

The Four Requisites



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A Gift of Dhamma

PREFACE

This is excerpted from the Dhammadana organization for the purpose of information and education to **Daeyaka** (Male devotee) (**daeyakae** - female devotee) Buddhist devotees or laity. Many devotees need this education so we all could fulfill the needs of our Dhamma teachers – Bhikkhu –

We, the Buddhist, took refuge in the three jewels – *Buddha, Dhamma* and *Samgha* and Samgha is our dhamma teacher. Only with full knowledge of the Bhikkhu's needs could we fulfill their daily needs thus they could teach us the true Dhamma. Bhikkhu teaches us the Buddha teaching so we get enlightened while we are in this human world and in return for their selfless service to mankind, we must have full knowledge of Bhikkhu's needs. It is for that purpose that this book is compiled for the good of the Buddha Dispensation.



He who is not free from taints of moral defilements (kilesas) and yet dons the yellow robe, who lacks restraint and (speaks not the) truth, is unworthy of the yellow robe

Dhammapada Verse 9.

A Gift of Dhamma

We will all strive to fulfill the needs of our Samghas

Maung Paw, California

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1. The four requisites

The **Bhikkhu** must limit his needs to a minimum. He is content with whatever is given to him, without ever asking for anything. Thus, he renounces everything that is superfluous; he avoids anything that could induce pleasure, comfort or distraction. His needs are of four kinds:

1. **Nutrition** (food, drinks, etc.);
2. **Housing** (monastery, hut, etc.);
3. **clothing** (robes); and
4. **Medicine** (medicaments, remedies, first aid, hygienic products, etc.)

It is clear that everything the *bhikkhu* obtains must be exclusively to provide him the conditions required by his dhamma ¹ practice. It is only with this state of mind that the *bhikkhu* should use - or consume - the things at his disposal. For example, when he eats, it is only for nourishment, not for pleasure.

During the process of integration in the Samgha a new *bhikkhu* is told that

- he must henceforth go out for alms to collect his daily food,
- live under a tree,
- make his robes out of discarded cloth, and
- Drink cow's urine as medicine.

They are also told that if, on their part, the laity offers him other requisites, and he is authorized to accept them (invitations for meals, lodging, new robes, medicines...)

A *bhikkhu* must never ask for anything from anyone. If a **Daeyaka** (male devotee) invites a *bhikkhu* to ask for what he needs, he could simply report his needs, but **he should not under any circumstances request anything**. However, a sick *bhikkhu* is allowed to ask for whatever he needs to be cured.

¹ **dhamma** - M [Reality, thing]. Nature of all things. That which Buddha has taught (apart from the *vinaya*). Study of reality. Consciousness. Every moment of consciousness which does appear in the mind is a *dhamma*. Detachment and deliverance from the world.

2. The Food

Accepting and consuming food

Food collection.

If a *bhikkhu* is invited for a meal or served a meal in his monastery, he can accept it. If not, he must take his bowl and go out to do his alms round. For this, he stops in front of the houses that he finds along his way, **without entering** (unless he is invited). When stopping in front of a house, he must stand still, silent, with his gaze lowered and his attention focused on the bowl. He must do nothing else than offering the laity the opportunity to cultivate merit through the food that they offer. When someone has placed food in his bowl or after some time without anyone approaching, the *bhikkhu* continues his way towards the next house. He does this until he reckons that he has obtained enough food.

During the round, there are six places where a *bhikkhu* must avoid making a habit to go searching for food, even if he is invited: **the house of a prostitute; the house of a widow; the house of an elderly celibate woman; the house of a homosexual; a bhikkhuni² monastery; place of sale of alcoholic drinks**. Although it is inadvisable to go frequently to these places in the daily alms round, it is however allowed to pass by them occasionally. Also, it is proper to accept the food that people from these places place in his bowl as he approaches on their path (or on the road), as well as the food that they bring to the monastery.

When, what and how to accept?

There are periods during which certain types of food are forbidden, or cannot be stored. → See the pacittiya 37 and 38. Also, the food can only be accepted if certain factors are respected. → See the pacittiya 40 **A *bhikkhu* must never show his preferences with respect to food. He must not even show whether he likes or not what is served to him.** If a *dāyaka* offers to choose a dish or a menu for him, he must answer that *bhikkhus* do not choose, that they eat whatever is given to them.

The forbidden meats

The *bhikkhu* must not be fussy: he is content with what "falls into his bowl". However, he must not accept meat of an animal that has been slaughtered purposely for offering to the *saṅgha* or to him, or meat from ten animals considered at the time of the Buddha (and still today) as noble or sacred by a part of the population. To avoid offending those people, the Buddha forbid the *bhikkhus* to eat these ten

² **bhikkhunø** F Feminine of *bhikkhu* (see above). Following the strong insistence of many women, Buddha consented to found a female *saṅgha*,

kinds of meats which are: **human flesh, dog, horse, elephant, leopard, tiger, lion, bear, hyena and snake.**

The flexibilities

Concerning accepting or consuming food, there are, in special cases, certain flexibilities: in case of famine, the fruits requiring to be made authorized by a *kappiya*³ stored food, and food cooked by himself, are allowed; in case of health problems and in accordance with the needs of his medical treatment, a *bhikkhu* can ask for a particular type of food, or eat a meal at any time - of day or night. Under normal conditions, a *bhikkhu* who has not obtained any food must fast until the next day.

The frame of mind when consuming

It is important to take into account the spirit in which a product is consumed; if salt or sugar is taken for a medical reason, he can store the first for life, and the second for seven days. However, if the same salt or sugar is taken for flavoring, they cannot be consumed or stored after the solar noon on the same day of their acquisition.

The *pætimokkha*⁴ includes numerous rules regarding accepting and consuming food. See especially the *sekhiya* 27 to 56.

³ **Not to destroy plants.** If a *bhikkhu* destroys or causes someone else to destroy plants that already reached their growing stage or completed their growth, he commits a *pæcittiya*.

⁴ **sekhiya 27** To adopt a respectful attitude when going to collect food. It is advisable to go for the alms round holding the bowl properly on the arm(s), ahead of oneself, with a respectful and appreciative attitude. The food must not be accepted with an air of disgust

3. Conduct to observe when eating

As at all other times, during his meal, the *bhikkhu* must pay attention to his smallest actions and gestures. In this way, it will be easy for him to adopt the proper manners.

1. The best places must be reserved to the more senior.
2. All the members of the *saugha* must eat at the same time.
3. Those who arrive first must meditate whilst waiting for others.
4. Nobody must eat before the majorities have already arrived at the table.
5. Each *bhikkhu* must make an effort to arrive punctually.
6. The conduct at the table must be based on equanimity and moderation.
7. The dishes must not be kept close to oneself but passed around the table to allow everybody equal access.
8. Reasonable amounts of food must be served in the bowl (or plate) to avoid leaving remainders at the end of the meal.
9. Every *bhikkhu* must avoid leaving the dining room with any food.
10. The taking and chewing of each mouthful of food must be done with attention.
11. He must abstain from any conversation at the table, eat in silence and not make noise with the utensils.
12. Every *bhikkhu* must eat properly, using a spoon to serve him and wash his hands before eating, especially if he eats with his hands.
13. He must avoid spitting, coughing or sniffing. If this is unavoidable, the *bhikkhu* is required to do it discretely by turning the other way or moving away from the table.
14. A *bhikkhu* must not take away a cup, a spoon or any other utensil without a good reason. If he has to do so, he must report it as soon as possible.
15. Although not obligatory, it is very important for a *bhikkhu* to adopt the habit of going to the village (or town) to collect his food with his bowl. This daily round is fundamental for bringing together and relates the lay world and that of *bhikkhus*.

4. The offerings



With regard to food,⁵ With regard to the rest, if it is an object that can be carried (soap, robe, etc.), the same factors as for food, as well as the ensuing conditions, must be respected (substituting eating utensils by the appropriate ones).

If, an object that cannot be carried (*monastery, tree, etc.*), it is sufficient that the donor indicates the object and the beneficiary of his donation without ambiguity, for this to be acceptable. It is more appropriate to address large gifts to the *saugha* rather than to a single individual.

Remarks: A *bhikkhu* is authorized to gather discarded cloths - to make himself a robe - without it being offered⁶.

⁵ Not to eat food which has not been offered and given in hands? Except for water (unless it is bottle put on sale) and a stick of "tooth brush" (in certain areas and epochs, a kind of wooden stick was utilized as a tooth brush, by fringing out the edges), if a *bhikkhu* on purpose inserts in his mouth, any type of food or drink, without having it been correctly offered to one or several members of the *saugha*, on a layman's behalf, In the parajika 2 a thing belonging to someone, which has not been given by the owner is called: "*adinna*". In this rule also, food that has not been offered by the owner (or by a person who is in charge to do so) is called: "*adinna*".

To offer food to the *saugha* or to re-offer food already belonging to the *saugha*, five conditions must compulsorily be fulfilled so that a "correct offering" could take place...

⁶ The training of wearing discarded robes (*paṃsukulika dhuta³ga*) "I renounce new robes, I will train to wear only discarded robes. "Only robes made out of discarded cloth must be worn. It is permitted to accept a new robe, but this must not be determined; it will have to be offered to another *bhikkhu*. According to a strict version of this *dhuta³ga*, all the clothes that the *bhikkhu* uses must be from discarded cloth

The five required conditions for a correct offering:



1. The offered object must be remitted to the *bhikkhu* face to face, in hands, and the donor - if he is not a *bhikkhu* - must bow slightly.
2. The donor does perform the offering only by means of one or both hands, the *bhikkhu* receives only by means of one or both hands, and the two persons are separated from one another by a distance measuring about two and a half cubit lengths.
3. The offered object and the container holding it (bowl, plate, pot, etc.) or the thing on which it is placed (tray, table, stool, etc.) and which is to be remitted in the hands of a *bhikkhu* can be carried or lifted by a man of normal anatomical complexion.
4. The offering can be performed according to one of the three following ways:

The donor is in direct physical contact with the container of the offering that he directly hands over to the *bhikkhu*.

- The donor is in direct physical contact with the offering that he directly hands over to the *bhikkhu*: bowl, plate, ladle, tray, table (or what is contained in the offering, etc., all should be carried together or raised at the same time as the moment of the offering).
 - The donor gives or organizes a donation to the *bhikkhu*
5. The offering can be accepted according to one of the two ways:
 - a. The *bhikkhu* receives offering in direct contact with his body (hands, arms, etc.)
 - b. The *bhikkhu* receives offerings with the help of a utensil that he carries (bowl, plate, tray, etc.)

An offering can only be valid if one of these five conditions is respected. If a layman touches or serves a meal which has been offered beforehand to the sangha, the

bhikkhu can continue to serve the food as long as the layman has not considered it as his meal.

Note: As soon as it does not concern food, if an object is fixed or too heavy to be carried (tree, monastery, etc.), it can simply be offered with the help of speech. It is however preferable to offer household objects to the sangha rather than to one or even to several particular *bhikkhu*. In the case of a fruit tree offered to one or several members of the *sangha*, no *bhikkhu* will be authorized to pick up fruits, not even those which have fallen down. They should ask a [kappiya](#) kappiya ⁷ to offer them with their own hands.

⁷ kappiya / kappi M [(He who renders) appropriate, suitable.] Person who proposes to assist the *bhikkhus* in doing various tasks, especially those that he is not authorized to according to the vinaya (open up a fruit having grapes or seeds, "re-offer" some food left the day before, purchases, etc.)

It deals with a thing that is convenient (or which has become convenient), which a *bhikkhu* is supposed to accept (or consume). Given that a *bhikkhu* cannot accept money, if someone wishes offer to him some, he makes remittance of it to a *kappiya* (or someone who accepts to temporarily be his *kappiya*, during a trip for example, for purchasing travel tickets or other requisites).

5. The five improper ways to obtain gifts

1. **Lies:** by pretending qualities that one does not have.
2. **Flattery:** talking in such a way as to flatter a donor.
3. **Suggestion:** suggesting offerings through veiled allusions.
4. **Harassment:** harass a donor to extract an offering.
5. **Gain through gifts:** give presents, or render services, with the purpose of obtaining more.

A *bhikkhu* who uses an object that he has obtained incorrectly commits a [dukkaṃ](#).
dukkaṃ⁸ This object must not be used by another *bhikkhu*, otherwise he too commits a *dukkaṃ*.

⁸ dukkaṃ - T Fault due to unwholesome action.

6. Way of abandoning things

A *bhikkhu* can abandon what is offered to him, whether it is food or not, an abandoned object can no longer be used - even by another *bhikkhu* - unless it is re-offered. Attention: food that has not been abandoned **cannot be re-offered on another day**. To abandon something, two factors are necessary:

The *bhikkhu* must renounce the possession of the object by telling himself by word or thought that he abandons this object;

The object must be separate from the *bhikkhu* by a minimum distance of two cubits and one span (around 70 centimeters).

When these two factors are met (in whichever order), the object is considered to be abandoned.

7. The *dāyaka* and the *kappiya*

The *dāyaka*

A *dāyaka* is a benefactor who supports the *bhikkhu* materially. To do this, he provides, within the measure of his capabilities, for the needs of one or more *bhikkhus*. A *bhikkhu* can communicate his needs to a *dāyaka* only if the latter has expressly invited him to do so. A *dāyaka* can offer food, robes, soap, lodging or books. "

The *kappiya*

A *kappiya* is a person who offers to help the *bhikkhu* to carry out various tasks, notably, that which he is not authorized to do by the *vinaya* (open a fruit with seeds or stone, re-offer the food abandoned the night before, make payments, etc.)

As a *bhikkhu* cannot receive or handle money, if anyone wishes to offer him something but has no time to buy this, he/she can send the money needed to buy this thing to a *kappiya* (temporary or not). The *kappiya* then uses this money when paying for what was intended for the *bhikkhu*'s need(s). For example, a robe, transport tickets during a trip, medical consultation. After this, any remaining money must be returned to the donor. When the *bhikkhu* has been informed by the *kappiya* that money has been sent to him for the purchase of something, the *bhikkhu* can simply say that he needs that particular thing. Under no circumstances should he ask "Buy me this. Buy me that! "

A *kappiya* cannot be a *bhikkhu*, a *bhikkhuni*, a *samanera* or a *samaneri*, because these persons are also forbidden to handle money. A *bhikkhu* must not accept anything that has been bought by another *bhikkhu*, a *bhikkhunø*, a *semanera* or *samaneri*.

8. The Vassa

Every year, the *bhikkhu* is **obliged to reside for three months at the same place**; from the full moon of July (sometimes August) until that of October (sometimes November). In South Asia, this period corresponds to the rainy season, translated in Pali by the word **Vassa**. During the *vassa*, a *bhikkhu* cannot spend a night in another place unless he has a good reason (teaching the dhamma, visiting a sick parent, etc.) and then only for six nights in succession. At the end of these, it is enough for him to spend at least one night in the monastery where he started to observe his *vassa* so as to be able to absent himself again for a few nights. As soon as the *bhikkhu* enters the enclosure of the **Vihara** where he observes his *vassa*, even if he has spent the previous night somewhere else, he is obliged to spend the following night at this *vihāra*.

There are cases in which the *bhikkhus* are not at fault if they change their place of residence during the *vassa*. These are extreme situations in which the *bhikkhus* no longer have the possibility of satisfying their vital needs: the village is about to be deserted (burnt, flooded, attacked, and infected); dangerous animals threaten or attack the monastery; the monastery is destroyed; access to the village becomes impossible; etc.

The *bhikkhu* who, for any reason, cannot observe the *vassa* from the full moon of July (or beginning of August), has the possibility of entering in the "second *vassa*", that is, after the following full moon (August or beginning of September). He will then end his *vassa* a month after the others, but will not be at fault. However, he will not be able to benefit from the "**katthina privileges**" (see below).

Taking refuge on entering the vassa

The day of entering the *vassa*, each *bhikkhu* recites a short formula indicating that he will spend the *vassa* at the *vihāra* where he is. This then implies that the latter has chosen the place where he will reside during the whole of the three months of the *vassa*. To do this, he will say in Pali (three times in succession):

" *imasmiṃ vihāre imaṃ temāsaṃ vassaṃ upemi* "

" I will reside in this *vihāra* (monastery) during the three months of the *vassa* (rains season). "

Invitation at the conclusion of the vassa

On the last day of the *vassa*, each *bhikkhu* recites a formula, in Pali (three times in succession), which is an invitation to all the members of the *saṃgha* to make comments on the offences that he has committed:

" *saṃghaṃ bhante pavāremi, diṃhena vā sutena vā parisa³kāya vā, vadantu maṃ
āyasmanto anukampaṃ upācāya, passanto paṭīkarissāmi. " " dutiyampi... tatiyampi... "*

" Venerable, if you have seen, heard or suspected any faults whatsoever in me, I invite you to admonish me as required. " " For the second time... For the third time... "

The kathina

The period starting on the day of the full moon marking the end of the *vassa*, until the following full moon, is called the *kathina*.

The *kathina* privileges, which are five in number, are expressed by flexibilities in the *vinaya*. These are valid during the whole month of the *kathina*. The *bhikkhu* who has observed his *vassa* without breaking it can benefit from them:

1. he can be distanced - by about 1.20 meters or more - from his robes at dawn;
2. he can leave the [vihāra](#) after noon without asking for consent from another *bhikkhu*;
3. he can accept an invitation (even if addressed to more than three *bhikkhus*) for a meal that has been formulated incorrectly;
4. he is authorized to keep an additional robe - not determined - for more than ten days; the “ [kathina robe](#) ”, offered to the entire *saṃgha*, can be shared with every *bhikkhu* in the monastery (this is not always obligatory, except for those who have observed the *vassa* right until the end.

The *kathina* takes place in a great ceremony during which the *bhikkhus* of the monastery gather at the [somae](#)⁹ to proceed to the presentation of the "kathina robe". At this time, no lay person - and no samanera is allowed in the *somae*. After agreement, the *saṃgha* presents the famous *kathina* robe to the *bhikkhu* who has shown the most remarkable conduct, and who, *a fortiori*, must not have broken the observance of the *vassa*. According to tradition, this robe will have been sewn during the night by the villagers, before being offered to the *saṃgha* for the occasion. The *bhikkhu* to whom this is presented can keep it in addition to his own robe, during the whole month of the *kathina*. However, he will have to share it with the other *bhikkhus* beneficiary of the *kathina* privileges.

⁹ [somae](#) F Building of a monastery specially designed for the performance of certain duties such as the entrance into the *saṃgha* of a new *bhikkhu* or the reading of the rules of the *patimokkha*, which is done twice a month.

9. Miscellaneous

The *bhikkhus* are obliged to shave the head and, the beard. Other hairy parts are not shaved. The maximum length allowed for hair and beard is two fingers.

Outside the precinct of the monastery, the *bhikkhu* is not allowed to wear sandals (or shoes). When accepting an offering, a *bhikkhu* should never have footwear on. Footwear is a sign of wealth and comfort, which the *bhikkhus* are supposed to renounce. Besides, bare foot force them to keep the sight constantly lowered, permitting them to remain always attentive and preventing them from being distracted by the surroundings.

Outside the precinct of the monastery, the *bhikkhu* is not allowed to carry a parasol. In case of rain, umbrellas are tolerated.

The Buddha strictly forbade the *bhikkhus* to make use of astrology, numerology, palm reading, amulets, etc.

A *bhikkhu* must not water a tree (or a plant) that produces ornamental flowers or edible fruits. He must not even wash himself or shower near it, hoping to water it in this way. However, he can water a tree that provides shade or which serves as a fence.

It is not proper for a *bhikkhu* to carry messages for any person except a *bhikkhu*, a samanera someone who offers food to the *sangha*, his mother, his father or those persons who carry out various tasks on behalf of the samgha (sweeping, table service etc.)

If a *bhikkhu* needs to acquire something and there is no dayaka in the immediate vicinity, he is authorized to do a round in the afternoon, stopping in silence in front of the houses (as during the food round in the morning). He can communicate his needs only if anyone asks him, if not, he continues his way and stands in front of another house.

A *bhikkhu* must avoid all forms of distraction and any futile action or word. He must watch his speech, avoiding vulgarities. In addressing anyone, he must be polite and measured in every single word. He must be vigilant to keep always a proper distance from lay people; he must not shake their hand or treat them informally. When a *bhikkhu* goes to the toilet, he is obliged to be restrained and silent. In anything he does, his conduct must be blameless.