into the most serious sin, a *Parajika*, for nuns. The especially rigorous and serious standard for *bhikkhunis* may indicate that, in the view of the Buddha, although all sentient beings have the same ability of becoming Buddhas, women have deeper *vasanas* (the subconscious habits from previous lives) of lust, selfish love, and sexual desire than men have, so that they should be regulated more strictly in this issue in order to experience *nirvana*.

⁶⁴ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 165.

⁶⁵ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 173-176.

⁶⁶ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 165-168.

In Buddhism, the unconditional love towards all sentient beings is regarded as true love or compassion, while the love between men and women based on sexual attractions or the love towards certain selective people, such as the love for a friend and even family members, is regarded as selfish love. Moreover, this point of view is not unique in the Buddhist sutras. It is said that people are born to be women because of their deeper desires for being loved, with a deeper selfish love, than those who are born to be men, and this desire is one of the biggest obstacles on the way to *nirvana*. Hence, the *bhikkhuni*'s covering of another *bhikkhuni*'s fault is categorized into the most serious transgression because the goal of the precept is to cut off the selfish love that is thought to be the deepest *vasana* and the biggest obstacle of women.

2. Difference between the Two Precepts in *Sanghadisesa*

In *Sanghadisesa*, there are seven rules that are common for both monks and nuns, six rules that only monks follow, and ten rules that are made for nuns. In the *Bhikkhu Patimokkha*, the first four precepts and the sixth and seventh precepts are rules that only monks follow. The sixth and seventh rules are regulations about building houses. Since usually a man's body is stronger than a woman's body, the task of building houses is more associated with men. Therefore, the two rules apply only to monks probably for simple physical reasons.⁶⁷

The first four rules in the *Bhikkhu Patimokkha* are all about sexual desires. Also for physical reasons, the first rule, that prevents intentional emission of semen, only applies to monks. The third and fourth rules prohibit oral assaults of sexual nature on women, a

⁶⁷ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.
Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

rare occurrence among women. The second precept prohibits *bhikkhus* from becoming “overcome by lust, with altered mind, engage in bodily contact with a woman, or in holding her hand, holding a lock of her hair, or caressing any of her limbs,” which is behavior very similar to the prohibited behavior for women in the fifth precept of the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, in the second precept of the *Bhikkhu Patimokkha*, the perpetrators of these behavior are all monks, while, in the fifth precept of the *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*, the acceptors of these behavior are nuns. In the secular law, those who actively commit crimes are “principal criminals,” while those who merely consent to accept or corporate with them are “accessary criminals.” Normally, principal criminals should be punished more heavily than accessary criminals. Nevertheless, in this case, the Buddha categorized nun’s consenting to man’s misbehavior as a more serious transgression, while he counted monks’ similar misbehavior as a less serious transgression. This again demonstrates that, in the view of the Buddha, women have deeper *vasanas* of selfish love and sexual desire than men have so that they should be regulated more strictly in this issue.

The precepts that only nuns follow are the rules from the first to the sixth and from the tenth to the thirteenth in *Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*.⁶⁹ The first rule prevents litigation against any person. In the story of the first precept, the nun Thullananda initiated litigation because a person, whose father gave a house to the Order of nuns, asked the nuns to give the house back to him.⁷⁰ In the secular law, the litigation was totally reasonable and the nun would indeed win. However, in Buddhism, which emphasizes

⁶⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “*Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha*,” from a website.

⁶⁹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “*Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha*,” from a website.

⁷⁰ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 177-181.

harmony and endurance, the litigation brings trouble to lay people and to society in general and thereby should be forbidden. Therefore, even a reasonable litigation, in the secular view, should be forbidden in Buddhism. For the uniqueness of this event, which does not usually happen, a similar occurrence and its subsequent rule were not found in Bhikkhu Patimokkha.

The second rule prohibits the ordination of a nun who is a thief sentenced to death. The nun Thullananda received properties from a female thief who was sentenced to death but wanted to be a nun to escape from the penalty; the nun, Thullananda, then allowed the thief to go forth. By way of background, it should be noted that, originally, the woman was condemned to death for adultery, and escaped from her home with properties to avoid death. In the society of the time of the Buddha, men were allowed to marry multiple wives, and even visit brothels legally without any punishment, while women who committed adultery were sentenced to death.⁷¹ This demonstrates the low position of women in the society of the time of the Buddha. In this social context, some seemingly discriminatory sayings regarding women in the Buddhist sutras, in modern view, are actually progressive, and this will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Among the rest of the ten precepts applying only to nuns, only the third precept shows the Buddha's attitude towards women. The third rule forbids nuns from leaving the Sangha alone, while monks are allowed the privilege. This suggests that women need to be regulated more strictly because of their deeper *vasanas*, in the view of the Buddha. The fourth rule prohibits the restoration of a suspended *bhikkhuni* without the permission of the community; the fifth and sixth rules prohibit a nun from accepting food from the

⁷¹ I. B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, 182-185.

hands of a lusting man; the tenth and eleventh rules prevent the improper sayings in the state of anger; the twelfth and thirteenth precepts forbid nuns from forming factions inside the Sangha to benefit themselves.⁷²

3. Difference between the Two Precepts in *Nissaggiya Pacittiya*

In *Nissaggiya Pacittiya*, both Bhikkhu and Bhikkuni Patimokkhas have thirty rules. The rules from the first to the twelfth are regulations only for nuns, while the fifth and sixth rules and the rules from the eleventh to the seventeenth are only for monks. Although twelve of them are different for monks and nuns, their content is pretty neutral and almost without implication for the difference in genders. Most of these rules both for monks and nuns are made to prevent the desire for materials and may be derived from some random events that happened only to the Sangha of nuns or monks.⁷³ In the Bhikkhu Patimokkha, the fifth, sixth, and seventh rules require monks to keep distance from nuns to avoid sexual desires. In addition, there are two *Aniyata* indefinite rules that only monks have, about regulating wrong behavior that evoke sexual desires.⁷⁴

4. Difference between the Two Precepts in *Pacittiya*

In the *Pacittiya* category, the recorded stories of the precepts become shorter and simpler. The Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Patimokkhas differ the most in the *Pacittiya* parts. There are 166 precepts in Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, while, in the Bhikkhu Patimokkha, there are only 92 rules. The rules from the first to the 96th are special for nuns. In the

⁷² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁷³ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁷⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

Bhikkhu Precepts, the rules from number 21st to number 30th, and the 35th, 36th, 64th, 65th, 67th, 85th, and 91st rules are unique for monks.⁷⁵

In the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, the 31st and 32nd rules in *Pacittiya* prohibit the sharing of one bed or covering cloth with another nun, whereas there is no similar rule in the Bhikkhu Patimokkha. Based on the observation in the daily life, usually, women especially girls prefer to act together with their friends more than men do. According to the principle of Buddha *dharma*, this habit or the intimacy with friends shows the attachment to or reliance on friends, but experiencing *nirvana* requires that there should be no attachment to anything, even the body. Therefore, the sharing of one bed or covering cloth with nuns is forbidden.⁷⁶

Furthermore, as mentioned in *Parajika*, the fault of a *bhikkhu*'s concealing of another *bhikkhu*'s defeat is only counted as a *Pacittiya*, but the fault of a *bhikkhuni*'s concealing of another *bhikkhuni*'s defeat falls into *Parajika*. The direct reason for the different classifications is the difference in reasons for the transgressions in the two cases, but once the rules had been written down, they were generalized to apply to any cases with any reasons. Thus, this difference of categorization still implies the Buddha's attitude towards women that they are more easily attached to or more easily rely upon their friends, and therefore are less independent than men. For the same reason in 31st and 32nd rules, this rule also prevents the irrational love or attachment among female friends.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

⁷⁶ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

⁷⁷ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

In the Bhikkhu Patimokkha, there is only one precept regulating the prerequisite of giving ordination, whereas in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, there are 22 rules about ordination. Although the Buddha did set up more prerequisites for the ordination for women, this is mostly because the physical features and the social role of women bring more special situations. Nuns are required to be trained for two additional years before the full ordination, while monks are not. This is partly because women in the society of the time of the Buddha usually just stayed at home and thereby were not used to dealing with the outside world, so the two-year training period was necessary for them to get used to the life in the Sangha. Men above 20 years old can be ordained, while unmarried women above 20 years old and married women above 12 years old, with two-years training in six precepts, authorized by the community, can be ordained.

Married women are mature and therefore make better nuns. For they have more life experiences, having left their original homes for new environments, and having learned to get along with their husbands and their new families. Thus, women can go forth at twelve but men cannot. In addition, pregnant women or women who are still nursing cannot be ordained. Overall, then, the 21 extra rules for nuns about ordination have no implication about the *vasanas* of women, and here we see how the Buddha gave equal opportunities for women to go forth with men.⁷⁸

What's more, in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, there are two precepts, the 84th and 85th, prohibiting wearing any ornaments, which does not appear in the Bhikkhu Patimokkha because men do not usually wear as many ornaments as women do. Some women may like to adorn themselves from birth but some of them are definitely influenced by the

⁷⁸ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.
Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

society. In other words, this is also a difference of social customs. Even in modern society, appearance is still regarded as more important in the evaluation of women than of men - a view improper to express in public but generally true among people. In this cultural environment, girls are cultivated, or at least are influenced subliminally, to pay more attention to their appearances, and adornments are encouraged and praised for women.⁷⁹

However, except in Tantra or Tibetan Buddhism, which allows any sensual enjoyments in order to cultivate the ability of detaching desires in heart, in all other branches of Buddhism, ornaments of the body are thought to increase the attachment to one's self and body, and thereby should be taken off. Therefore, this habit is considered to be unhealthy in Buddhism especially for ascetic monastic life. Lay people can be adorned for the social needs sometimes, and Bodhisattvas can be ornamented because their beautiful appearances attract people to learn about Buddhism and they have already released from the circle of samsara in the view of Mahayana, but monks and nuns, who dedicate their whole lives to practice Buddhism in order to experience *nirvana*, have to give up all the things that have even a little chance to obstruct their way to *nirvana*.

5. Difference between the Two Precepts in *Patidesaniya*

In *Patidesaniya*, precepts are totally different for monks and nuns but they all concern food. The eight precepts for nuns prohibit eating certain food except in the state of illness,

⁷⁹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

while, in the four precepts of monks, two of them involve nuns.⁸⁰ In the second precept in the Bhikkhu Patimokkha, it is said that

In case Bhikkhus, being invited, are eating in family residences, and if a Bhikkhunī is standing there as though giving directions, (saying,) ‘Give curry here, give rice here,’ then the Bhikkhus are to dismiss her: ‘Go away, sister, while the Bhikkhus are eating.’⁸¹

The hierarchy of the whole Sangha is clear here - that is, the status of monks is higher than that of nuns because women are regarded to be with deeper *vasanas*.

6. Difference between the Two Precepts in *Sekhiya*

In *Sekhiya*, precepts are totally the same in both the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Patimokkhas for these rules are not based on wrong behavior of monks or nuns but rather on special etiquettes the Buddha thought monks and nuns should learn and practice.⁸²

Overall, although some of the precepts related to sexual desires for nuns fall into more serious categorizations of transgressions than for monks, the number of precepts that regulate sexual desires is actually more for monks than for nuns. Comparing the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Patimokkhas, there are two more rules in the *Parajika*, two more rules in the *Sanghadisesa*, and fifteen more rules in the *Pacittiya* regulating sexual desires or the love between men and women for nuns, while there are four more rules in the *Sanghadisesa*, two more rules in the *Aniyata*, two more rules in the *Nissaggiya Pacittiya*, eleven more rules in the *Pacittiya*, and one more rule in the *Patidesaniya*, regulating

⁸⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁸¹ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

⁸² Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.
Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha,” from a website.

sexual desires or the love between men and women for monks.⁸³ Two of these rules for nuns prevent the evoking of sexual desires in men rather than themselves, such as bathing naked and entering a village without a vest.⁸⁴ After removing these two rules not related to women's *vasanas*, there are three more rules for monks controlling their own sexual desires.

There is indeed a more negative attitude towards women than towards men on the issue of love between men and women in Buddhism, but this view is not expressed by the number of precepts in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, but by the fact that some of the nuns' coincident faults with monks fall into more serious offenses than for monks. In other words, the existing of more rules for nuns than for monks cannot illustrate the negative attitude of the Buddha towards women.

Rather, more rules in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha than in the Bhikkhu Patimokkha demonstrate that there are indeed more practical issues existing in the Sangha of nuns of the time of the Buddha. These issues are caused by the physical differences, different social role and customs, and different habits and psychologies with men. Not all of these differences indicate the problems or *vasanas* of women themselves, but some of them really do and therefore contribute to the view that women tend to have deeper *vasanas* or bad habits than men, especially the desire for love in Buddhism. This shows that the Buddha regulated nuns more strictly based on the facts rather than the stereotype or the discrimination towards women.

⁸³ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

⁸⁴ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Bhikkhunī Pāṭimokkha," from a website.

Chapter 4. The View of Women in Buddhism from the Comparison

1. The General View of Women in Buddhism of the Precepts

In Buddhism, the core of the Buddha's teaching or doctrine is that every sentient being is able to experience enlightenment in the future. In this perspective, women and men should begin equally on the way to *nirvana*. However, it is also said that women tend to have deeper *vasanas*, bad subconscious habits from previous lives, than men have, and thereby need to be regulated with stricter rules and practice Buddhism harder in order to experience enlightenment. These two divergent views, that both exist in Buddhist sutras, need to be examined in order to explain their contradictions.

We begin by noting that the sameness of nature in terms of enlightenment cannot wipe away the difference of appearances as presented in the Buddhist canons. Some habits that women usually have are regarded to be bad in Buddhism, but it does not mean that every woman has such habits and is thereby worse than a man. Furthermore, even though some women have more bad habits in the view of the Buddha, these bad habits are not necessarily inherent and unchangeable and some of them are taught by society. In addition, some rhetorical skills in the Buddhist sutras, using women as the representative of those who have these bad habits, seem to be confusing, without analyzing the inner meaning that the Buddha had in attacking these bad habits themselves rather than the gender of women. Therefore, the "discrimination" towards women in Buddhism is actually a misunderstanding of the real meaning of the teaching of the Buddha.

2. The Factors that Constitute the View of Women in Buddhism

a) The Buddha *Dharma*

In the conversation with Ananda who tried to convince the Buddha to allow the ordination of women, the Buddha agreed with Ananda and said that

Women, Ananda, having gone forth from home into homelessness in the *dhamma* and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, are able to realise the fruit of stream-attainment or the fruit of once-returning or the fruit of non-returning or perfection.⁸⁵

This illustrates that the Buddha thought women had the same ability and possibility of experiencing *nirvana* as men.

Although women and men are different in appearance, the appearance or the body is regarded as just an illusion for only the possibility of becoming Buddhas is the unchangeable truth in Buddhism. People who are in the cycle of rebirth are born as all kinds of beings in previous lives, but none of these appearances or bodies are their real selves. The appearance is always changing and can be changed by one's will through practicing Buddhism. Therefore, the difference in appearance really exists but it does not matter for becoming a Buddha. As long as people have a chance to know, learn, and believe in Buddhism and practice it hard, they can become Buddhas in this life.⁸⁶

Since everyone's *karma* is complex, a woman is born as a woman because she shares some common *vasanas* with most other women, but if she has practiced Buddhism for many lives previously, and therefore has deep good *karma* or relationship with Buddhism, she can become a Buddha soon in this life with the body of woman. Thus, by the way of practicing Buddhism, a woman can surpass herself, her identity of both a woman and a human being. Her body, appearance, identity, or *vasanas* do not obstruct

⁸⁵ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, 354.

⁸⁶ "The Truth of the 'Discrimination of Women' in Buddhism," from a website.

her from becoming a Buddha sooner than most men, because *vasanas* are not fixed but can be changed by practicing Buddhism. Thus, the decisive factor of experiencing *nirvana* is not *vasanas* from previous lives but rather the diligent practicing of Buddhism in this life. In Buddhism, every sentient being begins equally on the way to *nirvana*.

b) Facts

Although women have the same ability of becoming Buddhas as men, it cannot be denied that, based on the Buddha *dharma*, they have their own problems that men do not usually have and there are more social customs for women in the secular world that are regarded as bad habits in Buddhism. In the *Maha-prajapati Bhiksuni Sutra*, the Buddha said eighty-four habits or states of women that impede the experiencing of enlightenment. Many of these habits normally apply only for women, such as rouging lips and tinting the eyes, and these habits are truly negative in the philosophical system of Buddhism rather than are made up for discriminating the identity of women, the reason of which is already explained in the last chapter in the rules about ornaments.⁸⁷ Decorations of body increase the attachment of the self and the desire of being loved because they are often used to attract attention and admiration of the opposite sex. Besides, men also have their own problems and the Buddha gave teachings towards men's *vasanas* as well.

For the reason that more women tend to have these bad habits, the Buddha made many rules aiming at their special problems and put the status of women lower than men in the hierarchy of monastery. In Buddhist values, modesty and humility, letting other people go first and be in a higher position, are always good qualities that Buddhists

⁸⁷ Minghua, "Overcoming these Eighty-Four States Can Make Women Experience Nirvana Soon," from a website.

should follow in order to experiencing *nirvana* sooner. By undermining belief in and attachment to the self- the biggest attachment that hinders the experiencing of enlightenment, bad habits can be eradicated and therefore people can be released from the circle of samsara. Thus, the reason that the Buddha placed nuns in a lower position was to help them to overcome their *vasanas* and become Buddhas sooner.

In a famous case of Zen Buddhism, a pious Buddhist was attracted to a temple by the reputation of the master of the temple. However, when the person went to this temple, the master did not allow him to come inside to listen to his preaching. Thus, the person had to stand outside to listen to his preaching, but he did not give up. Three years later, the master knew that he was about to experience *parinirvana* and needed to choose his successor. Out of the expectation of all his disciples, he called the person outside the temple back and passed on his robe and bowl to this person. The master explained that, because of the endurance for three years, this person had already swept out his *vasana* of arrogance, broken the attachment to the self, and experienced enlightenment. The master is said to treat this person so poorly because he knew the person's potentiality, and deliberately chastened him to help him to succeed sooner.

In other words, even though some nuns do not have these habits or *vasanas*, to be in a lower position than monks is always a beneficial experience for overcoming arrogance that all unenlightened sentient beings have because of the attachment to the self. Hence, the Buddha made special rules for women out of the care and protection of women with the wish of moving them to experience *nirvana* sooner. Once women overcome these *vasanas* by obeying these precepts strictly and practicing Buddhism with diligence, they can attain the same achievements as male practitioners.

c) Social Context

Around the time of Buddha, agriculture was the largest occupation, and that source of living which required the most physical strength. Provided that the body of man is usually stronger than that of woman, men played more important roles in the field and were the main economical source for their families, while women, who may also have worked in the field, were more responsible for taking care of their families. This is not to say that taking care of family is unimportant, but women, who mainly relied on men for living, stayed at home most of the time, and, having had less contact with the society, were regarded to be less independent than men.

Furthermore, Hinduism, the most influential religion in ancient India, had a very negative view towards women. According to the *Law of Manu*, a foundational work on Hindu law and jurisprudence, suggests that materials from the body like hair, saliva, sweat, and menstrual blood were considered to cause pollution. Based on a ranking of these bodily materials, people were categorized in the caste system based on their “purity.” Pollution can be either temporary or permanent. People performing certain polluted jobs, such as being barber or a washer man, were thought to be permanently polluted, while people during menstruation, going to the bathroom, giving a birth, eating, or exercising, were thought to be temporarily polluted.⁸⁸

During the period of menstruation, women were regarded as impure, inauspicious, so they are unfit to perform puja, the ritual of showing reverence to a god, and are not even allowed to interact with their own family. The *Manusmriti* gives instruction that not

⁸⁸ Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 178-189.

until a woman's menstruation has ceased to flow, did her body return to an unpolluted state. For example,

(A woman) is purified on a miscarriage in as many (days and) nights as months (elapsed after conception), and a menstruating female becomes pure by bathing after the menstrual secretion has ceased (to flow).⁸⁹

Therefore, women were discouraged from doing puja or praying and were usually not allowed to enter temples. In some cases, they were not allowed to cook or were kept separately from those in the rest of the village until their menstruation ceased for the reason that

When he has touched a *Kandala*, a menstruating woman, an outcast, a woman in childbed, a corpse, or one who has touched a (corpse), he becomes pure by bathing.⁹⁰

Since even those who touched women during menstruation were also regarded as being polluted, women during menstruation had to be separated from their families until their menstruation ceased. For this religious reason, women were considered to be lower than men in the context of ancient Hinduism.⁹¹

Moreover, the caste system was deeply rooted in the Indian society. People's social statuses were decided by their family backgrounds from birth. The concept that the destiny was decided from birth also applied to women, so their status lower than men in the society was considered to be fixed. Consequently, the situation, that women usually economically relied on their husbands and were polluted by menstruation in the view of

⁸⁹ Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 179.

⁹⁰ Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, 183.

⁹¹ "Three Days of Impurity," from a website.

Hinduism, made people conclude that women were, inherently and unalterably, worse than men.⁹²

Although in this social context, women were discriminated against simply on the basis of their bodily features, the Buddha saw through the appearance and pointed out that such physical differences themselves were neutral, but only certain habits of women and psychologies behind these habits were bad. Physical differences cannot be changed but habits can be corrected. Furthermore, it was “breaking news” at that time of the Buddha when he said that women had the same ability to experience enlightenment as men. In other words, he did not deny some disadvantages of women at that time but saw the reasons behind this early situation and increase them to surmount the difficulties to experience enlightenment.

d) Rhetorical Skill

Since 1) women tended to have more bad habits at that time of the historical Buddha than men has as shown the analysis in chapter three, and 2) the society that was influenced by Hinduism thought that women were inherently and unchangeable worse than men because of their bodily characteristics, some Buddhist sutras used women as the representative of those who had certain bad habits. However, it is also explicitly explained in these sutras that the word of women means to represent those who have these bad habits rather than literally meaning the gender of women. We ask, then, why did the Buddha sutras use such seemingly confusing and misleading rhetorical skill to express?

⁹²O’ Malley, *Indian Caste Customs*, 1-33.

This can be explained by the example of the saying in the *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra* that

The nature of Buddha is the *dharma* of man. Those who are not enlightened are “women,” even though they have the body of man. Those who are enlightened are “men,” even though they have the body of women.⁹³

In the first verse, the sutra associates the nature of Buddha or the Buddha *dharma* with the gender of man and ignorance with the gender of woman. However, right after saying this, the sutra substitutes the gender of man to those who are enlightened to really represent the Buddha *dharma*.

As demonstrated above, since ancient Hindu society had a very negative view of women, this play of words or rhetorical skill means to destroy the stereotype towards women at that time. The Buddha or the makers of the cannon used women as the representative of bad features, so that local people could understand and accept the new concept of equality between women and men in terms of experiencing enlightenment better. If the Buddha said directly that women and men were equal in achieving the supreme goal of *nirvana* without the language skill of metonymy, the substitution of the original name of a concept with a new concept, it would be hard for local people to accept a completely new concept that was contradictory with the original view towards women.

Since the using of this rhetoric is to make local people accept a new concept rather than really saying that women were the representatives of bad behavior, right after the using of this rhetoric, the Buddha clarified his real meaning that it was those who were not enlightened were bad rather than the gender women. Similarly, all sutras and

⁹³ Master Daoliang, “The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra.”

extra rules for women aim at correcting certain habits, rather than attacking the identity of women. Their real goal is to help women to overcome their special *vasanas*.

e) The Predicted Reversed Position of Women Nowadays

In most Buddhist sutras, women are considered to have deeper *vasanas* and to be less diligent in practicing Buddhism than men. Nonetheless, this is not always the case in Buddhism. In the Mahayana sutra *The Buddha Said the End of Dharma Sutra*, it is said

When the Buddha *dharma* is about coming to the end, women practice Buddha *dharma* diligently and keep making good *karma*, while men are arrogant and slack in practicing the Buddha *dharma* and do not believe in the Buddha *dharma*⁹⁴

In addition, it is also said that men live shorter lives than women because they indulge in sexual desires.

The time that the verse refers to is the “*dharma*-ending time.” Several Buddhist sutras mention the concepts of the “true-*dharma* age,” “the semblance age,” and the “*dharma*-ending age.” The period of 500 years after the death of the Buddha is the true-*dharma* age that many people practiced Buddhism sincerely and diligently and then experienced *nirvana*. The period of 1000 years after the true-*dharma* age is the semblance age in which many people practiced Buddhism hard but less people experienced *nirvana*. The period of 10000 years after the semblance age is the *dharma*-ending age in which even less people believed in and practiced Buddhism and rarely experienced enlightenment.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Tansuo, “The Buddha Said the End of *Dharma Sutra*,” from a website.

⁹⁵ “*Dharma*-Ending Age,” from a website.

According to this record, people nowadays are in the *dharma*-ending age in the timing system of Buddhism. At this time, women are regarded to be better in the practicing of Buddhism and in the experiencing of *nirvana* than men. From this point, it can be seen that the common *vasanas* of women and men are changing with the changing of time and social atmosphere. *vasanas* are never permanent and stick to certain group or certain person. If *vasanas* cannot be changed or permanently attached to people, no one can experience *nirvana* at all. It is because *vasanas* are constantly changing, that people have the chance to become Buddhas.

Therefore, this discussion once again demonstrates the view of the Buddha that the gender of women does not matter for becoming enlightened at all and the *vasanas* of women are different in different places, time periods, and social contexts. Hence, people in different genders, time periods, and social contexts need different kinds of teaching to erase their different *vasanas* in order to help them to experience enlightenment, and the extra rules for women in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha are just such a teaching.

In conclusion, the facts, the Buddha *dharma*, the social context, the rhetorical skill, and the prediction, all contribute to the same conclusion that although women usually have deeper *vasanas* than men have, these *vasanas* can be eliminated by practicing Buddhism, because they have the same ability of experiencing enlightenment. The deeper *vasanas* of women, then, are not permanent and their *vasanas* gradually become lighter than men today. The extra rules for nuns at the time of Buddha aimed at the special *vasanas* for women at that time, many of which still exist among women today, rather

than indicate the inherent inferior position of women. Therefore, there is no discrimination towards women in Buddhism and in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha.

Conclusion

Overall, precepts are extremely important in practicing Buddhism in order to experience *nirvana* or enlightenment in the perspectives of both *karma* and *nirvana* in terms of both the training of mind and the training of the body. Precepts, especially the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Patimokkhas, guarantee not only a personal achievement but also a harmony inside the whole Sangha and the Sangha's good relationship with lay people.

Concerning the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Patimokkhas, these precepts cover almost all aspects of the monastic life and solve not only common problems that all people have but also special problems of nuns and monks respectively. By regulating behavior that is prohibited in these precepts, people can eliminate the *vasanas* (bad subconscious habits from previous lives) of the motivations of *raga*, *dosa*, and *moha* (lust, anger, and ignorance), which are the cause of the cycle of rebirth, and release from the circle of *samsara*.

The differences between the two groups of precepts, and the stories behind them, show that women at the time of the Buddha tend to have deeper *vasanas* (bad subconscious habits from previous lives) than men have, but this situation gradually changes with the change of social context. Furthermore, in Buddhism, even though women are thought to have deeper *vasanas*, they still have the same ability and possibility of experiencing enlightenment as men, because only the delusive appearances differ but every sentient being's ability of experiencing enlightenment is the same.

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