

## Pa-Auk Meditation Centre: Sāmaṇera Course, Lesson 1

### Why Ordain?

#### Ratṭhapāla Sutta

- King's understanding of one's reasons for ordaining; the 4 kinds of loss:
  - Loss through ageing
  - Loss through sickness
  - Loss of wealth
  - Loss of relatives
- Bhante Ratṭhapāla's answer
  - Life in any world is unstable, it is swept away.
  - Life in any world has no shelter and no protector.
  - Life in any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on.
  - Life in any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving.

### The Age of a Bhikkhu

During the early days of Buddha's time, all were ordained as Bhikkhu. Later on, the Buddha laid down the rule that before the age of 20, one cannot ordain as a Bhikkhu. Thus, the Sāmaṇera group begins to have a clearer role in the Buddhist hierarchy of training. There is a story behind this rule.

The Buddha was staying in Rājagaha. A group of 17 children who were friends had among them Upāli as the leader. Upāli's parents thought: What kind of livelihood will our Upāli be able to undertake with happiness after we pass on?

At first, they thought that it would be beneficial for Upāli to learn writing. Later on, they thought: "If our son writes as a career, his fingers will be tired and he will suffer. It would be beneficial for Upāli to learn mathematics."

Later on, they thought: "If our son learns mathematics, his chest (heart) will be tired and he will suffer. It would be beneficial for Upāli to learn smithing."

Later on, they thought: "If our son learns smithing, his eyes will be tired and he will suffer."

Finally, they thought: “If our son is a recluse of the Sakyan clan, one takes up a happy and easy practice. One eats good food and sleeps in a place with no wind. It would be good if Upāli ordains as a recluse after we pass away.”

They informed Upāli to ordain as a Bhikkhu. Upāli’s friends decided to go along with their leader and together, they ordained as Bhikkhu. Living in the monastery and following the Bhikkhu precepts was not easy for them. Before dawn, they started to cry: “Give me porridge! Give me food etc.!” A Bhikkhu asked them to wait until the sun rises (according to the training rules), when the night had totally disappeared. “At that time, if we get food, you will have the chance to eat.”

Upāli’s group was unconsolated. The monastic environment became noisy and uncondusive for practice. They also passed urine and faeces everywhere.

The Buddha heard their cries in the morning and Ananda reported the situation to him. The Buddha reprimanded, “Why ordain someone before 20 years of age? Someone before that age cannot tolerate hot, cold, hunger, thirst, mosquitoes, gadflies, wind, sun, creeping things, harsh words, unwelcoming speech, arising bodily feelings: like suffering, that which is strong, sharp, disagreeable & of great pain.

This kind of behavior prevents those who have yet to develop faith in the Buddha’s teachings from developing faith.

This kind of behavior prevents those who already have faith in Buddha’s teachings from increasing in their faith.

At that time, the Buddha laid down the rule that one cannot ordain those who are not of an adequate age, which is the age of 20 years old.

### **The Age of a Sāmaṇera**

At a certain time, a disease called Ahivāta ravaged the land. Many people died. For a particular family, only a father and his child survived. The two was subsequently ordained as a Bhikkhu and Sāmaṇera. When this Bhikkhu goes for alms round, his child follows along. Some people thought that the Bhikkhu did not keep his precept of being free from sexual activities, and his child was given birth by a Bhikkhuni.

To prevent misunderstandings, the Buddha laid down the minimum age of 15 years old before one can be a Sāmaṇera. That is the first measure or limitation of age as a Sāmaṇera.

In a second instance, after laying down this rule, a devotee of Bhante Ananda caught the disease Ahivāta and was survived by his two children. Whenever Bhikkhus came to their house, the children approached them. Bhante Ananda, with compassion, told the Buddha about their situation, as he wanted to help.

The Buddha asked Ananda, “When they eat, the crows might try to eat their food. When this happens, can they chase the crows away?” Ananda replied. “Yes, they can chase the crows away.” And thus a second measure or limitation of age as a Sāmaṇera was declared.

### **3 Crucial Matters**

To start practicing as a Sāmaṇera, three things are crucial.

- Shaving of hair
- Wearing of yellow robes
- Taking of the three Refuges

#### **1. Shaving of Hair**

Before one shaves his hair, he (or another) has to announce to the Sangha that he is going to become a Sāmaṇera.

During shaving time, we need to practice a certain type of kammaṭṭhāna (meditation); the noting of the different body parts. In this body, there exists hair, body hair, nail, teeth and skin (etc.). We have to recite this again and again. If one has Perfections (good kamma conducive towards Enlightenment), one can even become an Arahanta (one without mental defilements) within that short span of time.

The maximum length of hair for a Sāmaṇera to keep is two finger widths.

## 2. Wearing of Robes: Procedure of Ordination

- Giving robes to the teacher. / Handing over the Robes to the Preceptor

Note: Although the applicant might have his own robes, he can't wear it himself. By accepting a request, the preceptor should receive and then give the robes back to the applicant. Then he properly becomes a Samanera. One can recite the following chant in any language.

*Sakalavaṭṭadukkhaniṣṣaraṇanibbānasa Sacchikaraṇatthāya Imaṃ Kāsāvaṃ  
Gahetvā Pabbājetha Maṃ Bhante anukampaṃ upādāya  
(3 times)*

*Venerable sir, I would like to request you to take this set of robes in my hands and ordain me as a Samanera out of compassion, in order that I may become free from the cycle of suffering existences. (3 times)*

[The applicant hands the robes over to the teacher and bows down three times. Then he asks for the robes.]

*Sakalavaṭṭadukkhaniṣṣaraṇanibbānasa Sacchikaraṇatthāya Etaṃ Kāsāvaṃ  
Datvā Pabbājetha Maṃ Bhante anukampaṃ upādāya (3 times)*

*Venerable sir, I would like to request you to give me the set of robes in your hands and ordain me as a Sāmaṇera out of compassion in order that I may become free from the cycle of suffering existences. (3 times)*

[The applicant bows down three times and the teacher gives him the robes. Then the applicant puts on the robes with the help of a Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera.]

- Making a Request for the Sāmaṇera Ordination

*Bhante saṃsāravatṭadukkhato mosanatthāya pabbajjaṃ yācāmi*

*Venerable sir, I would like to request you to ordain me as a Sāmaṇera in order that I may become free from the cycle of suffering existences and attain Nibbāna. (3 times)*

Before wearing the new robes, one must reflect upon the Dhamma in short to prepare one's intention: To protect against cold and heat and to cover the body.

After wearing robes, one should squat and recite the Ten Precepts.

[The applicant requests for the Three Refuges and the Ten Precepts as follows:]

*Ahaṃ bhante tisaraṇena saha dasa sāmaṇera-pabbajjasīlaṃ dhammaṃ  
yācāmi. Anuggahaṃ katvā sīlaṃ detha me bhante.*

*Dutiyampi--*

*Tatīyampi--*

*Yamaḥaṃ vadāmi, taṃ vadehi (for one Sāmaṇera) /  
Yamaḥaṃ vadāmi, taṃ vadetha (for more than one Sāmaṇera)*

*What I recite, please recite after me. [As said by the preceptor.]*

*Āma bhante*

*Yes Venerable sir. [As said by the Sāmaṇera.]*

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. (3 times)*

*I pay homage to the Exalted One, free from all defilements and perfectly  
enlightened by himself.*

### **3. The Three Refuges (Part I)**

*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*Sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*I take refuge in the Buddha.*

*I take refuge in the Dhamma.*

*I take refuge in the Sangha.*

*Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*Dutiyampi Sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*For the second time I take refuge in the Buddha.  
For the second time I take refuge in the Dhamma.  
For the second time I take refuge in the Sangha.*

*Tatiyampi **Buddham** saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
Tatiyampi **Dhammam** saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.  
Tatiyampi **Sangham** saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

*For the third time I take refuge in the Buddha.  
For the third time I take refuge in the Dhamma.  
For the third time I take refuge in the Sangha.*

*Saraṇagamanam paripuṇṇam*

*The taking of the Refuges is complete.*

*Āma bhante*

*Yes, Venerable Sir.*

Note: The mind, which knows the Buddha Dhamma Sangha as a shelter, is called *Saraṇagamanam*. The declaration that I have that kind of mind, by reciting *Buddham saraṇam gacchami etc.*, is called the taking of the Three Refuges. If the teacher and disciple can recite these clearly and correctly, after three recitations to show respect, the applicant becomes a Sāmaṇera. It is very important for both parties involved to recite clearly and correctly.

### **3. The Ten Precepts of a Sāmaṇera (Part II)**

*1. Pānātipātā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from killing.*

Note: Even destroying the eggs of bed bugs is considered killing.

*2. Adinnādānā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from taking what is not given.*

Note: Even taking something as small as bamboo strips without permission is considered taking what is not given.

*3. Abrahmacariyā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from all kinds of sexual activity.*

Note: Anus, urethra (urine hole), and mouth are all areas that are associated with sexual activity.

*4. Musāvādā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from telling lies.*

Note: Even for the desire of joking, words that are untrue are still considered a lie.

*5. Surāmeraya-majjapamādaṭṭhanā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from any kind of intoxicants.*

Note: Even if the Bhikkhu does not know of the presence of intoxicants, he commits a Pācittiya offense purely by drinking the substance. For Sāmaṇera, being ignorant of the presence of intoxicants and drinking the substance is not an offense.

*6. Vikālabhojāna veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from taking substantial food after midday. (from noon to dawn)*

*7. Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassanā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from dancing, singing, music and any kind of entertainment show.*

Note: Nacca is both the act of dancing by oneself and also the act of making others dance. Gīta is both the act of singing by oneself and also the act of making others sing. Vādita is the act of playing of musical instruments by oneself and also the act of making others play. Visūka-dassanā is the watching and listening of something that is like the thorn of Buddha's Dispensation. (Where the 'thorn' refers to entertainment; a kind of disturbance to the mind.)

However, if Bhikkhu and Sāmaṇera are already in an area and individuals who are dancing and singing approach them, it is not an offence if their acts are seen. Likewise, if Bhikkhu and Sāmaṇera go for alms food and see dancing and singing, it is not an offence.

*8. Mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhaāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanatṭhanā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from the use of flowers, garlands, perfumes, unguents and things that tend to beautify and adorn a person.*

Note: Mala-dharana (wearing of flowers; made of gold, silver or plain flowers). Ganda-mandana (thick substance to cover up pores on the face). Gandavilepana-vibhusana (substance to give good colour and fragrance). Thāna (the above are the cause of defilements, especially attachments.)

*9. Uccāsayana-mahāsayanā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from using high and luxurious beds and seats.*

Note: A high place (Uccāsayana) is defined as anything higher than one cubit (length of forearm) and a half, the maximum the allowable height. One Subcommentary mentioned that if there are lion, tiger or dragon carvings on the legs of the bed, it is a decoration, which is also considered a high place.

A great place (Mahāsayanā)

It is defined in a variety of ways. Where carpet hair is over 4 finger widths, carpet made of animal's hair and strange decorations, white carpet made of animal fur, carpet made of animal fur, with flower decorations, comforters; sheets filled with cotton.

If the above carpets are placed on the chair and bed, the Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera may not use it. If placed on the floor, the Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera may use all that is stated except the comforters, which cannot be used at all.

If a Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera goes on a house visit and chances upon the stated luxurious items, they can sit but cannot sleep on it. Except for comforters, which they cannot use at all.

*10. Jātarūpa-rajata-pāṭiggahanā veramaṇi.*

*Abstaining from accepting and holding any kind of money, gold or silver.*

Note: A Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera cannot accept money and jewels, and he also cannot ask others to accept it for him. He has the responsibility to communicate a refusal, if someone places money or jewels near him. However, if the Bhikkhu or Sāmaṇera genuinely dislikes these items, then there is no need to communicate a refusal.