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PRECEPTS

Precepts within Buddhism are rules and guidelines intended to properly shape the mind and its manifestations in physical and verbal behavior so as to facilitate progress on the PATH to liberation. The term *precepts*, although a valid rendering of one sense of the Sanskrit word *śīla* (Pali, *sīla*), fails to convey the full range and force of that word, which properly refers to the morality or virtue that constitutes one of the prerequisite foundations for ultimate spiritual attainment. The cultivation of *śīla* in this broad sense represents one of three required forms of training (*trīṇi śikṣāṇi*), along with concentration and wisdom, that correspond to the noble eightfold path. Although the precepts appear as external prescriptions and are often couched in negative terms, their goal and the proper thrust of Buddhist morality is the natural and positive embodiment of right action, speech, and livelihood. The various categories of precepts that will be discussed below are therefore not to be seen as ends in themselves, but rather as necessary steps in training for awakening. As steps, these categories distinguish between the lay and monastic life stations, between males and females, as well as between different levels of progress and commitment in religious life.

The five, eight, and ten precepts

The most basic moral prescriptions in Buddhism are often identified with the categories of five, eight, and ten precepts, which are generically known as rules of training (Sanskrit, *śikṣāpada*; Pāli, *sikkhāpada*). The five precepts address the moral obligations of all Buddhist laypersons and are sometimes taken along with the three REFUGES in a formal ceremony. They are thus viewed, much like monastic precepts, as a set of vows that call for abstention: (1) from the taking of life, (2) from stealing, (3) from sexual misconduct, (4) from lying, and (5) from intoxicants. Laypersons seeking to express greater dedication to the Buddhist path and further growth in moral training can take on observance of the eight precepts. Besides adopting a stricter interpretation of the first five precepts in which ob-

servance of the third precept requires complete abstinence from sexual activity, adherence to the eight precepts further entails: (6) refraining from eating after midday, (7) avoiding singing, dancing, and music, as well as use of perfume, and (8) refraining from the use of luxurious beds. Observance of these eight rules conventionally takes place only for limited periods, often on six days each month, arranged around the full and new moon days that coincide with the bi-monthly confessional ceremonies (Sanskrit, *poṣadha*; Pāli, *uposatha*) in the monastic community.

In contrast to the categories of five and eight precepts that pertain to the moral training of laypersons, the category of ten precepts sets forth a basic moral vision for Buddhist monastics. Those entering the monastic order take these ten precepts in a "going-forth" ceremony (*pravrajyā*, *pabbajā*) through which they become novices (*śrāmaṇera*, *sāmaṇera*). The ten precepts resemble an expanded form of the eight precepts, which involves adherence to the five precepts, including a strict ban on all sexual activity, and further entails vowing to refrain: (6) from eating after midday, (7) from singing, dancing, and music, (8) from wearing jewelry and using perfumes, (9) from sleeping on luxurious beds, and (10) from handling gold and silver.

The monastic disciplinary code

Whereas the ten precepts set forth a basic moral compass for MONKS and NUNS, the monastic disciplinary code (PRĀTIMOKṢA, *pātimokkha*), consisting of a greatly enlarged number of more than two hundred precepts, historically has been a determining factor in shaping the Buddhist monastic order (SAṄGHA) as an institution. These precepts, which constitute the central content of the VINAYA-*piṭaka* in the Buddhist CANON (Tripiṭaka, Tipiṭaka), function on different levels.

On the one hand, the monastic code has an obvious moral dimension. Many of these precepts are simply a further elaboration of the moral principles laid out in the ten precepts, and therefore reinforce the continued moral training of monastics after their ORDINATION. At the same time, the aim of these precepts has been to preserve the Buddhist saṅgha's image as a model of rectitude in the eyes of the lay community. Thus, the Buddha is recorded as having established some of the precepts as a result of incidents in which the conduct of monks threatened to cause scandal in those for whom the monastic community was to provide moral guidance and upon whom the monastic community relied for its physical support.

From another perspective, these precepts have an institutional dimension. In practical terms, many of the precepts in the *prātimokṣa* have the concrete goal of ensuring order and smooth functioning in the everyday affairs of the community. More fundamentally, however, the very existence of the whole Buddhist community is premised upon the stability of the *saṅgha*, which in turn is dependent upon the valid conferral of the precepts in ordination. The *vinaya* specifies that the *prātimokṣa* are to be formally taken (*upasampadā*) in the presence of a requisite number of properly ordained monks. Furthermore, the candidates were required to fulfill conditions that were ascertained through a set of questions during the ceremony. Finally, there were specifications with regard to the site of ordination, which DAOXUAN (596–667), founder of the Chinese *Vinaya* school (Lüzong), developed into a detailed set of specifications for the erection of an ordination platform. Absence of these key conditions was thought to invalidate this crucial ceremony that marks the passage to status as a fully ordained monk or nun. Great attention, therefore, has been paid through history to ensure the validity of this process. A striking example of such concern took place in Japan in the eighth century when questions about proper ordination cast the validity of the whole Buddhist order, which had existed in Japan for over a century, into doubt. Consequently, the Chinese ordination master GANJIN (Jianzhen, 688–763) was invited to Japan. After five failed attempts, he finally arrived in Japan in 754, erected an ordination platform according to specifications in Nara before the great Tōdaiji, and performed a properly prescribed ordination, thus ensuring the legitimacy of the *saṅgha* in Japan.

The centrality of the *prātimokṣa* for the moral discipline of monks and nuns and the cohesion of the *saṅgha* is symbolically expressed through fortnightly confessional ceremonies (*poṣadha*, *uposatha*) at which monastics in a locality are required to gather together (with monks and nuns meeting separately) for a recitation of the precepts of the *prātimokṣa*. The recital of each precept is accompanied by a required confession before the community of any instance of transgression. The shared recognition and adherence to a particular articulation of the *prātimokṣa* evident in these ceremonies has been the token of unity for communities of the *saṅgha* through history, while disagreement with regard to the precepts has led historically to the creation of new communities with their own separate *prātimokṣa*. Unlike Christianity, in which doctrinal disagreements often inspired the rise of new groups,

sectarian division within early Buddhism is thought to have been largely premised on differing approaches to the discipline.

One of the historical results of these divisions was the production of divergent *prātimokṣa* contained within different versions of the *vinaya-piṭaka*. There currently exist in various languages versions of the *vinaya* from six different schools: SARVĀSTIVĀDA AND MŪLASARVĀSTIVĀDA, DHARMAGUPTAKA, MAHĀSĀMĠHIKA, MAHĪSĀKA, and THERAVĀDA. Of these, three have contemporary relevance: The Theravāda tradition observes the precepts in its Pāli version of the *vinaya*; the East Asian tradition of Buddhism has largely adhered to the precepts of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* (*Sifen lü*) for over a thousand years; and discipline in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is based on the *vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda. Each of these differs with regard to the number of precepts constituting the *prātimokṣa*. For full ordination, the Theravāda *Vinaya* contains 227 rules for monks (or 311 for nuns), the Dharmaguptaka 250 (or 348), and the Mūlasarvāstivāda 258 (or 354). Today only East Asian Buddhism continues to preserve a tradition of fully ordained nuns.

The precepts of the *prātimokṣa* are grouped in categories that are arranged in descending order of seriousness according to the gravity of an offense. The most serious category (*pārājika*) contains offenses that require immediate expulsion from the *saṅgha* with no possibility of reinstatement in one's lifetime. For monks, this category involves four major offenses: sexual intercourse, stealing, murder, and false claims with regard to one's spiritual attainment. The *prātimokṣa* for nuns legislates four more offenses in this category, including intimate touching of men, holding hands with men, hiding the serious offenses of other nuns, and following a censured monk. The second category (*saṅghāvasesa*) concerns offenses that call for discipline falling short of expulsion but requiring temporary forfeiture of one's full status as a monk or nun and removal from the community for a period of time. This category contains thirteen offenses for monks that include sexual impropriety, erecting dwellings, slander, and causing dissension in the *saṅgha*. For nuns, this category in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* holds seventeen precepts, including prohibition from serving as a marriage broker. The remaining categories of the *prātimokṣa* address less serious offenses calling for punishments that range from confiscation of inappropriate items and confession before the whole community to confession before one person. Although the

different versions of the vinaya listed above vary in the number of categories and precepts, they nevertheless manifest a remarkable similarity.

Mahāyāna precepts

The MAHĀYĀNA tradition from its inception paid great heed to training in morality and the observance of precepts. This emphasis was incorporated into the bodhisattva path as an essential element of the PĀRAMITĀ (PERFECTION) that the bodhisattva was expected to cultivate. The second of these perfections calls for dedication to morality and strict adherence to the precepts. This dedication has often been expressed simply through observance of traditional precepts. Mahāyāna monks and nuns, for example, have ordinarily taken and adhered to the full precepts of the prātimokṣa. In time, however, Mahāyāna came to develop precepts that were unique to the bodhisattva vocation. The most famous articulation of such precepts is that found in the FANWANG JING (BRAHMĀ'S NET SŪTRA), an apocryphal text thought to have been produced in China. This scripture sets forth fifty-eight precepts, dividing them into ten major and forty-eight minor rules that besides emphasizing the basic moral orientation of the five precepts also stress the bodhisattva's obligation to care for all beings. They further call for extreme ASCETIC PRACTICES, such as the burning of limbs, thus marking a significant departure from the discipline of the prātimokṣa.

These bodhisattva precepts were administered to lay persons and monastics alike. Monks and nuns customarily would take these precepts in a separate ceremony following the administration of the prātimokṣa in ordination. Historically, the Mahāyāna tradition rarely called attention to the disparity between these "Mahāyāna precepts" and the "precepts" of the vinaya. The founder of the Japanese Tendai school, SAICHŌ (767–822), however, made just such a distinction. In attempting to firmly establish the Tendai teaching that he had brought back from China, Saichō asked permission of the court to build an ordination platform on Mount Hiei. Tendai monks ordained on this platform were not to receive the customary precepts but only the bodhisattva precepts, thereby ensuring that their ordination was a purely "Mahāyāna" one. When the Japanese court granted Saichō's request shortly after his death, the Japanese Tendai school and the traditions that grew out of it adopted an approach to precepts that differed from that taken by the rest of the Buddhist world.

See also: Councils, Buddhist; Ethics; Festivals and Calendrical Rituals; Mahāyāna Precepts in Japan; Repentance and Confession

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PRINTING TECHNOLOGIES

Since at least the eighth century C.E., printing technologies have been used to promulgate Buddhist teachings, preserve Buddhist literature, and protect Buddhist people and their sacred sites and possessions. Most of the techniques that will be discussed below were not developed originally by Buddhists, but were an outgrowth of the rich cultural, intellectual, and religious traditions of China and their spread eastward to Korea and Japan and, subsequently, to the West.

Dhāraṇī and the origin of Buddhist print culture

The earliest technique employed for printing Buddhist texts was xylography, which used reverse-image characters carved on woodblocks to print pages of text. The exact process that led to the development of woodblock printing is unknown, although the earliest advances in print culture and technology took place in medieval China after the invention of paper in about 105 C.E. Printing from blocks of wood is commonly considered to be the first true printing technology, although printing with stamps and seals (*yin*), from