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THE SCOPE AND LIMIT OF PUNISHMENTS IN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

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The Buddha's main purpose was to show the path to all human beings to get rid of suffering and attain *Nibbāna*. For forty-five years he preached the *Dhamma* out of compassion, and many people entered the *Sangha* community in order to practice and attain *Arahant*-ship. There were no *Vinaya* rules at the beginning of the *Sangha* community, and consequently, there was no system of punishments available. However, this situation was gradually changed. The *Vinaya* rules had to be enforced and the violators had to be punished. Although we know that the Buddha promulgated *Vinaya* rules and punishments to discipline his monastic disciples (*Bhikkhu*-s and *Bhikkhuni*-s), he never promulgated disciplinary rules or punishments for laypeople. Therefore, we have to discuss the scope and limit of punishments within the monastic system. Once, the punishment was approved for *Bhikkhu Channa* (*Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta*, *Dīghanikāya*). The *Kesisutta* (*Aṅguttaranikāya*) clearly mentions how the Buddha treated those who did not follow the *Dhamma* properly. The purpose of using punishments in Buddhism was to regulate the ill behaviours of the wrong-doers. As we all know the Buddha was known as the “incomparable trainer of men to be disciplined (*anuttara purisadammasārathi*)” and it is very interesting to examine how the Buddha disciplined his followers. The most serious punishment in the Buddhist community is the loss of the higher ordination in the *Buddhasāsana*. The Buddha said to *Kesi*, “*Kesi*, finally you killed the horses who cannot be trained, but I will not kill the *Bhikkhu*-s who cannot be disciplined, I let them leave the order” (*Kesisutta-Aṅguttaranikāya*). In addition to the monastic discipline to which punishment is directly relevant, we can study the general attitude of Buddhism towards physical punishment and capital punishment found in the legal system in general. The objective of this paper is to discuss the Buddhist stance on punishment with reference to the following issues: what is the primary intention of using punishment?; whether Buddhism has justified punishment; if it has been justified, in what circumstances?; and whether there is an ethical basis for the use of punishment.

Keywords: Punishment, *Sangha* community, *Dhamma*, *Vinaya*, *Vinaya* rules, Violation of rules