

1: The Pema Chodron Foundation – The Buddhist Contemplative Tradition

GEBIS monastic communities devote a great amount of time and effort in learning and studying scriptural teachings. The core of their studies consists of The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment and the Five Great Commentaries.

The Dharma exists where 4 or more fully ordained monastics regularly perform the sangha rites. We do this at Sravasti Abbey. Monastics get lots of questions Are all Buddhists monastics? Monastic life is not suitable for everyone, and lay people can be very good practitioners. The way Buddha designed it, nuns and monks are responsible for keeping their vows, learning, and practicing the Dharma, and teaching and guiding the lay people. Lay people, in turn, provide the requisites for life—housing, clothes, food, and medicine. This is how we live at Sravasti Abbey. Through the kindness of others, we offer the Dharma freely to you and everyone. Why do you shave your head? Monastics cultivate inner beauty and drop fixation with making ourselves physically attractive. We shave our heads to symbolize letting go of ignorance, anger, and attachment. We also wear the same outfit every day—the robes of a Buddhist monastic—and refrain from jewelry and makeup. What are the monastic precepts? The Buddha laid out a gradual path to embracing monastic life. The novice or training ordination consists of taking ten precepts for life. These ten are subdivided into thirty-six in the Tibetan tradition. After training in these for a time, monastics may request full ordination. This involves taking over two or three hundred precepts—the exact number depends on the Vinaya lineage and whether you are a man or woman. A fully ordained monk is called a bhikshu. Fully ordained nuns are bhikshunis. Abbey monastics train in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya lineage. Most of our residents are fully ordained. Why do you choose to live this way? Without the demands of family and career, monastics have more time for study and service. We also have fewer distractions from meditation and other practices, creating the causes for happiness in the future. In all activities monastics practice to cleanse our minds of afflictions—greed, anger, jealousy, conceit and so on—and develop all good qualities—love, compassion, wisdom, generosity, and so on. By living within the precepts, monastics constantly accumulate merit. This brings contentment and peace. Buddhists believe that every living being naturally possesses the buddha nature to become a Buddha ourselves. This is our long-term goal, and we commit to helping all other living beings along the way. How does a Buddhist monastery help society? The existence of a flourishing monastic community brings benefit in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. Sravasti Abbey seeks to serve society as whole. A monastery or abbey is a physical place conducive to training your mind in compassion and wisdom. It is a place where Buddha images and Dharma texts abide. Monasteries train monks and nuns to embody and teach authentically. At the Abbey we learn to explain the teachings in a Western context. A monastery offers teachings, retreats, and service opportunities that give you the tools you need to merge your daily life with spiritual values. Living simply as the Buddha did, the monastery residents demonstrate how ethical discipline contributes to a morally grounded society. Through actively developing our own qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, and wisdom, we aspire to make Sravasti Abbey a beacon for peace in our conflict-torn world. Thus the existence of monks and nuns and the practice of Vinaya, the Buddhist monastic discipline, are very important. There is nothing more important.

2: Benedictines - Wikipedia

Monastic education refers to a nation-wide network of schools run by monasteries and nunneries that have long provided free education to girls and boys of all backgrounds, mostly attracting students from poor, ethnic and migrant communities.

The Buddha has already shown us the way to achieve it, And that is through ethical discipline. The wisdom and compassion of the Buddhist masters can guide our lives toward happiness and peace. They help us eliminate our afflictive emotions, making our hearts brighter, gentler, more compassionate, and more hopeful. GEBIS monastic communities devote a great amount of time and effort in learning and studying scriptural teachings. In addition to these core texts, monastics also study many other texts and commentaries written by esteemed Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars. The study curriculum for the Five Great Commentaries usually takes 14 years to complete. Alongside conventional classes, this curriculum also places high emphasis on scriptural memorization and dialectics. Successful graduation from this curriculum is the Buddhist equivalent of gaining a Ph. The richness of their wisdom and educational experiences allow them to effectively communicate wisdoms to the young minds of today. For the student monks, learning from these teachers is always a profoundly enlightening experience. Recitation Within a monastery, one often hears the sound of scriptural recitation. This is a way used by the monastics to commit scriptural texts to memory. Over the course of a lifetime, these words take root and grow , giving rise to wisdom and noble character. It is not rare for a monk at GEBIS to know more than , words of scriptural text completely by heart. Wherever they go, the scriptures are always with them. Dialectics Scriptural dialectics is a key method for scriptural learning which originated from Nalanda Monastery in ancient India. This way, understandings are tested and refined, while doubts and uncertainties are resolved, and the most profound scriptural teachings become tangible. The education at Moonlight International Academy emphasizes the Buddhist philosophy in selected programs. We also focus on fostering in every student monk such qualities as kindness, tolerance, forgiveness, and positivity, in order to prepare them for active engagement with the community and the world. Today, translation is often an individual endeavor, rarely a joint undertaking. Such a group of scholars would comprise a "translation workshop". Today, The Moonlight International Scriptural Translation Bureau incorporates the structure of these historical translation workshops, and embodies rigorous procedures to produce the most accurate and highest-quality translations possible. Translation -- it lends the possibility for intercultural dialogue, and paves an important avenue for the furthering of human wisdom. To begin the translation process, the main translator first produces a draft from the original text. The text is then examined by the main proofreader, and polished by the chief editor. It is in turn given to the cross-reference reviewer, who is responsible for explaining the difficult points in the text and making any relevant inquiries to qualified lineage teachers. The Translation Bureau continues to translate scriptures from Tibetan to Chinese. This preserves the Buddhist scriptures as a precious human cultural heritage. At the same time, it also enhances the quality of learning for the practicing monastics while building an extensive reference base for scriptural translation. Physical library While the physical scriptural library mainly houses scriptural teachings from the various Buddhist sects, it is also designed to have many books that teach and advocate for virtue and good character. Texts come in a variety of languages, such as English, Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese, as well as geographical origins, including the U. Digital Library To make the scriptures more widely accessible for viewing and reference, we have a digital library which contains digitized versions of our scriptural collection. The physical library now holds more than 60, volumes, and the digital library holds more than 80, Organizational work is currently underway, and it is our goal to establish a larger-scaled library to provide for the needs of sangha members, scholars, and lay readers around the world.

3: 3 Ways to Become a Monk - wikiHow

In Teachings of a Buddhist Monk Ajahn Sumedho's wisdom and humour bring us right to the heart of Buddhist meditation and Theravada Buddhism. From the foreword by Jack Kornfield. Ajahn Sumedho was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Thailand in and trained under the guidance of the highly respected Thai teacher, Ajahn Chah. He was the abbot of Amaravati Buddhist monastery in England for many years, but has recently returned to Thailand.

Spiritual life is not about becoming someone special but discovering a greatness of heart within us and every being. It is an invitation to inwardly drop our opinions, our views, our ideas, our thoughts, our whole sense of time and ourselves, and come to rest in no fixed position. Ajahn Sumedho invites us all, ordained and lay people alike, to enjoy the freedom beyond all conditions, a freedom from fears, from gain and loss, from pleasure and pain. This is the joy and happiness of the Buddha. See below for other online sites Extract The path of mindfulness is the path of no preferences. When we prefer one thing to another, then we concentrate on it: We have to go to some place where there is no confusion, become a hermit, go up to the Orkneys, find a cave. I found a super cave once off the coast of Thailand. It was on a beautiful little island in the Gulf of Siam. And it was my sixth year as a monk. And they were causing me a lot of sorrow and despair. Oh, what a miserable Rains Retreat that was! I thought it was perfect. They had caves on the island and little huts on the beaches. It was the perfect set-up for a monk. One could go and get one of those huts and live in it. And then go on alms-round in the village. The village people were all very friendly, especially to Western monks because to be a Western monk was very unusual. We could depend on having all the food we could possibly eat, and more. It was not a place that was easy to get to, being out in the Gulf of Thailand, and I thought: It had an inner chamber that was completely dark and no sounds could penetrate. I crawled in through a hole and inside there was nothing. I could neither see nor hear anything. So it was ideal for sensory deprivation: I can go in this cave and just practise for hours on end with no kind of sense stimulation. But there was this old monk living in this cave who was not sure whether he was going to stay. Anyway, he said I could have the grass hut on the top of the hill. I went up there and looked, and down below was the sea. I wanted peace and I found the Western monks very confusing. They would always ask lots of questions and were so demanding. So I was all set to spend the Rains Retreat in this idyllic situation. My right foot became severely infected and they had to take me off the island into the local hospital on the mainland. I was very ill. They would not let me go back to the island and I had to spend the Rains Retreat in a monastery near the town. Sorrow, despair and resentment arose towards this foot-all because I was attached to tranquillity. I wanted to escape the confusion of the world; I really longed to lock myself in a tomb where my senses would not be stimulated, where no demands would be made on me, where I would be left alone, incognito, invisible. But after that I contemplated my attitude; I contemplated my greed for peace. And I did not seek tranquillity any more. From the foreword by Jack Kornfield Ajahn Sumedho was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Thailand in and trained under the guidance of the highly respected Thai teacher, Ajahn Chah. He was the abbot of Amaravati Buddhist monastery in England for many years, but has recently returned to Thailand. The Book Depository is owned by Amazon.

4: Monastic Community :: Shasta Abbey Buddhist Monastery

In this way the relevance of monastic education and the teachings of Buddha will open a doorway for the creation of mutual respect, understanding and sharing of information between the modern and the traditional - a truly educational "middle-way" approach.

Given that the monks have just completed their end of year exams, we thought it timely to explain some of these issues in this blog. Traditionally, education in Bhutan took place only in the monasteries. In response, Bhutan has created a unique development philosophy. In a world first, Bhutan requires that any development be culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable to measurably enhance the Gross National Happiness GNH [1] of its people. As part of this, Bhutan promotes modern education to provide for the economic needs of the country whilst at the same time ensuring that its unique Buddhist culture and value system is preserved through traditional monastic education. But will this be enough to stem the tide of young Bhutanese students increasingly lured into desiring a life of excessive consumption and glorified materialism touted by the West? Lama Namgay recently posed this question: What is the relevance of monastic education in modern day Bhutan? If they focus their mind on developing wisdom and compassion then they will not grasp for external things to make them at peace and happy which ultimately are the causes of unhappiness due to the law of impermanence. If the students in schools understand properly the Buddhist teachings at an early age this will help them to discover peace and inner happiness and help them to spread this to others they come in contact with. There are many very educated Buddhist masters in Bhutan but it is difficult for them to communicate such wisdom, as they cannot speak English. Therefore, to maximize the potential of the Bhutanese school children, monks should be taught English so they can share these precious teachings with them. They are well positioned to help modern educators shape the youth into highly educated, compassionate and wise individuals, and strengthen the GNH guided education curriculum. The only problem standing in the way of this is the need to develop the English speaking skills of the many qualified monastics. English is the main medium of instruction in schools Dzongka is taught as a separate subject. As mentioned in a previous post, Lama Namgay has already taken measures to begin to teach their students basic English. Opening up the lines of communication between traditional and modern education systems will stimulate debate and discussion and a two way exchange of ideas, which will go a long way to reducing any tensions. What do the monks learn at Phajoding? Phajoding serves as a Lopdra, which is equivalent to a primary school education, and recently they have begun to offer a Shedra curriculum, which is equivalent to a high school education. The ultimate goal of a monastic education is to provide the student with the tools to attain the mind of enlightenment a state referred to as an absence of worldly suffering or dukkha in Sanskrit "where the mind is fully awakened and the generation of Bodhicitta the seeking of enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Teachings largely comprise training in Buddhist philosophy, learning Buddhist poetry and grammar, handwriting, the memorization of prayers, contemplation on the spiritual wisdom of revered Buddhist masters in addition to instructions in the Buddhist art forms such as performing various rituals, playing Buddhist instruments, molding butter sculpture offerings, thangka painting and lama dancing. Playing the Dungchen "the Buddhist long horn Those in the Lopdra are being taught Buddhist art forms, Dzongkar handwriting and the meaning of various prayers that have to be committed to memory. They are also learning about the Vinaya, which is a set of rules or a code of conduct that the monastic community abides by. It differs from the dharma Buddhist teachings in that it relates to discipline. What Lama Namgay is attempting to teach the monks is for them to not just blindly accept these vows but to understand the underlying principles of the vows and why the Buddha proposed them. In this way the monks will be able to direct their mind away from worldly attachments and towards the dharma. According to Lama Namgay this section was the most nerve racking for the students. They were also examined on how well they could write the Dzongka alphabet. They were examined on the Vinaya vows in addition to questions on the life of the Buddha. All students have an examination number to ensure impartiality with their exam papers being sent away to other monasteries for marking. Similarly, the teachers at Phajoding receive exam papers to be marked from other monasteries. The

results are due to be released around the 10th January then they are officially on holidays until mid February

5: The Rule of St Benedict: a Guide to Living

Orthodox monastic life is contemplative—we do not have monastic "orders" devoted to teaching, social work, etc., such as one would find in Roman Catholicism. Over and above this, monastic communities provide a strong witness to the world of a lifestyle rooted not only in prayer, but in service, hospitality, and concern for the salvation of others.

Saint Benedict of Nursia c. Detail from a fresco by Fra Angelico c. He later founded the Abbey of Monte Cassino. There is no evidence, however, that he intended to found an order and the Rule of Saint Benedict presupposes the autonomy of each community. When Monte Cassino was sacked by the Lombards about the year , the monks fled to Rome, and it seems probable that this constituted an important factor in the diffusion of a knowledge of Benedictine monasticism. Andrew in Rome that Augustine , the prior, and his forty companions set forth in on their mission for the evangelization of England. At various stopping places during the journey, the monks left behind them traditions concerning their rule and form of life, and probably also some copies of the Rule. Augustine and his companions in In many monasteries it eventually entirely displaced the earlier codes. By the ninth century, however, the Benedictine had become the standard form of monastic life throughout the whole of Western Europe, excepting Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, where the Celtic observance still prevailed for another century or two. Sacred Scripture was always at the heart of every monastic scriptorium. As a general rule those of the monks who possessed skill as writers made this their chief, if not their sole active work. An anonymous writer of the ninth or tenth century speaks of six hours a day as the usual task of a scribe, which would absorb almost all the time available for active work in the day of a medieval monk. The abbey was noted for its strict adherence to the Rule of St. The abbot of Cluny was the superior of all the daughter houses, through appointed priors. The dominance of the Benedictine monastic way of life began to decline towards the end of the twelfth century, which saw the rise of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Not being bound by location, the mendicants were better able to respond to an increasingly "urban" environment. This decline was further exacerbated by the practice of appointing a commendatory abbot, a lay person, appointed by a noble to oversee and to protect the goods of the monastery. Oftentimes, however, this resulted in the appropriation of the assets of monasteries at the expense of the community which they were intended to support. England[edit] The English Benedictine Congregation is the oldest of the nineteen Benedictine congregations. Augustine of Canterbury and his monks established the first English Benedictine monastery at Canterbury soon after their arrival in Other foundations quickly followed. Through the influence of Wilfrid , Benedict Biscop , and Dunstan , the Benedictine Rule spread with extraordinary rapidity, and in the North it was adopted in most of the monasteries that had been founded by the Celtic missionaries from Iona. Many of the episcopal sees of England were founded and governed by the Benedictines, and no fewer than nine of the old cathedrals were served by the black monks of the priories attached to them. The monks studied the healing properties of plants and minerals to alleviate the sufferings of the sick. Willibrord and Boniface preached there in the seventh and eighth centuries and founded several abbeys. During the 19th century they were able to return to England, including to Selby Abbey in Yorkshire , one of the few great monastic churches to survive the Dissolution. The two sides of a Saint Benedict Medal St. Currently the priory is home to a community of Benedictine nuns. During the next few years, so-called Prinknash Park was used as a home until it was returned to the order. In , Ampleforth set up a daughter house, a priory at St. Louis, Missouri which became independent in and became Saint Louis Abbey in its own right in Monks would read privately during their personal time, as well as publicly during services and at meal times. In addition to these three mentioned in the Rule, monks would also read in the infirmary. However, Benedictine monks were disallowed worldly possessions, thus necessitating the preservation and collection of sacred texts in monastic libraries for communal use. The first record of a monastic library in England is in Canterbury. Monasteries were again allowed to form in the 19th century under the Bourbon Restoration. Later that century, under the Third French Republic , laws were enacted preventing religious teaching. The original intent was to allow secular schools. Thus in and , Benedictine teaching monks were effectively exiled; this was not completed until Other houses either reformed by, or founded as priories of, St Blasien were:

6: Meaning in Monasticism - Questions & Answers - Orthodox Church in America

Â» *Buddhist Studies*Â» *Buddhist Scriptures*Â» *Basic Teachings* Questions on *What is Buddhism, Basic Buddhist Concepts, The Buddhist Scriptures, About Monks and Nuns, Rebirth, Vegetarianism, Becoming a Buddhist, Buddhism and the God-idea* are answered by an Australian monk, Venerable S. Dhammika.

They wonder about birth and death. They wonder why they get sick and why grandfather died. They wonder why their wishes do not come true. Children also wonder about happiness and the beauty in nature. Because the Buddha knew what was in the hearts of children and human kind, he taught everyone how to live a happy and peaceful life. Buddhism is not learning about strange beliefs from faraway lands. It is about looking at and thinking about our own lives. It shows us how to understand ourselves and how to cope with our daily problems. It began around 2,500 years ago in India when Siddhartha Gautama discovered how to bring happiness into the world. He was born around BC, in the small kingdom of Kapilavastu. His father was King Suddhodana and his mother was Queen Maya. Soon after Prince Siddhartha was born, the wise men predicted that he would become a Buddha. When the king heard this, he was deeply disturbed, for he wanted his son to become a mighty ruler. He told Queen Maya, "I will make life in the palace so pleasant that our son will never want to leave. The king built them three palaces, one for each season, and lavished them with luxuries. They passed their days in enjoyment and never thought about life outside the palace. The Four Sights Soon Siddhartha became disillusioned with the palace life and wanted to see the outside world. He made four trips outside the palace and saw four things that changed his life. On the first three trips, he saw sickness, old age and death. He asked himself, "How can I enjoy a life of pleasure when there is so much suffering in the world? Renunciation Leaving his kingdom and loved ones behind, Siddhartha became a wandering monk. He cut off his hair to show that he had renounced the worldly lifestyle and called himself Gautama. He wore ragged robes and wandered from place to place. In his search for truth, he studied with the wisest teachers of his day. None of them knew how to end suffering, so he continued the search on his own. For six years he practiced severe asceticism thinking this would lead him to enlightenment. He sat in meditation and ate only roots, leaves and fruit. At times he ate nothing. He could endure more hardships than anyone else, but this did not take him anywhere. He thought, "Neither my life of luxury in the palace nor my life as an ascetic in the forest is the way to freedom. Overdoing things can not lead to happiness. Enlightenment On a full-moon day in May, he sat under the Bodhi tree in deep meditation and said. First he sent his beautiful daughters to lure Gautama into pleasure. Next he sent bolts of lightning, wind and heavy rain. Last he sent his demonic armies with weapons and flaming rocks. One by one, Gautama met the armies and defeated them with his virtue. As the struggle ended, he realized the cause of suffering and how to remove it. He had gained the most supreme wisdom and understood things as they truly are. From then on, he was called Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha Teaches After his enlightenment, he went to the Deer Park near the holy city of Benares and shared his new understanding with five holy men. They understood immediately and became his disciples. This marked the beginning of the Buddhist community. For the next forty-five years, the Buddha and his disciples went from place to place in India spreading the Dharma, his teachings. Their compassion knew no bounds, they helped everyone along the way, beggars, kings and slave girls. At night, they would sleep where they were; when hungry they would ask for a little food. Whenever the Buddha went, he won the hearts of the people because he dealt with their true feelings. He advised them not to accept his words on blind faith, but to decide for themselves whether his teachings are right or wrong, then follow them. He encouraged everyone to have compassion for each other and develop their own virtue, "You should do your own work, for I can teach only the way. He always taught in such a way that everyone could understand. Each person thought the Buddha was speaking especially for him. The Buddha told his followers to help each other on the Way. Following is a story of the Buddha living as an example to his disciples. Once the Buddha and Ananda visited a monastery where a monk was suffering from a contagious disease. The poor man lay in a mess with no one looking after him. The Buddha himself washed the sick monk and placed him on a new bed. Afterwards, he admonished the other monks. If you do not look after each other, who will look after you? Whoever serves the

sick and suffering, serves me. Although he has left the world, the spirit of his kindness and compassion remains. The Buddha realized that that he was not the first to become a Buddha. To know who we are, we need to understand that we have two natures. One is called our ordinary nature, which is made up of unpleasant feelings such as fear, anger, and jealousy. The other is our true nature, the part of us that is pure, wise, and perfect. In Buddhism, it is called the Buddha nature. The only difference between us and the Buddha is that we have not awakened to our true nature. Flowers were blooming and trees were putting on bright new leaves, but among all this beauty, he saw much unhappiness. A farmer beat his ox in the field. A bird pecked at an earthworm, and then an eagle swooped down on the bird. Deeply troubled, he asked, "Why does the farmer beat his ox? Why must one creature eat another to live? He discovered three great truths. He explained these truths in a simple way so that everyone could understand them. Nothing is lost in the universe The first truth is that nothing is lost in the universe. Matter turns into energy, energy turns into matter. A dead leaf turns into soil. A seed sprouts and becomes a new plant. Old solar systems disintegrate and turn into cosmic rays. We are born of our parents, our children are born of us. We are the same as plants, as trees, as other people, as the rain that falls. We consist of that which is around us, we are the same as everything. If we destroy something around us, we destroy ourselves. If we cheat another, we cheat ourselves. Understanding this truth, the Buddha and his disciples never killed any animal. Everything Changes The second universal truth of the Buddha is that everything is continuously changing. Life is like a river flowing on and on, ever-changing. Sometimes it flows slowly and sometimes swiftly. It is smooth and gentle in some places, but later on snags and rocks crop up out of nowhere. As soon as we think we are safe, something unexpected happens. Once dinosaurs, mammoths, and saber-toothed tigers roamed this earth. They all died out, yet this was not the end of life. Other life forms like smaller mammals appeared, and eventually humans, too. Now we can even see the Earth from space and understand the changes that have taken place on this planet. Our ideas about life also change. People once believed that the world was flat, but now we know that it is round. Law of Cause and Effect The third universal truth explained by the Buddha is that there is continuous changes due to the law of cause and effect. This is the same law of cause and effect found in every modern science textbook. In this way, science and Buddhism are alike. The law of cause and effect is known as karma. Nothing ever happens to us unless we deserves it.

7: Monasticism - Wikipedia

The point of obeying the monastic rule was not performing works to gain merit from God, they said, but rather was done to remove worldly obstacles between the monk or nun and God. Supporters of Christian monasticism stress Jesus Christ's teachings about wealth being a stumbling block for people.

Monasticism originated in the East. It was introduced in the West during the 4th century and was developed in Gaul, mainly in the west St. Martin of Tours and southeast St. In the 6th century the number of monasteriesâ€ Nature and significance Monastics have been instrumental in creating, preserving, and enhancing institutions of religious and secular learning and in transmitting cultural goods, artifacts , and intellectual skills down through the generations. Monastic institutions have also fulfilled medical, political, and military functions, though since the latter two have become completely secularized in most societies. A definition of monasticism that covers all its forms would be so broad that particulars would have to be relegated to the analysis of specific monastic systems. Such a definition might be: Such behaviour derives from the example of religious and spiritual founders who interpreted more radically the tenets that apply to all believers or to the whole society. Beyond such a statement, one can speak only of the principal characteristics of the monastic life and its institutions, since none of them is universal. Another characteristic, asceticism , is universal, provided the term is defined widely enough so as to include all supererogatory voluntarily undertaken rather than wholly prescribed religious practices. The truly universal characteristic of monasticism follows from its definition: Monasticism does not exist in societies that lack a written transmitted lore. Nonliterate societies cannot have monastic institutions, because the monastic responds to an established written body of religious doctrine, which has undergone criticism and then generated counter criticism in a dialectic process that presupposes a literate, codified manipulation of the doctrine. The monastic founders and their successors may either support or oppose the official religious tradition, but the presence of such a tradition is indispensable as the matrix of all monastic endeavour. The ego with which the layperson and the seeking neophyte identifies is not the true self, which must be discovered or uncovered. Barriersâ€ differently conceived as matter, individuated mind, or a soul- mind aggregate defiled by sin, ignorance, and perversionâ€ must be broken through, or a veil lifted, so that the true self, the primordial spirit, may shine forth. In most traditions this breakthrough is held to be unattainable through a conventionally good life in society, and thus a new approach must be sought. The body and the mind, which are part or all of the impediment, have to be controlled, disciplined , and chastised; hence, monastics advocate either asceticism or a set of psychophysical practices that differ radically from the normal routines of life. Spiritual perfection The quest for spiritual intensification is elitistâ€ even when, as within Christian monastic orders, humility is required. Withdrawal from society is necessary because the instrumentalities of perfection cannot normally be acquired and activated in the surroundings of everyday life. The basis of monastic life is a set of spiritual precepts that either articulate the supreme value or provide support for the body and the mind on their journey toward whatever supreme consummation may be envisioned. Intense contemplation, often accompanied by physical rigours, constitutes ascetic practiceâ€ i. Monastics pursue all these forms of orthopraxy in enormously varied forms and degrees. Emancipation of the self Salvation The ultimate purpose of the monastic endeavour is to attain a state of freedom from bondage, where both bondage and freedom are defined in theological terms. The languages of most cultures with monastic traditions possess special terms to denote bondage and freedom; a few languages adapt terms of common parlance that are then understood by members of society to refer to theologically adumbrated types of bondage and freedom. In Christianity and Islam, but not in Rabbinic Judaism , salvation cannot be fully achieved as long as the body exists. Thus, salvation and its semantic equivalents in other languages refer to both the present and the future in the South Asian religions but to the future above all in two of the Abrahamic ones. Redemption The concept of redemption as deliverance from the spiritual effect of past transgressions may or may not be identical with salvation, though the terms are synonymous in many contexts , notably within Christianity. As part of a vocation, the monastic seeks redemption from his or her sins and usually intercedes for others to advance their redemption. This is accomplished through personal sacrifice and may

involve forms of self- mortification. The practice of self-mortification, which intensifies or stabilizes the austerities required of the monastic, is found in all monastic traditions. Whether the autocentric or the vicarious aspect of the quest is emphasized depends entirely on the doctrinal framework within which the monastic functions. In either case, however, monastics improve their chances of redemption because, in mortifying their own bodies and minds for the benefit of others, they also help their own advancement along the spiritual path. When a Franciscan friar a follower of Francis of Assisi , the 12th-13th-century Italian mendicant leader serves the poor and the sick, he also exercises his own virtues of service and humility, all of which are signs or instruments of his own redemption. Liberation When liberation moksha from cycles of birth and death constitutes the foundation of a belief system, as in the basic Indian pattern of samsara the ineluctable process of death and rebirth that can be broken only through supererogatory efforts of asceticism , monastics become disseminators of methods of liberation. In India , Tibet , and Southeast Asia the monk stood at the centre of religious life, whereas in the Western Christian world he was and is marginal to the main liturgical and ideological thrust, albeit not always deprived of high social status. In principle, the importance of the monastic life in a religious system if not always in the social system is related to its eschatology doctrine of last things. Thus, if the state of existence after salvation is continuous with the present life, as in the Abrahamic religions, then the monastic will have less prominence than would be had in belief systems, such as those of South Asia, in which salvation implies a different state that cancels finitude and eradicates all traces of separate individual existence. The earliest Christian hermits of the Egyptian desert c. The community was viewed as composed of soldiers of the spirit, who were combatting the forces of evil by facing the temptations of the Devil in the desert. Early Christian monasticism spread beyond Egypt and assumed different forms, most famously in the example of the Syrian ascetic Simeon Stylites c. The community is usually identified with the Essenes , a religious group that flourished in the Judean desert between bce and 70 ce and was the chief exemplar of Jewish monasticism. This may have been the first conflict between a proto-monastic elite and an urban sacerdotal establishment in which the interpretation of the canonical teachings was under dispute. Rigorous asceticism, communal prayer, and common work were the rule, though celibacy may not as yet have been expected of members of the community. Improvement of society By and large, monastic institutions may have aided the progress of civilization, even though they often have been blamed for obstructing and retarding it. As an instrument for the creation, preservation, and transmission of secular and religious traditions , monasticism played an important role in society, especially in those cultures that favoured cenobite institutions. The role of monks and mendicant friars and their orders in the arts, sciences, and letters, as well as in the pedagogical and the therapeutic social services, is thus discussed under the headings of the diverse monastic systems see below Varieties of monasticism in the religions of the world. Institutional centres for religious leadership In some religions, monasteries serve as training centres for institutional religious leaders. There is, however, a clear dichotomy between training secular clergy e. Even though the distinction may seem to be blurred in the Roman Catholic and Eastern both Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox traditions, most Christian monastics, both men and women, continue to be laypersons i. Indeed, the Christian tradition is unique in that its monastic training produces priests as well as monastics. In all Indian religions, by contrast, there is an unbridgeable gulf between the priestly and the monastic careers and their concomitant institutions. The common denominator lies in the supererogatory status of the monastic life. If churches and seminaries prepare ecclesiastical leaders, teachers, and intellectuals , monasteries may train people to whom the same terms apply but with a difference: Other purposes Apart from the redemptive, spiritual, and social goals of monastic systems, most of them tolerate peripheral goals that may be rather mundane. A Tibetan Vajrayana Tantric or Esoteric Buddhist lamasery monastic religious centre , for example, may serve not only as a dispenser of spiritual counsel but also as a bank, a judicial court, a school, and a social centre for the laity. Types of monasticism Eremitic There have been a variety of types of monastic institutions. Some European and American neo-mystics also should be included in this class. Common to all true hermits and eremitical institutions is an emphasis on living alone, on pursuing a highly regularized contemplative life with individually generated, often experimental spiritual disciplines , and on frequently idiosyncratic and sometimes heretical interpretations of scriptural or disciplinary codes. Self-mortification and individual

austerities can be detected, but these are incidental to the eremitical style. Quasi-eremitic The lauras communities of anchorites of early Christianity in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Greece, and Cyrenaicaâ€”perpetuated today in the Mount Athos a monastic complex founded in Greece in the 10th century traditionâ€”as well as the small-scale ashrams religious retreats of monastic Hinduism since at least bce are best called quasi-eremitic. Similar in function were the semiformal congregations of the early Buddhist monks and nuns, which preceded the establishment of the sangha monastic order or community. Common elements of quasi-eremitic monasticism include a loose organizational structure with no administrative links to mother institutions and no external hierarchies. This type of monasticism marks a transition between the eremitic and the cenobitic; in many cases, certain groups displayed eremitic and cenobitic features alternately, either during different annual seasons or on the occasion of special gatherings. For example, in early 4th-century Egypt and Syria, hermits attached to the Christian lauras lived alone during the week but gathered on Sunday sometimes also on Saturday for worship and fellowship. In the 20th century some Nepalese followers of Gorakhnath 8th century ce lived as recluses most of the time but formed a quasi-military association on certain occasionsâ€”such as the Kumbh Mela , or all-Indian monastic assemblies, held every sixth year at certain pilgrimage centres. During these periods they were organizationally indistinguishable from the most highly structured cenobitic units at the conventions. In fact, the first Christian cenobitical communities were based on a rule prepared by Pachomius c. Smaller monasteries for men and women emerged in Cappadocia under the influence of the Greek theologian St. Basil the Great c. The basis for all subsequent Eastern Christian Greek monastic institutions, it was simpler than some of the regulae of the orders founded in later centuries in western Europe. Avoiding the extreme austerities of the Desert Fathers, St. Its asceticism was dedicated to the service of God, which was to be pursued through community life and obedience. Liturgical prayer and manual and mental work were obligatory. The Rule of St. Basil also enjoined or implied chastity and poverty, though these were far less explicitly stated than in the later regulae. Benedict of Nursia c. His regula, which enjoined poverty , chastity , obedience , and stability, was followed until the 13th century by diverse orders, including the Knights Templars and most other paramilitary aristocratic orders, and it remains the rule of the Benedictine order today. It is notable for providing an effective model of monastic government and for its requirement, adopted by all subsequent Roman Catholic monastic orders, that the individual monk not own property. The core of canonical literature in the southern Buddhist Theravada Pali: These regulations constitute the distinguishing feature of Buddhist particularly Theravada monasticism; strictly speaking, there is no Buddhist monasticism apart from the life lived according to the vinaya. The vinaya has always exacted more intense asceticism from women than from men because, according to tradition, the historical Buddha did not at first desire women monastics and laid extra obligations on them when he conceded their existence. The number of requirements in the rules of the monastic traditions of South Asia varies greatly. They were highly formalistic, emphasizing ritualistic purity, with ablutions prescribed for the members, and they maintained a rigorous adherence to the letter of the Jewish ritualistic and legal books Leviticus and the Deuteronomy. At the opposite pole of rigour, certain hippie communes of the s and later, insofar as they sought religious experience , can be classified as cenobitic organizations. In their case, growing food, preparing and consuming it jointly, and sharing common dormitory facilities were essential elements of the cenobitic structure, though they failed to take a vow of chastity or indeed any formal vow. Quasi-monastic Paramilitary, or quasi-monastic, associations are another type of monastic group. Whereas most Christian orders of this sort also fulfilled medical or healing commitments, non-Christian monastic orders of this type did not cater to the sick. The Knights Templars , a Crusading order founded in the Holy Land in the early 12th century, became the most prestigious and later the most defamed aristocratic organization in medieval Europe. The military model was evident in their hierarchical structureâ€”there were chaplains, knights, and sergeants under a grand masterâ€”and their numbers grew rapidly, in part because of the support of St. Bernard of Clairvaux , who wrote their rule. John of Jerusalem , founded at the end of the 11th century. The classic nursing order, the Hospitallers were probably the first to provide genuine medical and hospital services, initially for pilgrims to Jerusalem. Their first foundation was the Hospital Saint-Antoine-de-Viennois c. Changing conditions in the eastern Mediterranean forced the Hospitallers to move their headquarters from Jerusalem to Acre and then to

Cyprus and Rhodes. After moving to Malta in , they became known as the Knights of Malta. The Teutonic Order German: This arrangement was specially defined by more than papal bulls. After the fall of Acre, the order moved its headquarters to various places in Europe.

8: Buddhist Studies: Basic Teachings

The way of life he prescribes allows the monk (or nun) enough food, drink and sleep without letting any luxury, self-indulgence or, above all, private ownership, creep in. Prayer, work and reading make up the content of the monastic day, just as abbot and community make up the context, so to say, in which monastic life is lived.

Jain monasticism In Jainism , monasticism is encouraged and respected. Rules for monasticism are rather strict. A Jain ascetic has neither a permanent home nor any possessions, wandering barefoot from place to place except during the months of Chaturmas. The quality of life they lead is difficult because of the many constraints placed on them. Nazirite Judaism does not encourage the monastic ideal of celibacy and poverty. However, until the Destruction of the Second Temple , about two thousand years ago, taking Nazirite vows was a common feature of the religion. Nazirite Jews in Hebrew: Unique among Jewish communities is the monasticism of the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, a practice believed to date to the 15th century. Its principal expression was prishut, the practice of a married Talmud student going into self-imposed exile from his home and family to study in the kollel of a different city or town. The Essenes in Modern but not in Ancient Hebrew: Many separate but related religious groups of that era shared similar mystic , eschatological , messianic , and ascetic beliefs. These groups are collectively referred to by various scholars as the "Essenes". Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea. These documents include multiple preserved copies of the Hebrew Bible which were untouched from as early as years before Christ until their discovery in Some scholars, however, dispute the notion that the Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. Taoist philosophy and White Cloud Monastery Taoism is considered to have originally taken up the idea of monasticism under the influence of Buddhism, but has throughout the centuries developed its own extensive monastic traditions and practices. Ananda Marga has both monks and nuns i. The monks and nuns are engaged in all kinds of direct services to society, so they have no scope for permanent retreat. They do have to follow strict celibacy, poverty and many other rules of conduct during as well as after they have completed their training. Manichaeism had two types of followers, the auditors, and the elect. The elect lived apart from the auditors to concentrate on reducing the material influences of the world. They did this through strict celibacy, poverty, teaching, and preaching. Therefore, the elect were probably at least partially monastic. Scientology maintains a "fraternal order" called the Sea Organization or just Sea Org. They work only for the Church of Scientology and have signed billion year contracts. Sea Org members live communally with lodging, food, clothing, and medical care provided by the Church. Way of Former Heaven sect of Zhaijiao.

9: Monastic education

Monasticism (from Greek $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{\omicron}\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, monachos, derived from $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{\omicron}\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, monos, "alone") or monkhood is a religious way of life in which one renounces worldly pursuits to devote oneself fully to spiritual work.

This compilation is for anyone interested about Bhikkhus monks and about how to relate to them. Some may think that this lineage follows an overly traditionalist approach but then, it does happen to be the oldest living tradition. A slight caution therefore to anyone completely new to the ways of monasticism, which may appear quite radical for the modern day and age. The Discipline of a Buddhist monk is refined and is intended to be conducive to the arising of mindfulness and wisdom. This code of conduct is called the Vinaya. While it is not an end in itself, it is an excellent tool, which can be instrumental in leading to the end of suffering. Apart from the direct training that the Vinaya provides, it also establishes a relationship with lay people without whose co-operation it would be impossible to live as a monk. A monk is able to live as a mendicant because lay people respect the monastic conventions and are prepared to help to support him. This gives rise to a relationship of respect and gratitude in which both layperson and monk are called upon to practise their particular life styles and responsibilities with sensitivity and sincerity. Many of the rules of discipline were developed specifically to avoid offending lay people or giving rise to misunderstanding or suspicion for example, the rules stipulating that another male be present when a monk and a woman would otherwise be alone together. As no monk wishes to offend by being fussy and difficult to look after, and no lay Buddhist would wish to accidentally cause a monk to compromise the discipline, this booklet is therefore intended to be a useful guide to the major aspects of the Vinaya as it relates to lay people. Providing the Means for Support The Vinaya, as laid down by the Buddha, in its many practical rules defines the status of a monk as being that of a mendicant. Having no personal means of support is a very practical means of understanding the instinct to seek security; furthermore, the need to seek alms gives a monk a source of contemplation on what things are really necessary. The four requisites, food, clothing, shelter and medicines, are what lay people can offer as a practical way of expressing generosity and appreciation of their faith in belonging to the Buddhist Community. Rather than giving requisites to particular monks whom one likes and knows the practising Buddhist learns to offer to the Sangha as an act of faith and respect for the Sangha as a whole. Monks respond by sharing merit, spreading good will and the teachings of the Buddha to all those who wish to hear, irrespective of personal feelings. Food A monk is allowed to collect, receive and consume food between dawn and midday taken to be 12 noon. He is not allowed to consume food outside of this time and he is not allowed to store food overnight. Plain water can be taken at any time without having to be offered. Although a monk lives on whatever is offered, vegetarianism is encouraged. A monk must have all eatables and drinkables, except plain water, formally offered into his hands or placed on something in direct contact with his hands. In the Thai tradition, in order to prevent contact with a woman, he will generally set down a cloth to receive things offered by women. He is not allowed to cure or cook food except in particular circumstances. In accordance with the discipline, a monk is prohibited from eating fruit or vegetables containing fertile seeds. So, when offering such things, a layperson can either remove the seeds or make the fruit allowable slightly damaging it with a knife. It is instructive to note that, rather than limiting what can be offered, the Vinaya lays emphasis on the mode of offering. Offering should be done in a respectful manner, making the act of offering a mindful and reflective one, irrespective of what one is giving. Clothing Forest monks generally make their own robes from cloth that is given. Plain white cotton is always useful it can be dyed to the correct dull ochre. Shelter Solitary, silent and simple could be a fair description of the ideal lodging for a monk. From the scriptures it seems that the general standard of lodging was to neither cause discomfort nor impair health, yet not to be indulgently luxurious. So a simple bed is an allowable thing to use, although most monks prefer the firmer surface provided by a mat or thick blanket spread on the floor. In providing a temporary room for a night, a simple spare room that is private is adequate. Medicine A monk is allowed to use medicines if they are offered in the same way as food. Once offered, neither food nor medicine should be handled again by a layperson, as that renders it no longer allowable. Medicines can be considered as those things that are

specifically for illness; those things having tonic or reviving quality such as tea or sugar ; and certain items which have a nutritional value in times of debilitation, hunger or fatigue such as cheese or non-dairy chocolate. Sundries As circumstances changed, the Buddha allowed monks to make use of other small requisites, such as needles, a razor, etc. In modern times, such things might include a pen, a watch, a torch, etc. All of these were to be plain and simple, costly or luxurious items being expressly forbidden. Invitation The principles of mendicancy forbid a monk from asking for anything, unless he is ill, without having received an invitation. So when receiving food, for example, a monk makes himself available in a situation, where people wish to give food. At no time does the monk request food. This principle should be borne in mind when offering food; rather than asking a monk what he would like, it is better to ask if you can offer some food. Considering that the meal will be the only meal of the day, one can offer what seems right, recognising that the monk will take what he needs and leave the rest. A good way to offer is to bring bowls of food to the monk and let him choose what he needs from each bowl. Tea and coffee can be offered at any time if after noon, without milk. Sugar or honey can be offered at the same time to go with it. To avoid any misunderstanding, it is better to be quite specific about what you are offering. Unless specified, an invitation can only be accepted for up to four months, after which time it lapses unless renewed. Inappropriate Items Including Money T. Under certain circumstances, a Dharma video or a documentary programme may be watched. In general, luxurious items are inappropriate for a monk to accept. This is because they are conducive to attachment in his own mind, and excite envy, possibly even the intention to steal, in the mind of another person. This is unwholesome Kamma. It also looks bad for an alms mendicant, living on charity as a source of inspiration to others, to have luxurious belongings. Although the Vinaya specifies a prohibition on accepting and handling gold and silver, the real spirit of it is to forbid use and control over funds, whether these are bank notes or credit cards. The Vinaya even prohibits a monk from having someone else receive money on his behalf. In practical terms, monasteries are financially controlled by lay stewards, who then make open invitation for the Sangha to ask for what they need, under the direction of the Abbot. This means that as far as is reasonably possible, the donations that are given to the stewards to support the Sangha are not wasted on unnecessary whims. If a layperson wishes to give something to a particular monk, but is uncertain what he needs, he should make an invitation. For items such as travelling expenses, money can be given to an accompanying anagarika dressed in white or accompanying layperson, who can then buy tickets, drinks for a journey or anything else that the monk may need at that time. It is quite a good exercise in mindfulness for a layperson to actually consider what items are necessary and offer those rather than money. Relationships Monks and nuns lead lives of total celibacy in which any kind of sexual behaviour is forbidden. This includes even suggestive speech or physical contact with lustful intent, both of which are very serious offences for monks and nuns. Monks should have a male present who can understand what is being said when conversing with a lady, and a similar situation holds true for nuns. Much of this standard of behaviour is to prevent scandalous gossip or misunderstanding occurring. So, to prevent such misunderstanding, however groundless, a monk has to be accompanied by a man whenever he is in the presence of a woman; on a journey; or sitting alone in a secluded place one would not call a meditation hall or a bus station a secluded place. Generally, monks would also refrain from carrying on correspondence with women, other than for matters pertaining to the monastery, travel arrangements, providing basic information, etc. When teaching Dharma, even in a letter, it is easy for inspiration and compassion to turn into attachment. Teaching Dharma The monk as Dharma teacher must find the appropriate occasion to give the profound and insightful teachings of the Buddha to those who wish to hear it. It would not be appropriate to teach without invitation, nor in a situation where the teachings cannot be reflected upon adequately. The value of Dharma is greatly reduced if it is just received as chit-chat or speculations for debate. Accordingly, for a Dharma talk, it is good to set up a room where the teachings can be listened to with respect being shown to the speaker. Questions are welcome at the end of the talk. Also, as a sign of respect, when inviting a monk it is usual for the person making the invitation to also make the travel arrangements, directly or indirectly. Minor Matters of Etiquette Vinaya also extends into the realm of convention and custom. In monasteries, there is some emphasis on such matters as a means of establishing harmony, order and pleasant relationships within a community. Lay people may be interested in applying such

conventions for their own development of sensitivity, but it should not be considered as something that is necessarily expected of them. Firstly, there is the custom of bowing to a shrine or teacher. This is done when first entering their presence or when taking leave. Done gracefully, at the appropriate time, this is a beautiful gesture, which honours the person who does it; at an inappropriate time, done compulsively, it can appear foolish to onlookers. Another common gesture of respect is to place the hands so that the palms are touching, the fingers pointing upwards and the hands held immediately in front of the chest. This is a pleasant means of greeting, bidding farewell, saluting the end of a Dharma talk or concluding an offering. Body language is something that is well understood in Buddhist cultures. Apart from the obvious reminder to sit up for a Dharma talk rather than loll or recline on the floor one shows a manner of deference by ducking slightly if having to walk between a monk and the person he is speaking to. Similarly, one would not stand looming over a monk to talk to him or offer him something, but rather approach him at the level at which he is sitting.

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