

A person under the age of 20 cannot be ordained as a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni but can be ordained as aśrāmaṇera or śrāmaṇērī.

# Contents

## External links

## Definition

In the *Dhammapada* commentary of *Buddhaghosa*, a bhikkhu is defined as "the person who sees danger (in samsara or cycle of rebirth)" (Pāli: *Bhayaṃ ikkhatīti: bhikkhu*). He therefore seeks ordination to obtain release from it.<sup>[5]</sup> The *Dhammapada* states:<sup>[6]</sup>

Bhikkhu	
	
Buddhist monks in Thailand	
Chinese name	
Chinese	比丘
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	bǐqiū
Wade–Giles	PI <sup>3</sup> -ch'iu <sup>1</sup>
Native Chinese name	
Chinese	和尚
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	héshàng
Wade–Giles	he <sup>2</sup> -shang <sup>4</sup>
Burmese name	
Burmese	ဝိက္ခူ
Tibetan name	
Tibetan	དགེ་སྤྱོད་
Transcriptions	
Wylie	dge slong
THL	gelong
Vietnamese name	
Vietnamese alphabet	<i>Tĩ-khâu</i>
Thai name	
Thai	ภิกขุ
RTGS	<i>phiksu</i>
Japanese name	
Kanji	僧、比丘
Transcriptions	

[266-267] He is not a monk just because he lives on others' alms. Not by adopting outward form does one become a true monk. Whoever here (in the Dispensation) lives a holy life, transcending both merit and demerit, and walks with understanding in this world — he is truly called a monk.

For historical reasons, the full ordination of women has been unavailable to Theravada and Vajrayana practitioners, although recently the full ordination for women has been reintroduced to many areas.

## Historical terms in Western literature

In English literature before the mid-20th century, Buddhist monks were often referred to by the term *bonze*, particularly when describing monks from East Asia and French Indochina. This term is derived Portuguese and French from Japanese *bonsō*, meaning 'priest, monk'. It is rare in modern literature.<sup>[7]</sup>

Buddhist monks were once called *talapoy* or *talapoin* from French *talapoin*, itself from Portuguese *talapão*, ultimately from Mon *tala pōi*, meaning 'our lord'.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

The Talapoys cannot be engaged in any of the temporal concerns of life; they must not trade or do any kind of manual labour, for the sake of a reward; they are not allowed to *insult* the earth by digging it. Having no tie, which unites their interests with those of the people, they are ready, at all times, with spiritual arms, to enforce obedience to the will of the sovereign.

— Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the eastern courts of Cochin-China, Siam, and Muscat*<sup>[10]</sup>

The talapoin is a monkey named after Buddhist monks just as the capuchin monkey is named after the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (who also are the origin of the word cappuccino).

## Ordination

### Theravada

Theravada monasticism is organized around the guidelines found within a division of the Pāli Canon called the *Vinaya Pitaka*. Laypeople undergo ordination as a novitiate (*śrāmaṇera* or *sāmanera*) in a rite known as the "going forth" (Pali: *pabbajja*). *Sāmaneras* are subject to the Ten Precepts. From there full ordination (Pali: *upasampada*) may take place. *Bhikkhus* are subject to a much longer set of rules known, the Pātimokkha (Theravada) or Prātimokṣa (Mahayana and Vajrayana).

### Mahayana

In the Mahayana monasticism is part of the system of "vows of individual liberation".<sup>[5]</sup> These vows are taken by monks and nuns from the ordinary sangha, in order to develop personal ethical discipline.<sup>[5]</sup> In Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, the term "sangha" is, in principle, often understood to refer particularly to the *aryasangha* (Tib. *mchog kyi tshogs*), the "community of the noble ones

Romanization	Sō, biku
Tamil name	
Tamil	துறவி <i>tuṛavi</i>
Sanskrit name	
Sanskrit	भिक्षु
Pāli name	
Pāli	<i>Bhikkhu</i>
Khmer name	
Khmer	ភិក្ខុ
Nepali name	
Nepali	भिक्षु
Sinhalese name	
Sinhalese	භික්ෂුව
Tagalog name	
Tagalog	භික්ෂුව <i>bhikṣuvu</i>



A bonze farmer

who have reached the first bhūmi". These, however, need not be monks and nuns.

The vows of individual liberation are taken in four steps. A lay person may take the five Upāsaka and Upāsikā vows (Tibetan *dge snyan*, *dge snyan ma* "approaching virtue"). The next step is to enter the pabbajja or monastic way of life (Srt: *pravrajya*, Tib. *rab byung* pronounced *rabjung*), which includes wearing monk's or nun's robes. After that, one can become a samanera or samaneri "novice" (Skt. *śrāmaṇera*, *śrāmaṇeri*, Tib. *dge tshul*, *dge tshul ma*). The last and final step is to take all the vows of a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni "fully ordained monastic" (Sanskrit: *bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, Tib. *dge long*, *dge long ma*).

Monastics take their vows for life but can renounce them and return to non-monastic life<sup>[11]</sup> and even take the vows again later.<sup>[11]</sup> A person can take them up to three times or seven times in one life, depending on the particular practices of each school of discipline; after that, the sangha should not accept them again.<sup>[12]</sup> In this way, Buddhism keeps the vows "clean". It is possible to keep them or to leave this lifestyle, but it is considered extremely negative to break these vows.

In Tibet, the upāsaka, pravrajya and bhikṣu ordinations are usually taken at ages six, fourteen and twenty-one or older respectively.

## Robes

The special dress of ordained people, referred to in English as robes, comes from the idea of wearing a simple durable form of protection for the body from weather and climate. In each tradition there is uniformity in the colour and style of dress. Colour is often chosen due to the wider availability of certain pigments in a given geographical region. In Tibet and the Himalayan regions (Kashmir, Nepal and Bhutan) red is the preferred pigment used in the dying of robes. In Burma, reddish brown; In India, Sri Lanka and South-East Asia various shades of yellow, ochre and orange prevail. In China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam grey or black is common. Monks often make their own robes from cloth that is donated to them.<sup>[1]</sup>

The robes of Tibetan novices and monks differ in various aspects, especially in the application of "holes" in the dress of monks. Some monks tear their robes into pieces and then mend these pieces together again. Upasakas cannot wear the "chö-gö", a yellow tissue worn during teachings by both novices and full monks.

In observance of the Kathina Puja, a special Kathina robe is made in 24 hours from donations by lay supporters of a temple. The robe is donated to the temple or monastery, and the resident monks then select from their own number a single monk to receive this special robe.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Additional vows in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions

In Mahayana traditions, a Bhikṣu may take additional vows not related to ordination, including the Bodhisattva vows, samaya vows, and others, which are also open to laypersons in most instances.

## Japan and Korea

---



Tibetan monks engaging in a traditional monastic debate.



A Cambodian monk in his robes



Two monks in reddish yellow robes

Saichō petitioned for a Mahayana ordination platform to be built in Japan. Permission was granted seven days after his death.<sup>[14]</sup> and the platform was completed in 827 by his disciple, Gishin.<sup>[14]</sup>

Saichō believed the 250 precepts were for the Śrāvakayāna and that ordination should use the Mahayana precepts of the *Brahmajala Sutra*. He stipulated that monastics remain on Mount Hiei for twelve years of isolated training and follow the major themes of the 250 precepts: celibacy, non-harming, no intoxicants, vegetarian eating and reducing labor for gain. After twelve years, monastics would then use the Vinaya precepts as a provisional, or supplemental, guideline to conduct themselves by when serving in non-monastic communities.<sup>[14]</sup> Tendai monastics followed this practice.

During Japan's Meiji Restoration during the 1870s, the government abolished celibacy and vegetarianism for Buddhist monastics in an effort to secularise them and promote the newly created State Shinto.<sup>[15][16]</sup> Japanese Buddhists won the right to proselytize inside cities, ending a five-hundred year ban on clergy members entering cities.<sup>[17]</sup>

Currently, priests (lay religious leaders) in Japan choose to observe vows as appropriate to their family situation. Celibacy and other forms of abstaining are generally "at will" for varying periods of time.

After the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910, when Japan annexed Korea, Korean Buddhism underwent many changes. Jōdo Shinshū and Nichiren schools began sending missionaries to Korea under Japanese rule, and new sects formed there such as Won Buddhism. The Temple Ordinance of 1911 (Hangul: 사찰령; Hanja: 寺刹令) changed the traditional system whereby temples were run as a collective enterprise by the Sangha, replacing this system with Japanese-style management practices in which temple abbots appointed by the Governor-General of Korea were given private ownership of temple property and given the rights of inheritance to such property.<sup>[18]</sup> More importantly, monks from pro-Japanese factions began to adopt Japanese practices, by marrying and having children.<sup>[18]</sup>

In Korea, the practice of celibacy varies. The two sects of Korean Seon divided in 1970 over this issue; the Jogye Order is fully celibate while the Taego Order has both celibate monastics and non-celibate Japanese-style priests.

## Gallery

---



Young Indian Buddhist monk in India.



A Theravada Buddhist monk in Laos



A Buddhist monk in China



A Buddhist monk in Taiwan



A Buddhist monk in the U.S. (Chinese Buddhism)



A Buddhist monk in Tibet





Monks in Luang Prabang



Monks in Thailand

## See also

---

- Anagarika
- Bhikkhuni
- Unsui

## References

---

1. Lay Guide to the Monks' Rules(<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/layguide.htm>)
2. Buswell, Robert E., ed. (2004).*Encyclopedia of Buddhism (Monasticism)* Macmillan Reference USA. p. 556. ISBN 0-02-865718-7.
3. What is a bhikkhu?(<http://en.dhammadana.org/sangha/monks.htm>)
4. *Buddhist Dictionary Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*by Nyanatiloka Mahathera.
5. Resources: Monastic Vows ([http://www.palyul.org/eng\\_about\\_monasticvows.htm](http://www.palyul.org/eng_about_monasticvows.htm))
6. Buddhārakkhita, Acharya. "Dhammapada XIX — Dhammatthavagga: The Just"(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.19.budd.html>) Access To Insight Retrieved 18 December 2012.
7. Dictionary.com: bonze (<http://dictionaryreference.com/search?q=bonze>)
8. "talapoin" (<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/talapoin>). *Collins Concise English Dictionary* © HarperCollins Publishers. WordReference.com. June 23, 2013 Retrieved June 23, 2013. "Etymology: 16th Century: from French, literally: Buddhist monk, from Portuguese talapão, from Mon tala pōi our lord "...
9. Roberts 1837, p. 237.
10. Roberts 237.
11. how to become a monk?(<http://en.dhammadana.org/sangha/monks/become.htm>)
12. 05-05 《律制生活》 p. 0064 (<http://ddc.shengyen.org/cgi-bin/ccdd/showpy?s=05-05p0064>)
13. Buddhist Ceremonies and Rituals of Sri Lanka(<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/kariyawasam/wheel402.html#ch6>), A.G.S. Kariyawasam
14. Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism, Soka Gakkai, 'Dengyo'
15. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/history\\_1.shtml#section\\_4](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/history_1.shtml#section_4)
16. [http://www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon\\_patl.html](http://www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon_patl.html)
17. Clark, Donald N. (2000).*Culture and customs of Korea* Greenwood Publishing Group. ISBN 978-0-313-30456-9
18. Sorensen, Henrik Hjort (1992). Ole Bruun; Arne Kalland; Henrik Hjort Sorensen, ed.*Asian perceptions of nature* Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. ISBN 978-87-87062-12-1

## Sources

- Roberts, Edmund (1837). Embassy to the eastern courts of Cochin-China, Siam, and Muscat: in the U. S. sloop-of-war Peacock ... during the years 1832-3-4Harper & brothers.

## Further reading

---

- Inwood, Kristiaan.*Bhikkhu, Disciple of the Buddha* Bangkok, Thailand: Thai Watana Panich, 1981. Revised edition. Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2005.ISBN 978-974-524-059-9

## External links

---

- The Buddhist Monk's Discipline Some Points Explained for Laypeople
  - Thirty Years as a Western Buddhist Monk
- 

Retrieved from '<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bhikkhu&oldid=833457815>'

---

**This page was last edited on 31 March 2018, at 17:47.**

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.