

CONFLICTS WITHIN & CONFLICTS WITHOUT 2

Normally, precepts are dealt with in the order of 1 to 5. We would like to go in the reverse order from the 5th to the 1st. The Theravada tradition states the fifth precept as : **I undertake the training rule to abstain from drinks and drugs that leads to heedlessness.**

According to the Mahayana tradition it is : **‘As the Buddha refrained from alcohol till the end of his life, I, too, will refrain from alcohol till the end of my life.’**

The word ‘majjapama’ is used in the Theravada tradition to mean heedlessness as a result of ingesting oneself with intoxicating drinks or drugs,

Taking intoxicants has become a way of life, today. Intoxicants are consumed in excessive quantities at social gatherings. Some are so addicted to them so much that they cannot take a meal without consuming alcohol. Some have ruined their health by becoming habitual drinkers. Often we hear of very young people being addicted to drinks. Many females do not heed the advice of even medical professional that alcohol affects their pregnancies. The consumption of alcohol is encouraged wherever aggressive behavior is expected of the individual. Consumption of alcohol is encouraged in armed forces all over the world.

The use of other drugs is a more regrettable story. Anything and everything that would bring on a ‘HIGH’ is consumed. You often hear of ‘overdosing’ and the subjects sent to ‘rehabilitation centers.’ The drug addicts are looked after and the supply sources are hunted down! Individuals committing crimes under the influence of drugs are not held responsible for their actions. Alcohol is widely advertised, encouraged as an industry that brings in employment to many and sometimes, even, subsidized. Ailments resulting from the consumption of intoxicants are considered on par with any other.

There is a drug ‘culture’ in the entertainment industry. We often here of people in the highest positions who are addicts. One cannot fail to take note of the stories of violence in banner headlines in the morning paper. One often wonders whether the daily papers are good reading material for growing children. They often look up to outstanding personalities in society as their role models. Many are the ‘role models’ who end up on drugs and violence

Any individual engaged in an act of violence is not in full control of his/ her mental faculties. It is true that a certain amount of such acts of violence is committed without the use of intoxicants. Fathers and mothers kill their own children. Children kill their parents. Brothers and sisters kill their own siblings. Friends kill friends. The percentage of crimes committed without the use of intoxicants is less than those committed subsequent to the use of intoxicants.

Performance enhancing drugs have to be considered in the same category as other drugs. Although violent acts may not be committed under the influence of performance enhancing drugs, those who consume them over-exert themselves often leading to their own death. In any case, such drugs help to place them at an unfair advantage over others who are free of such drugs.

One could be wondering why this discussion began with the examining of the fifth precept. The reason is quite understandable. If one were to ingest oneself with any kind of intoxicant that would lead to heedlessness, one would consciously or unconsciously, be prone to violating other fundamental precepts. It is hoped that the propensity of a heedless person to violate other precepts is to be discussed at greater length as we carry on this examination. Only an indication of a possible process is outlined here.

The least that an intoxicated person could do is to cover up his/her condition with a string of falsehoods. It is to enhance sensual experiences that a person resorts to intoxicants.

Acts of incest have been most often reported to suggest that the perpetrator to have been under the influence of drugs. The third precept covers all unwholesome pleasures of sensual contacts and activities. The precept covers many more situations than sexual misconduct. An intoxicated person will be prone to take what is not voluntarily given In order to satisfy his/ her cravings. As a last resort, such a person may take the life of another being to get at what he/she desires. One thing leads to another.

A person who violates the fifth precept is liable to violate any or all other precept.

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To be continued. .