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The Function and Contemporary Role of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* (Abandoning the Training Rules) in the Pāli Canon

Chandima Gangodawila¹

Abstract

This article examines the intricacies of abandoning the monastic training rules (*sikkhāpaccakkhāna*) in key Pāli *sūta* and *Vinaya* texts to better understand how these textual sources, in addition to early modern Sri Lankan monastics as well as the contemporary *saṅgha*, have understood the abandonment of the training rules not as a spiritual failure, but rather as a set of pragmatic monastic principles that emphasize the retention of monkhood and the continuity of the *Buddhasāsana*. To demonstrate this, I propose an innovative approach to examining the first *pārājika* (concerning sexual intercourse) in relation to the *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*

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by considering Pāli *sūttas*, *Vinaya* texts, and the example of noncelibate seventeenth-century Laṅkān *gaṇinnānse* (non-*bhikkhu* monks). I conclude by arguing that the contemporary Sri Lankan *saṅgha* can use *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* to avoid falling into the first *pārājika*, which provides a basis for re-ordination and thus a more human-centered framework for supporting the stability and duration of the *Buddhasāsana*.

Introduction

This article examines the first *pārājika*² rule (concerning sexual intercourse by monastics) in Theravāda Buddhist sources, particularly Pāli *sūtta* and *Vinaya* materials, in order to gauge the function and contemporary role of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in both historical and contemporary contexts. *Sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is a process of voluntarily “abandoning the training rules,” often implying “disrobing,” with the possibility of later re-ordinating. My engagement with the abandonment of the training rules derives primarily from questions about the application and practicality of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* for the modern and contemporary Theravāda *saṅgha*,³ especially in Sri Lanka. In what follows, I first present an overview of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in Pāli-language *sūtta* and *Vinaya* texts. I then consider how *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is described and used, and what this usage signifies from doctrinal and legal standpoints in order to provide context for understanding the early modern and contemporary significance of the first

² Literally a serious transgression that leads to the loss of monastic life. *Pārājikas* are classified into four types: sexual intercourse, theft, murder, and assertions of non-obtained realizations.

³ Buddhist monastic community. However, it ideally refers to lay or ordained Buddhist followers who achieved at least stream-entry (*sotāpanna* status).

pārājika. I aspire to bring a fresh perspective on *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*'s textual function as well as its contemporary role in the Sri Lankan *saṅgha* to lay the groundwork for further research and study.

I became interested in this topic—originally found in Pāli *sūta* and *Vinaya* texts—in the context of the early-modern and contemporary *saṅgha* through discussions with other monastics. I began to wonder about real-world approaches to the violation of the first *pārājika* rule and about whether its violation always entailed “abandonment” of the order, or whether there were fewer fundamentalist approaches to expressing sexuality that do not foreclose the possibility of later resuming the monastic path. The case of *gaṇinnāses* (non-*bhikkhu* monks) in seventeenth century Lankā presents a fascinating example revealing how early modern Theravāda monastics navigated these questions. While they stopped practicing celibacy (the first *pārājika* rule), they continued to defend the *Buddhasāna*⁴ by preserving texts (including the *Vinaya*) and maintaining monastic institutions and ritual life. Mainstream interpretations of the *Vinaya* preserve a rather fundamentalist perspective on *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in relation to the sexuality of members of the *saṅgha*. I suggest that many contemporary monastics are confused about the proper way to interpret these rules and historical examples, and thus they maintain a kind of “wrong view” when deciding whether or not to engage in sexual activity. Such interpretations derive from a lack of clarity on and support for the concept of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*. Considering references in Pāli *sūta* and *Vinaya* references to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in early modern and contemporary social contexts may offer a potential path to reform the contemporary *saṅgha* practices concerning sexuality. Thus, I recommend that the Sri Lankan *saṅgha* community look to the *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* as a support for a more human-centered approach to conceptualizing the first *pārājika* rule. This would give monks a greater chance of abandoning the rules and

⁴ Literally, the Buddha's order, which encompasses the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

getting re-ordained when they wish to return, as opposed to engaging in sexual activity while wearing the robes and falling into a violation of the first *pārājika*.

This article aims to examine how *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* was understood in early Buddhist texts, applying this understanding to its significance in both early modern and contemporary contexts. First, I consider *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*'s primary role in terms of *vibbhanta* (“return to lay life”) and examine why this practice exclusively benefitted the male and not the female monastic *saṅgha*. Next, I consider key Pāli *sūtta* explanations of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, which differ significantly from that of the Pāli *Vinaya* in that the *sūttas* indicate that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* was performed not just for matters related to sexual contact, but also for a range of other matters, including anger, fear, and sometimes the handling of money. These additional matters become especially relevant in terms of early modern and contemporary *saṅgha* scandals. The final sections consider how the contemporary Sri Lankan *saṅgha* interprets *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in relation to sexual contact. Here, I look at non-*bhikkhu gaṇinnānse* monks in seventeenth century Laṅkā, arguing that there is a need for a more human-centered and less fundamentalist way of conceptualizing *pārājika* violations in order to provide a range of opportunities—not just “expulsion”—for penitent monastics. I also present the case of non-*bhikkhu gaṇinnānse* monks to show one historical example of how it is possible to uphold the essence of the Buddhist path even without celibacy. Such a clarification and interpretive analytical framework for Pāli language texts and historical examples alike will, I hope, provide a more informed basis for the contemporary *saṅgha* to navigate tricky questions related to monastic sexuality.

Thus, in the next section I suggest that these ancient *Vinaya* teachings should be applied and interpreted with an appreciation for the passage of time and not as static and immutable legal documents. I discuss

various potential interpretations of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the modern world, considering how we can best employ this provision to effectively support the contemporary Buddhist *saṅgha*.

Implications of Recent Research on *Sikkhāpaccakkhāna*

In the article “Monks who have Sex: Pārājika Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms,” Shayne Clarke gives ground-breaking insights into the foundation of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* by examining the first *pārājika*. Clarke demonstrates how *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is addressed without specific terms, but instead represents a compassionate route for a *pārājika*-penitent monk to remain in the *saṅgha* under certain circumstances.⁵ Consequently, I suggest that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is a more prudent method for abandoning the training rules than requesting a suspension immediately,

⁵ Clarke (*Monks Who Have Sex* 1-3): He believes that a monk who has engaged in sexual activity should not be removed based only on the Pāli *Vinaya*. According to him, various *sthavira* traditions, including Mahāsthavira, Dharmaguptaka, Mahāsaṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūlasarvāstivāda, permit a monk who failed with regard to sex to stay in the *saṅgha* under a special status known as “*śiḱṣādattaka*.” He refers to Monk Nandika’s narrative to provide some context. During his meditation, a woman disrobed the monk Nandika. The *saṅgha* placed him under the rank of *śiḱṣādattaka* after he had sexual relations. Clarke (*When and Where is a Monk No Longer a Monk* 7) argues with Prebish (*The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras* 11) and (2003, p.50) about the dearth of sources Prebish and western studies have emphasized regarding alternate *Vinaya* traditions. I believe that, based on the Nandika tale, the Theravādins may have eliminated these actual stories to preserve their original ideas. Clarke (*When and Where* . . . 28) reports that *śiḱṣādattaka* is seen as receiving a type of probation, similar to a monk who has committed a *saṅghādisesa* infraction. However, the identity of a *śiḱṣādattaka* is contested, and several researchers have held divergent views. Gombrich (102-103) believes that the Pāli translation of *śiḱṣādattaka* is “*kappiyakāraka*” and that it signifies either a monastic servant or a devout layperson. Clarke (*When and Where* . . . 24-25) further argues that the concept of the *pārājika*-penitent (*śiḱṣādattaka*) is not just a pan-Indian monastic provision, but also a trans-*nikāya* adaption.

and that such petitions for suspension may have been handled with greater severity by the Buddha and senior monks when the transgressions were committed at an earlier stage of the *saṅgha*. The reason may be that as time passed, older monks may have taken a more lenient stance on these topics so that a penitent monk who engages in sex as a distraction has a better chance of remaining in the *saṅgha*. Anālayo, conversely, has disputed Clarke's characterization of the compassion that should be shown to a *pārājika*-penitent monk as well as other factors related to monastic sexuality in the *saṅgha* (2012 418-420). Anālayo disagrees with Clarke's characterization of the nature of the first *pārājika* according to which granting *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is a fairly trivial. He also disagrees with Clarke's assertion that a *pārājika* monastic is only penalized within a local community, and that he may freely move between trans-local communities.

Ann Heirman's article, "Withdrawal from the Monastic Community and Re-Ordination of Former Monastics in the Dharmaguptaka Tradition," is of particular importance to our discussion (T 1428 569c28571a21).⁶ Heirman mentions that, according to the *Dharmaguptaka*

⁶ See also Heirman (164): According to the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* texts, Sudinna's mother first advised him to abandon the training rules (*sikkhāpaccakkhāna*) and then to engage in sexual activity with his wife. However, Sudinna appears to have rejected the advice and engaged in sexual activity without abandoning the training rules. This suggests that even in Sudinna's case, he was aware of abandoning training rules, but he did not take them seriously; this may have been the belief at the time. According to the Dharmaguptaka (*bu she jie* 不捨戒; p.571, b4-12), the abandonment of the training rules is more likely to be a declaration a monk must make before engaging in sexual activity. And the Dharmaguptakas assert that there are circumstances in which such an abandonment of the training rules does not occur: if the announcement of abandoning the training rules is made in a state of lunacy or in front of a mad man, with a disturbed mind or in front of a disturbed man, when in pain or in front of someone who is in pain, if the monk is dumb or deaf-mute, or if a monk from the central area wishes to abandon the training rules in front of a monk from the central area. This also clarifies that the Dharmaguptaka

Vinaya,⁷ Sudinna, the first monk to have committed a *pārājika*, must have been alerted by his mother to the need for abandoning the training principles prior to having sex with his wife, which he rejected. The Pāli tradition does not state that he was informed by his mother, which would be a marvelous addition to help us comprehend Sudinna's breaking of the first *pārājika* out of compassion for his mother and wife. According to the Pāli canon, the mother merely requested that he have sexual relations and produce a child in order to preserve the family lineage. In addition, Heirman's analysis of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* tradition reveals that they had elaborated on how a monk can convey his willingness to abandon the rules when the possibility of sex arises. In particular, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* describes how a monk can communicate his willingness to abandon the training rules correctly by informing appropriate individuals.

Ven. Pandita argues in the article “Quitting the Dhamma: The Ways of Abandoning the Order According to the Early *Vinaya*” that the practice of quitting (*vibbhamitvā*) existed before the Buddha amended the first *pārājika* (121), mentioning that monks and nuns must have left the order before the amendment of “*sikkhāpaccakkhāna*” was enacted (123-124). According to Pandita, the Buddha instituted the abandonment of the training rules so that such monks could disrobe and reapply for ordination. Another consideration for a disrobing monk, which Pandita brings up, is the seniority penalty he must face when re-ordaining. Re-ordination results in a re-assessment of monastic seniority, and this may have karmic

version discusses both the methods of proper abandonment of the training rules and their non-abandonment. In addition, we can observe that the Dharmaguptakas state the explicit abandoning of the training rules, which demonstrates that their handling of the subject is broader and more realistic than that of the Pāli *Vinaya*.

⁷ The term Dharmaguptaka means “those associated with the teacher Dharmagupta.” Inscriptions in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent attest to the Dharmaguptaka as a mainstream Indian Buddhist school, a subschool of the *Sthavira* branch.

implications for one's dhammic journey to attain *nibbāna*. Although the subject of monastic seniority in the context of *nibbana* has not been widely discussed, re-ordination is nevertheless a difficult act for many monks, since they must pay obeisance to all the new monks who took higher ordination before them.

This literature suggests that perceptions of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* are multi-faceted. Often, the agency of a monk and their eligibility for re-ordination constitute central points of the analysis. However, in their analyses, which are largely confined to ancient textual sources, none of the preceding authors considers the application and potential benefit of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in terms of the modern and contemporary *saṅgha*.

Abandoning the Training Rules and Returning to Lay Life (*Vibbhanta*)

Because *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is a provision of the first *pārājika*, it is possible that the Buddha wished to stress that a verbal expression of intention to engage in sexual activity has a significant impact on the first *pārājika*. If the declaration of intention constitutes a violation of the first training rule, how did the Buddha explain this violation when referring to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*? Furthermore, it is commonly believed that a monk who does not properly abandon the training rules prior to sexual activity cannot take the *bhikkhu upasampadā* again.⁸ Thus, before applying for higher ordination, a former monk must have abandoned the training rules correctly. In addition, a monk who has sexual intercourse without abandoning the training rules beforehand is generally regarded as no longer in communion (*asaṃvāsa*) and cannot be re-ordained (Anālayo *The Legal Consequences of Pārājika* 1).

⁸ Inclusion of a novice as a *bhikkhu* (monk) or *bhikkhuni* (nun) into the monastic community; Vin PTS III 23, 28-29.

In the Pāli *Vinaya*, “departing,” “quitting,” or “abandoning the *dhamma*” are described by two Pāli words: *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* and *vibbhanta* (or *vibbhamati*) (PED 629). *Vibbhanta*'s primary meaning is “to stray” or “roam,” while its contextual meaning is to return to a “normal” (i.e., non-monastic) way of life. According to Davids and Oldenberg, this is an *informal* departure from the monastic life (Davids and Oldenberg 275). In contrast, the Pāli term *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* signifies a *formal* abandonment of the training rules (Vin PTS III 24-28; vol. I, 43-47). To understand the formality and rigidity of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, it is essential to consider the dual usages of the term in the *Vinaya*: *sikkham apaccakkhāya*, “having not abandoned the training rules,” and *sikkham paccakkhāya*, “having abandoned the training rules” (Vin PTS III 23). In the *Vinaya*, the abandonment and non-abandonment of the training rules is described exclusively with reference to sexual activity:

If a monk engages in sexual intercourse without abandoning their training or revealing his weakness, he is ineligible for reordination. However, a monk who engages in sexual intercourse after abandoning training rules and admitting his susceptibility is eligible for reordination (Vin PTS III 23).

Abandoning the Training Rules (*Sikkhāpaccakkhāna*) and Vulnerability (*Dubbalyam Anāvikatvāti*) Co-Arise

There are four crucial aspects of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*: state of mind, intention, statement, and witness (Vin PTS III 24–28).⁹ State of mind and intention are closely related. If a monk desires sex, he must take proper steps to abandon the training rules if he intends to re-ordain. The statement hints that it is permissible for a monk to declare that he wants to

⁹ For an easy-to-understand English Translation, please see Thannissaro (55-57).

stop following the training rules. A monk who wishes to abandon the training rules to have sex must have witnesses in order to perform the formal abandonment lest others misunderstand his actions. The witness may be the person with whom he will have sex. On the basis of this procedure, Pandita asserts that it is easy for a monk to abandon the training rules and indulge in sexual activity:

A monk wishing to renounce his monkhood only needs to utter a single stock phrase to any fellow human being; if the latter makes sense of the utterance, the former instantly loses his monkhood and becomes immune to any Vinaya offence resulting from any misdeed that would be committed (Pandita 125).

It is one thing to examine the provision of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in ancient Pāli literature, but it is quite another to consider the range of potential effects this may have in the contemporary Buddhist world. The sexual act is not merely the monk's; the person he is having sex with must also consent, consider, and prepare for it. Thus, we should not consider the topic of monastic sexuality from a solely theoretical or text-centered basis. Monks who engage in sex, and those they have sex with, can sometimes find themselves facing public condemnation, which results from a longstanding taboo against monastic sexuality in conservative Theravāda Buddhist cultures. Another important component to this discussion is karma. While it is not my intention to defend or naturalize monastic sexuality, I do wish to consider how karma applies in such situations.¹⁰

¹⁰ In the state of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, for instance, engaging in sexual activity is a transgression for a monk. However, unless the monk does five or more heinous karmas, he does not lose his ability to become a *sotāpanna*. Therefore, it seems more plausible that the *Vinaya* rules regarding sex are more relevant to a monk's image than to his karma. If the primary goal of Buddhism is to reach *nibbāna*, then the effects of these *Vinaya* ambiguities must also be evaluated from a spiritual standpoint.

According to the preceding *Vinaya* reference, it is evident that a sexual act only constitutes a violation of the first *pārājika* rule if the monk does not first abandon the training rules in a moment of weakness or temptation. The Pāli term *dubbalyaṃ anāvikatvā*—“vulnerability, weakness”—reinforces the idea that in a moment of weakness or temptation a monk may be susceptible to sexual activity. Thus, “without abandonment and showing vulnerability” highlights the importance of his mental state when making a verbal declaration of his intent to have sex. Both contexts, “without abandonment” as well as “showing weakness/vulnerability” are addressed in the *pārājika* section of the *Bhikkhuvibhaṅga*.

Sikkhaṃapaccakkhāya dubbalyaṃ anāvikatvāti signifies both the susceptibility and the abandonment of the training rules. Therefore, if a monk is sexually responsive, he has also breached his training rules (Vin PTS III 1-40).

The *pārājika* section of the *Bhikkhuvibhaṅga* goes into greater detail about *dubbalyaṃ anāvikatvāti*. The description demonstrates that single or multiple factors can cause the vulnerability which results from disregarding the training rules, but only in conjunction with each other:

How can a monastic abandon the training rules and expose himself to the first *pārājika*, monks? Here is a monk who is dissatisfied with monkhood, who wishes to leave monkhood, who has been troubled, vexed, and disgusted, who wishes to pursue the worldly life, who wishes to pursue lay spirituality, who wishes to become a regular person living in the temple, who wishes to be a novice, who wishes to be a Jain, who wishes to become a disciple of [the] Jain[s], who wishes to not become a son of the Śākya¹¹

¹¹ The northern Indian tribe to which the Buddha belonged.

lineage. This is how the '*sikkhamapaccakkhāya dubbalyaṃ anāvikatvāti*' occurs, monks. (Vin PTS III 24)

Further explanations of the *Bhikkhuvibhaṅga*'s *pārājika* section reveal that the simultaneity of both *sikkhamapaccakkhāya* and *dubbalyaṃ anāvikatvāti* arises from a variety of *Vinaya* perspectives (*sikkhāpaccakkhānakāraṇassa*). Therefore, we cannot assume that there is only one reason for a monk to violate the first training rule. For example:

It would be preferable for me to abandon *Dhamma*, *Saṅgha*, precepts, *Vinaya*, *pātimokkha*, brief explanation, preceptor, teacher, co-resident, attendee, peer-preceptor, peer-teacher, and peer co-resident (Vin PTS III 24-25).

Accordingly, a monk may prefer to abandon the triple gems and all other monastic relationships for the same reason: he enjoys sex. The list of that which is also abandoned may include his preceptors, teachers, and co-residents. However, I question whether all monks who violate the first precept believe they wish to abandon the triple gem. In addition, the preceding *pārājika* section of the *Bhikkhuvibhaṅga* states that there are monastics who desire sexual relations because they may wish to join the Jain order, an odd assertion indeed! These perplexing claims should be investigated from multiple and unique vantage points. For instance, I believe there may have been Buddhist monks who wanted to join the Jain order and ended their monkhood by engaging in sexual activity in order to do so. Is it fascinating that some Buddhist monks have sex because they desire to join a different monastic order. If so, what is the true purpose of their sexual acts? Can we restrict all sexual acts to the physicality of the behavior alone, or should we also examine the monk's intentions, given the centrality of intention to Buddhist notions of karma as an essential factor in the cessation of suffering?

The Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and *Sikkhāpaccakkhāna*

According to the *Vinaya*, a Buddhist nun cannot benefit from abandoning the training rules before sex, and she must return to lay life in order to have sex. In the following, I consider a few of these *sūttas* to consider their treatment of women monastics in general. For instance, women were once compared to black snakes by the Buddha:

Mendicants, consider these five disadvantages of a black snake. Which five? It stinks, it is filthy, it is cowardly, it is frightening, and it is treacherous. These are the five threats posed by a black snake. Similarly, a female has five disadvantages. Which five? She stinks, she is filthy, she is cowardly, she is intimidating, and she is treacherous. These are the five disadvantages of being a woman (A PTS III 260).

According to *Mahāparinibbāna Sūtta* (D PTS II 105), the Buddha said shortly after his enlightenment that he would not die until he had wise and learned nun disciples. Such expressions regarding women in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sūtta* indicate that he intended to build an order of nuns from the beginning. Also, in the *jātakas*, at numerous points the Bodhisattva says that women are wiser than men. Thus, here we see evidence of what Alan Sponberg has characterized as an ambivalent “multivocality” of Pāli Buddhist representations of women’s spiritual capacities and their cultivation of wisdom (Sponberg 3).

I believe the confusion about the positive and negative teachings about women in the Pāli *sūttas* needs to be thoroughly studied, as the recensions carried out based on the memorization and redaction of parts of the Pāli canon give us a partial and selective picture of women’s treatment

and roles in the earliest *saṅgha*.¹² As a result, the *Vinaya*'s unwillingness to provide *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* to Buddhist nuns may have stemmed from such multivocal and ambivalent representations.

Let us now look at the context in which the Buddha recommended the *vibbhanta* method for Buddhist nuns. The Buddha's explicit recommendation for nuns to pursue *vibbhanta* rather than *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is clear in the *Vinaya*:

A certain nun had left the Order after abandoning the training; when she returned, she asked for ordination from the nuns. They told the Buddha about the matter. 'Monks, there is no abandonment of a nun's training, but she is not a nun if she leaves the Order,' he remarked (Vin PTS II 279).

The *sikkhāpaccācikkhaṇasikkhāpada* (The Nuns' Formal Meeting), a chapter in the *Vinaya*, specifies a formal renunciation of the training rules for *bhikkhunī*. Here, we encounter the story of the nun Caṇḍakālī (Vin PTS IV 236).¹³ In the story, Caṇḍakālī declares that she will abandon the training rules due to her frustration with other nuns. She also states

¹² Scholars who have written about a partial and selective picture of women's treatment and roles in the earliest *saṅgha* include Kusuma and Akincana (2015), Collett (2014), Anayayo (2019), and Gyatso (2005).

¹³ After advising three times, the Buddha's answer to Caṇḍakālī's declaration that she was disregarding the training rules was a warning that she would be suspended from the nuns' order. The *bhikkhunī saṅgha* will abandon a nun even if she declares her intention to abandon the training rules. I find this a little paradoxical. A nun who expresses a desire to abandon the training rules is warned three times not to do so; if she does not comply, she will be suspended or requested to abandon the training rules. The issue is that we should interpret *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* as a penalty for a nun, and not as a gauge of her ability to continue. Therefore, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* has been interpreted as a punishment and not as an automatic abandoning of the first *pārājika*. This section illustrates how the Buddha lays out the rule in a more stringent framework.

that monks and nuns of other spiritual orders may be superior to the members of the order of the Śākyamuni Buddha. Here, the role of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* takes on a different form; it is employed to describe a nun's temporary suspension in the form of a *saṅghādisesa*.¹⁴ They banished her from the monastic community for a short time because the Buddha counseled the other female monastics to do so. This rule is part of the *saṅghādisesa* for the female monastic. If a female monastic threatens other female monastics, she abandons the training rules because she has no regard for Buddha, Dhamma, or *Saṅgha*, resulting in a *saṅghādisesa*. Her monastic status will be put on hold for the time being. However, we do not observe the same expulsion for a monk under their *saṅghādisesa* rules. But if either monks or nuns violate the *pārājikas*, they will both be expelled permanently. This *Vinaya* narrative also specifies anger as a possible reason for a nun's desire to leave the monastic life:

When the Buddha was staying at Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery in Sāvattihī, Caṇḍakālī argued with the nuns. 'I repudiate the Buddha, the teaching, the *saṅgha*, and the training!' she yelled in a frenzy. Not just Śākyan nuns are monastics. Other monks have a conscience, fear misconduct, and enjoy training. I will engage with them in spiritual practices (Vin PTS IV 236).

Pandita explains that the reason the Buddha forbade nuns from receiving the provision of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* was to maintain public perceptions of propriety related to the treatment of women in the monastic

¹⁴ *Saṅghādisesa* literally translates as "thirteen rules in which the monastic community plays a role in the first (*ādi*) and subsequent (*sesa*) acts." There are thirteen *saṅghādisesa* training rules for *bhikkhus*, with the first nine requiring a *saṅghādisesa* immediately upon violation and the final four requiring three prior reprimands as part of a community transaction. These rules were established by the Buddha after the *pārājika* rules. In comparison to monks, the *Bhikkhuni* community has seventeen *saṅghādisesas*.

saṅgha, specifically their physical wellbeing; therefore, when a nun desires sex, she returns to lay life and has sex (134). Even if the Buddha advocated such a pathway for nuns to receive *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, it is possible that he was worried that the general public might misunderstand it. Although Pandita's notion is plausible in the premodern context, it is not applicable to today's monastic community because nuns wish to have full decision-making power. That the nuns are forbidden from declaring or making use of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is an indication of the *Vinaya*'s gendered normativity with respect to women's agency and status that warrants further investigation. I argue that the benefit of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* should be applied equally to both monks and nuns, as one's sexual drive is a natural human desire irrespective of gender.

***Sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the *Sūta* Texts**

Allusions to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the *sūta* texts diverge significantly from those in the *Vinaya*. While *Vinaya* texts indicate that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* was associated only with sex, *sūta* texts reveal that it was associated with a wider variety of human experiences, such as anger, frustration, fear, and even the desire to join other religious communities such as the Jains. The term *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is thus understood and deployed very differently in Pāli *Vinaya* and *sūta* texts. It is likely that these differences derive from the divergent intent of these two textual sources. Where the *Vinaya* is a collection of rules and principles for monastics, the *sūttas*, conversely, are a collection of religious and spiritual teachings. Thus, in the *Vinaya*, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is given as a practical alternative to disrobing, whereas in the *sūttas*, we only see evidence of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* for reasons other than violations of the *Vinaya*'s rules, such as interpersonal conflicts, emotional states, and the desire to join other religious communities.

The narrative of the monk Citta Hatthisāriputta's disrobing (A PTS III 393-399) provides an insightful analysis of these differences in terms of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*. Although he eventually abandoned his robes and later became a monk once more, the contextual implications of Hatthisāriputta's *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* should be considered more thoroughly with reference to the *Vinaya* texts. Throughout the entire *sūta*, the term *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is used widely, suggesting that the underlying reason for Citta Hatthisāriputta's departure from the monastic life was his lustful thinking. Hatthisāriputta's story is further evidence that the preceding *Vinaya* rule is respected, “[b]urned by lust, he abandons his training and returns to a simpler way of life (A PTS III 393-399).”

Furthermore, we should consider why Citta Hatthisāriputta had to abandon his ordination seven times before becoming an *arahant*. In addition to considering the use of the term *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in Pāli texts, we should also carefully examine how these texts foreground the karmic implications of a monk's desire to depart the monastic life. The *Āṅguttarānikāya* recounts that Citta Hatthisāriputta—first a monk during the time of the Buddha Kassapa—had extolled the value of abandoning monkhood as the reason for the abandonment. It describes how Citta Hatthisāriputta later expiated this karma by leaving the Buddhist order seven times during the period of Śākyamuni Buddha:

At the time of Buddha Kassapa, a monk lauded the importance of abandoning the training rules. Monk Citta Hatthisāriputta, who was supposed to become an *arahant* in his previous life, had to become a monk seven times to become an *arahant* due to this karma (A PTS III 393-399).

In the *Ūmibhaya Sūta*, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is portrayed in a framework of four different fears against which a monk should be vigilant.¹⁵ For example, in addition to lust, a monk may abandon the training rules for reasons of hate or enmity:

Furious, they withdraw from the training and return to a lower living level. Moreover, they are distressed. A mendicant is a person who abandons their training and reverts to a lesser status because they fear the hazards of waves. Anger and anxiety are known as “waves of danger.” This is called the danger of waves (A PTS III 393-399).

In the *Ūmibhaya Sūta*, we further see that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is not exclusively relevant to monastic sexual desire and activity, but more broadly to soteriological considerations related to the implications of one’s prior karma as well as strong negative emotions or dispositions that impede progress in the monastic life:

Due to his fear of whirlpools, a mendicant abandons his training and returns to the lower life. The term “whirlpool danger” refers to the five forms of sensory stimulation. This is referred to as the whirlpool danger (A PTS II 124-126).

The *Sikkhā Sūta* (A PTS III 5) outlines five disadvantages of abandoning the training rules. Its explanation of these disadvantages is intriguing because viewing *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* through disrobing invites us to

¹⁵ The *Cātuma Sūta* contains the same material as the *Ūmibhaya Sūta* (M PTS I 457-462). Although the *Cātuma Sūta* begins with an event in which the Buddha was dissatisfied with the monks brought by *Arahant* Sāriputta and *Arahant* Moggallāna, he becomes delighted with them following the request of Cātumeyyaka Śākyans and Brahmā Sahampatī. As in the *Ūmibhaya Sūta*, following the Buddha's happiness, he educated the disturbed monks on the four types of fears they should avoid, including the *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* phrase in the explanation of the four fears.

consider public perceptions of former monastics. Furthermore, the context in which *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is described in this *sūtta* is one of severe criticism in the form of a disparaging attitude toward people who reject the training rules for various reasons:

A monk or nun who abandons the training and returns to the lower life incurs five valid critiques and reasons for censure in this life. What are five? (1) You lacked trust in your ability to cultivate virtues. (2) Without a sense of moral shame, you nurtured noble qualities. (3) You nurtured virtuous traits without moral trepidation. (4) You lacked the motivation to build moral qualities. (5) You need more insight to cultivate virtues. Any monk or nun who abandons the training and returns to the lower life incurs these five criticisms and reasons for censure in the same life (A PTS III 5).

This is a rather different perspective than that of Citta Hatthisāriputta, who disrobed nearly six times but became an *arahant* the seventh time. Elsewhere, the *Sikkhā Sūtta* extols the myriad benefits of adhering to the training rules. The idea that there are advantages to adhering to these training rules is a sensible approach; nevertheless, there should be a method to leave the monkhood if it is difficult to continue, as I suggested at the outset. Even so, the *sūtta* suggests a rather pessimistic outlook for those who fail to abandon the training rules properly. In the narrative of Nanda (Ud PTS 22-24), the Buddha is deeply concerned about the monk's frustration with the monastic life, yet seems to support the idea that the spiritual life should be maintained despite his pain and despair (Ud PTS 22-24). Therefore, it is somewhat contradictory to compare the account of Nanda with the second section of the *Sikkhā Sūtta*, which discusses the benefits of not having to abandon training rules in Buddhist monastic life. In the Nanda episode, the Buddha proclaimed that:

Monks, any monk or nun who lives a complete and pure spiritual life, even with pain and dejection, weeping with a tearful face, acquires five causes for praise in this same life. What are five? (1) "You have believed in the development of virtuous traits. (2) You have experienced moral remorse for cultivating virtue. (3) When following virtuous characteristics, you experience moral apprehension. (4) You have put a significant effort into cultivating virtuous characteristics. (5) You have nurtured virtue with great discernment. In this very life, every monk or nun who lives a complete and pure spiritual life, even with pain and dejection and weeping with a tearful face, attains these five reasons for praise (Ud PTS 22-24).

Thus, while Citta Hatthisāriputta's story suggests disrobing is normal, the Buddha's words in the *Sikkhā Sūta* and Nanda's story reveal that he considers it an ex-monk's spiritual failure. The Buddha did not explain the ability of an ex-monk to ordain again, practice the path, and attain arahant hood. According to Citta Hatthisāriputta's story, an ex-monk was able to take ordination up to seven times. For Citta Hatthisāriputta's and Nanda's stories, and the *Sikkhā Sūta*, I believe the Buddha initially disapproved of disrobing, but as the *saṅgha* grew in the second decade after his enlightenment, he agreed to a proper way of abandoning the training rules. Thus, the five criticisms and five praises of disrobing should be read in the perspective of two approaches the Buddha adopted as time went on.

In the *Byasana Sūta* (A PTS V 318), we learn that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* occurs due to monks disparaging one another. However, as we observed in the *Ūmibhaya Sūta*, the abandonment of the training rules can be the result of lust or even hatred; there is no mention that a monk should abandon the training rules as a consequence of insulting other monks. It is

therefore noteworthy that in the *Byasana Sūtta*, criticizing other monastics can also result in the abandonment of the training rules:

Mendicants, every monk who abuses and degrades his spiritual partners by speaking badly of the noble ones will always befall one of these eleven disasters. What are the eleven? They cannot achieve the impossible. Their achievements need to be recovered. They do not cultivate their positive qualities. They overstate their favorable qualities. Alternatively, they are unhappy with their spiritual life. Or they engage in immoral behavior. They may abandon their training and return to a lower way of life. Alternatively, they contract a terrible disease. Alternatively, they turn insane and lose their minds. They feel lost when they die. And after death, when their bodies dissolve, they are reborn in a place of loss, a dreadful location, the underworld, hell (A PTS V 318).

Thus, we see that the *Sūtta Piṭaka* makes use of multiple contexts for articulating *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* from various perspectives, soteriological, ethical, karmic, and psychological. Although the *Vinaya* texts only refer to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in order to signify the psychological violation of the first *pārājika* rule, the *Sūtta Piṭaka*'s usage of the term deals further with the reasons for violation, considering additional points of view, and also the fact that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* is not limited to a monk's sexual desires or actions, but instead encompasses a wide range of behaviors and dispositions, as well as the quality of a monk's life as a monastic.

While the *sūttas* address *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in terms of a wider variety of human experiences, psychological states, and behaviors than the *Vinaya*, the *Vinaya*'s more pragmatic, human-centered orientation evidences a desire to prevent a monk from slipping into the first *pārājika* and

thereby creating unwholesome karmic results. In addition, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the *Vinaya* preserves the capacity of a monk to re-ordain, whereas this would otherwise have been impossible if they incurred a *pārājika* violation. By contrast, none of the *Sūta Piṭaka*'s depictions of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* address this possibility.

The Contemporary Theravāda Saṅgha's Multifaceted Approach to *Sikkhāpaccakkhāna* Sexuality

In early 2016, Karu Jayasuriya, speaker in Sri Lanka's parliament, claimed that every day eight monks disrobed, calling for an examination of whether the monks who disrobed did so as a result of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, or whether they returned to lay life without mentioning *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* (Silva). Alongside the narrative of monks disrobing in the contemporary Sri Lankan context, we should consider the relationship between monks' sexual activities and *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the framework of the modern Sri Lankan *Vinaya*.¹⁶ In general, it is crucial to examine the

¹⁶ However, the speaker made no specific mention of the causes and triggers of the disrobing. In any case, the fact that eight monks had abandoned their robes can be considered highly significant. Unlike Thailand and Burma, Sri Lanka does not have a large monk population. However, the reason why a substantial number of monks disrobe daily can be a concern for the peaceful process of disrobing. In Sri Lankan *Vinaya* contexts, sexual activities and the subsequent disrobing have fewer justifications. This is supported by the fact that none of the *nikāyas* in contemporary Sri Lanka maintains an updated set of the *Vinaya* rules, and they also adhere only loosely to the Pāli *Vinaya* texts. I propose that all *nikāyas* in Sri Lanka should have an up-to-date list of the *Vinaya* rules so that they are clear and widely acknowledged by the monks who follow them. If they do not simply follow all the principles presented in the *Vinaya* texts, several practical challenges may arise. Using money, for instance (Vin PTS III 240), is prohibited by the *Vinaya*, but the vast majority of monks, including the chief *saṅgha*, do so in order to adapt to contemporary culture. So how is it that a *Vinaya* rule is now not being followed when the *saṅgha* affirms that the original *Vinaya* rules are always maintained? It would be ideal and most

rationale for comparing the sexual behaviors of monks and nuns. Monks may engage in sexual activity for a variety of reasons. In Theravāda contexts, some monks ordain very young, possibly without sufficient knowledge of the relational implications of lay and/vs. monastic life. Therefore, having sexual thoughts may be a new experience for these monks, and they may enjoy such experiences and engage in sexual conduct in irrational or naïve ways. Some monks (K. Rādha, personal communication, October 01, 2022), for instance, have revealed their general frustration with monastic life to me, not from a spiritual, but an institutional and political perspective, suggesting that senior monks do not provide adequate guidance for young monks who might engage in sexual acts. Such a reluctance to discuss sexual desires may be one reason why their minds become mired in sensuality. If the relationship between senior mentors and young monks placed greater emphasis on transparency and open discussion about navigating sexual desire and romantic attachments, it would be likely, I argue, that such frustrations and impediments to spiritual growth could be reduced. This is also compatible with preventative measures to avoid a variety of monastic sexual scandals both in Sri Lanka and other Theravāda countries and contexts.

In countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand, monastic sex scandals capture the attention of the public. However, most Theravāda Buddhists do not view these incidents as a threat to their belief in virtuous monks or Buddhist values. But it is important to address them here because they are relevant to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* provisions, which always point backwards in time to consider what occurred prior to a sexual act. In Thailand, the

transparent if they showed their monk followers the new *Vinaya* rules in their own time and comfort. What they may have is a set of rules governing the execution of significant events within the *nikāya* itself. The concern with this lax adherence to the *Vinaya* texts without updating them (not necessarily the four *pārājikas*) is that the relevance of any deeds carried out by the current *saṅgha* violating the *Vinaya* may not be correctly determined, and they may be perpetually disregarded.

2020 case of a monk who murdered his pregnant girlfriend while she was with her new partner generated widespread indignation. In this story, the monk and the woman had been having sexual relations, but their relationship ended for unknown reasons (Cachia). Jealous of her new life, the monk murdered the woman and her baby. A potential motive for this incident may have been the woman's continued insistence that the monk, even after their breakup, gave her money. I believe that this story is significant to *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*. If a monk wants to have sex, he may decide to do so by appropriately abandoning the rules. If this Thai monk had followed this *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* method, he might have engaged in sex properly, and his partner might have requested that he became a layperson if he wished to remain with her, potentially obviating such a painful and gruesome scandal. Thus, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, along with open and transparent communication, might have constituted a skillful and non-violent means for the monk and his partner to express their sexual desire without arousing the condemnation and attention that such an act would otherwise generate.

In another recent story, a monk was reported to have extorted money from a woman, who demanded payment for sexual relations. This monk has since left the order (Ngamkham). The story demonstrates that sexual relations between a monk and a woman are not solely motivated by sexual gratification, but may involve financial considerations, too. In this story, it is evident that the monk was asked to pay a large amount of money by his lover since he was deliberately ending their relationship. How are we to interpret *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in this story? In some stories, money may be the main reason a woman is attracted to a monk for sex. Could the monk disrobe and engage in sex? Why does he not wish to conduct himself in this manner? Is it the lay supporters' money or his desire to remain a monk that motivates him? In the case of the monk pressed for money in exchange for the silence of the lay woman with whom he was having sex, we see that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* cannot be determined solely on

the basis of the sexual desire of a monk. Other factors, such as the temple's public reputation and financial entanglements are also relevant.

When we examine the life of university student monks in Sri Lanka, we find that some monks engage in sexual interactions with female student friends. When I asked monks with such links (*Rādha*), they told me that their senior monastic mentors were careless and had no love or concern for them once they entered university life because some resented their students attending universities. Some of these older monks are rumored to have told their followers that now that their students have entered university, they will end up with a woman. Thus, this dismissive prediction becomes a foregone conclusion in the mind of some of my interlocutors, paradoxically leading them to seek a female student with whom they might form a loving, caring, and sometimes sexual connection. These conversations lead me to conclude that frank discussions about sexuality, including and especially *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*, should be a part of the training for young male monastics as they navigate their sexuality. A monk may also engage in sex through additional forms of romantic relationships. Therefore, we cannot paint every monk with the same brush regarding sexual behavior, nor can we assert that all sexual behavior is identical. However, we should regard each of these incidents with patience and compassion for the passage of time. As I see it, we should rethink the definition of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in the contemporary context so that such monks have a higher likelihood of properly abandoning the precepts and getting reordained when and if they want to return, as opposed to having sex while wearing the robes and falling into *pārājika*.

Other sources of concern are institutionalized Buddhist temples and social taboos related to relationships with women. Most of these temples are financially and personally supported by wealthy women. When women become the temple's leading contributors, monks become their regular face-to-face contacts. As a result, it may be challenging for some

monks to maintain their control and, in the heat of the moment, to remember the provision of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*. Modern *saṅgha* and councils would do well to carefully consider and discuss such situations, always with a compassionate approach that favors the continuity of the *saṅgha* and the capacity for transformation and growth in individual monks who find themselves in these circumstances.

As I have already suggested, the Theravāda *saṅgha*, particularly in Sri Lanka, should consider the applicability of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* as well as the role of compassion and the purpose of the *saṅgha* when considering cases of violation of the first *pārājika*. In the final section of this article, I consider non-*bhikkhu gaṇinnānse* monks in seventeenth century Sri Lanka in order to demonstrate that even noncelibate monks without access to the *bhikkhu upasampadā* took great care to preserve the *Buddhasāsana* and monastic texts and principles. Thus, if a group of monastics unable to fulfill the role of the *bhikkhu saṅgha* considered the first *pārājika* through a human-centered and compassionate frame, so too should the contemporary Theravāda *saṅgha* in Sri Lanka.

Sikkhāpaccakkhāna* and the Sexual Life of *Gaṇinnānses

Noncelibate, non-*bhikkhu gaṇinnānse* monks played an important role in seventeenth century Sri Lanka. Even if they were not celibate, they upheld the *Buddhasāsana* by preserving texts, such as the *Vinaya*, and maintaining the continuity of monastic life amidst episodic decline in the *bhikkhu saṅgha*. In this section, I consider these features of *gaṇinnānse* monastic life as a case study to demonstrate that even noncelibate monks have contributed to the development of *Buddhasāsana*. Thus, I encourage the contemporary Sri Lankan *saṅgha* consider the first *pārājika* rule in terms of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* with a more compassionate and human-centered approach.

The *Saṅgharājavata* describes the lifestyle of *gaṇinnānses* during the Kandyan period in Sri Lanka, which tolerated their engagement in sexual conduct:

They cultivated noble families. Instead of learning the doctrine, they practiced astrology and medicine. By capturing the majority of the populace, they were able to accumulate wealth, and the only morality they observed was caring for their wives and children (Nagasinghe v.59-60).

Here we find that *gaṇinnānses*, who lived in monasteries and temples, indulged in a range of normal sexual behaviors (Wacissara (124)).¹⁷ It further reports that *gaṇinnānses* led both monastic and lay lives, and that a lay house was built adjacent to the temple so that the monk and his wife could live a hybrid life without any conflict vis-à-vis the devotees (Nagasinghe v. 64). In Sri Lanka's southern province, they were also known as *gaṇin*, *gaṇello* and *gaṇavolin*. Their house was referred to as *gaṇagedara*, *vi-hāragedara*, *gaṇavalavva*, or *vi-hāra-valavva*. *Gaṇagetayās* were the offspring they had with their wives (Wacissara 124-125). Kotagama Wacissara suggests that the devotees frequently witnessed the *gaṇinnānses* sending food and other items to their spouses and children through their acolytes (125). Although the Pāli term *gaṇa* has a textual basis, during the *gaṇinnānse* period (Sri Lanka's Kandyan era), the term referred to all monks who lacked the higher *upasampadā* ordination (Knox 118). *Gaṇa* has been used to describe a group of monks performing *Vinaya* acts, (Vin PTS IV 216-217; 231-232; 284; 310) and thus it does not appear to be derogatory, as some devotees and critics have suggested.

My argument here focuses mainly on the *gaṇinnānses*, who engaged in sexual activity and had a hybrid monastic and lay life without

¹⁷According to Wacissara, the period of *gaṇinnānse* can be dated to the aftermath of Rājasiṃha II.

provoking public outrage. In their case, how does *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* apply? Can we exclude them from our discussion based solely on the fact that, according to history, they were not *bhikkhus*? Alternatively, did they have a higher ordination influenced by the Burmese state of Arakan (Leider 438-440)?¹⁸ Each of these questions continues to be discussed by scholars of this fascinating period in Sri Lanka's history (Blackburn 44). I disagree with Wacissara's claim that *gaṇinnānses* lacked access to the higher ordination. His assertion that there was no higher ordination at the time, that all monks in Sri Lanka were novices, is illogical (124). Instead, I posit that the *gaṇinnānses* may have sought higher ordinations inconspicuously because if they hadn't done so, their status as monks could have been compromised. Given that the *gaṇinnānses* emphasize the significance of learning Pāli texts, it is worth considering the possibility that they had access to the *upasampadā* ordination.

In particular, Sūriyagoda Unnānse, Saraṇāṅkara's teacher, received higher ordination under some visiting Burmese monks, which is evidence of some monks having received higher ordination prior to the Saraṇāṅkara period (Blackburn 46). Anne M. Blackburn has two hypotheses regarding the higher ordination status of *gaṇinnānses*: either they did not receive higher ordination, or they did receive it but altered their status to that of novice monks (44). She also believes that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Burmese monks reinstated higher ordination. She

¹⁸ It is stated that the Arakanese kings aided their Sri Lankan counterparts in their efforts to reestablish the Buddhist order, including the higher ordination. Jina-Man-Aung and twelve other monks were sent to Sri Lanka in the year A.D. 82 under the reign of the Arakanese monarch Suriyasiri. In A.D. 1207, the Burmese monk Atula-Vijaya and sixteen monks were dispatched to Sri Lanka during the reign of the Arakanese king Dasaraja. In A.D. 1273, the Arakanese king Nga Ran-Man-Raja dispatched the Burmese monk Uttaradhamma and thirty-six monks to Sri Lanka. In A.D. 1481, the Arakanese king Bhasaw-Phru sent the Burmese monk Siddhatthana and fifty monks to Sri Lanka. I suppose that the *gaṇinnānses*' higher ordination was influenced by the last convoy of Burmese monks, which occurred in A.D. 1481 and was led by Siddhatthana.

asserts, however, that although Burmese monks helped reestablish higher ordination, there does not appear to have been a significant monastic presence during this period (36). Given that, as Malalgoda states, the majority of monks in the period from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century were *gaṇinnānses*, it is evident that any higher ordination conferred by Burmese monks must have occurred during their time (57). However, it is unclear how they maintained higher ordination while being with women.

I assume that *gaṇinnānses* must have had covert higher ordinations, which may not have been of the original form of the Arakanese tradition that was prevalent before and during the *gaṇinnānse* period. If higher ordination was thriving before the *gaṇinnānses* era, and monastic matters were likewise conducted in particular ways with *gaṇinnānses*, how can we believe that there was no higher ordination? It appears that the official history enshrined in eighteenth century Pāli language chronicles and other literature was created in favor of Saraṇāṅkara Saṅgharāja's new deployment of the Siamese higher ordination introduced in 1753. This means that during the eighteenth century especially, the *gaṇinnānses* were increasingly branded as a group of evil monks, who corrupted the Buddhist order with their sexual acts. Although these *gaṇinnānses* were seen to violate the basic *Vinaya* rules, they did not destroy Buddhist texts. Saraṇāṅkara's plot in 1760 to dethrone Kīrthi Śrī Rājasimha and enthrone a Siamese prince reveals that Saraṇāṅkara engaged in conspiratorial acts, and it is not surprising that he created schemes to remove the *gaṇinnānse* culture from the Siamese higher ordination.¹⁹ It also demonstrates his support for Siamese politics in Sri Lanka.

In my view, the *gaṇinnānses* defended Buddhism in a manner that was distinctive to their historical situation. Even the contemporary Sri

¹⁹ Blackburn (34) and Lehrer (411) note also that his chief student, Tibbatuwave Buddhakkhita (author of the *Cūlavamsa*), was also involved in the plot.

Lankan recensions of the Pāli canon would not exist without their care and preservation. However, their public life consisted of both lay and monastic practices. I contend that these *gaṇinnānse* monks adhered to the *Vinaya* rules differently from what we generally assume of Buddhist monastics, and yet it does not appear that they followed the first *pārājika* in any way. One may also dispute whether the Buddhist order with its *Vinaya* was maintained by the *gaṇinnānse* monks, who, despite indulging in sexual activity, did not dispose of the original manuscripts that contained the first *pārājika*. Why did the *gaṇinnānse*s wish to uphold the *Vinaya* even though they did not practice it? Furthermore, it has been observed that most *gaṇinnānse*s were wealthy, high-caste lay people. *Gaṇinnānse*s could thus be an entire class of hybrid monks who adhered to other *Vinaya* rules, but not the first *pārājika*. Therefore, *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* did not concern them as much as the cultural conceptions of Buddhism in Sri Lanka at the time, even in this hybrid monastic form. For this reason, I believe that discussions about *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* must consider the cultural subtleties of Lankan monastic society in that period.

Regardless of whether or not *gaṇinnānse* monks carried furtive *bhikkhu* status, the circumstances of their monastic and lay roles in society cannot be divorced from the social realities of the time. The eighteenth-century monastic secularization of Japan is comparable to the period when the *gaṇinnānse*s engaged in sexual activities. The Japanese government requested that Japanese monks secularized their traditions; this might have been the time when they began getting married and moving in with their spouses (Hori 2016). Consequently, the function of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* must be evaluated in light of contemporaneous social dynamics. Considering the social dynamics of the time, it is relatively straightforward to understand how the *saṅgha* viewed the *Vinaya*'s *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* as valid.

In addition, the monks of the *gaṇinnānse* sect had much more intimate contact with their devotees, resulting in a lifestyle that was more active and engaged with the social world around them. It has been reported that they often spent the entire night at the residence where they gave seven-day *dhamma* discourses. Their expertise in astrology, medicine, and exorcism greatly endeared them to the general population. Even though the life of *gaṇinnānses* did not include celibacy, it cannot be seen as anti-*saṅgha* because it was deemed acceptable at the time, and the *gaṇinnānses* were able to preserve the Pāli canon and its traditions despite not adhering to the *Vinaya* themselves (Wacissara 143-147). They also made a significant contribution to the advancement of Buddhism during a time of increasingly destabilizing contact with Portuguese, Dutch, and English colonial forces.

Overall, the life of *gaṇinnānses* shows that sex was not a barrier to maintaining the Sri Lankan Buddhist order, as they focused on monastic life despite their lack of celibacy. I propose this as a counterargument to the singular reliance on *Vinaya* texts and standards for *bhikkhus* amongst scholars and practitioners when considering the history of monastic sexuality. This is not a proposal, but a perspective on the sexual life of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in the seventeenth century. As *gaṇinnānses* thrived amidst the near extinction of the *bhikkhu* order, and the post-*gaṇinnānse* monks were inspired by the Thai tradition, we might also consider *gaṇinnānses* to be the culmination of the indigenous *Mahāvihāra saṅgha* as a lineage. In addition, we see that, according to Wacissara, *gaṇinnānses* rendered an immense contribution to Sri Lankan Buddhist culture by innovating song and dance, and influencing the king politically in the face of external invasions.²⁰ Given the account of *gaṇinnānses*, I wish to clarify that the lack of provision of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* does not appear

²⁰ Wacissara (147): In "the light of these facts, some monk in the dark period of decline, though not pious, were the guardians of religion and race. Such service was probably due to the inestimable freedom they enjoyed."

to have hindered the development of the Buddhist order during the period of the *gaṇinnānses*, except for the monks' awkward cohabitation with women and their children. Therefore, the function of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* must be viewed in the context of society's dynamics and not only as an ancient, static teaching, in which only the violation of the first *pārājika* is considered relevant.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to argue for the validity and necessity of a compassionate and human-centered approach to the violation of the first *pārājika* rule by considering the use and applicability of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* in a variety of textual, historical, and contemporary contexts. We learn that the provision of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* has been granted only to the male *saṅgha* and not to the female *saṅgha*, making it essentially a normative advantage benefitting monastics of only one gender. As sexual desire is innate to both genders, I believe this benefit should also be extended to the community of nuns. Moreover, we have seen that the method for verbalizing *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* varies between the *sūtta* and *Vinaya* texts for distinct reasons. *Sūtta* texts in particular suggest that the reasons for declaring *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* include anger, fear, and a desire to join other religious orders such as the Jains, reasons absent from the *Vinaya*'s explanations. I have also endeavored to discuss the complexities of sexual relations in contemporary *saṅgha* communities, and have proposed that the Theravāda *saṅgha*, particularly the Sri Lanka Theravāda *saṅgha*, clarify and uphold the possibility of *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* as a reform in the contemporary *saṅgha* community.

Finally, I propose that the Theravāda *saṅgha* may learn from the example of *gaṇinnānse* monks in seventeenth century Laṅkā to recognize how a committed Buddhist monastic community can still contribute to

the Buddhasāsana while engaging in sexual contact. Furthermore, if contemporary Buddhist monks understand the historical acceptance of *gaṇinnānse* monks' sexuality, they will better understand how and why to maintain their contemporary practice without slipping into the first *pārājika*. Therefore, I have argued that *sikkhāpaccakkhāna* should be reinterpreted in multiple ways, that it cannot be understood simply by witnessing a monk who has engaged in physical sex, and that a substantial verbal component is necessary to assess whether he can slip into *pārājika*. I further propose, in this context, that the senior Theravāda *saṅgha* should aim for a less fundamentalist attitude when dealing with *bhikkhus* who have concerns regarding the first *pārājika* by adopting the *sikkhāpaccakkhāna*'s principles and intent.

Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>
D	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
J	<i>Jātaka</i>
M	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
PED	Pāli English Dictionary
PTS	Pali Text Society
S	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新修大藏經
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>

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