The Third Precept

Sexual misconduct
with a multi-life view

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Preface

This article explains the third precept as it is described in the Original Texts and interpreted in the East where the texts came from. It should be known that the precept comes from an Asian culture. When the precepts were first imported into the West, the third precept was edited, and some things were left out to the point where it is almost a different rule altogether. You will most likely not be happy with this article. Instead of being immediately critical of what will follow, you should perhaps question what you have been told all along.

I personally did not believe the information you are about to read until a Myanmar monastic friend told me this after I was a monk for 6 years. He said, "It is true. Ask the Laotian-American who is coming to visit us today." I asked, and he also agreed with my friend. Later, when I had the chance, I asked Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw about this, but he also confirmed what my friend told me. Sri Lankans will say the same.

The 5 precepts are some of the most basic points of the Buddhist teachings. How much have you been told about the third precept? Probably not a whole lot. Monks do not want to talk about sex, and lay teachers either do not know the third precept or they are afraid to take an unpopular stance. It seems as if those who have brought the teachings to the West may have felt they needed to "adapt" the teachings to create a new flavor of "Western Buddhism," just like we have a "flavor" of Tibetan Buddhism or Chinese Buddhism, etc., which can sharply contrast and contradict the oldest known sources written in *Pāli*. In the end, such adaptations can lead one astray since the teachings are a Direct Path to Liberation.

This article not only covers the rule as it was originally worded by the Buddha but also attempts to cover why one should follow the rule—perhaps to its fullest extreme. In Buddhism, rules are made only because of *kamma* and for the purpose of Liberation.

There is no other reason, and they are universal in nature. There is no such thing as "Modern Buddhism." *Dhammas* exist in the past, present, and future. They are natural universal laws, like gravity. The laws of nature do not change with time. For this reason, I have heavily emphasized a multi-life view on this issue as it relates to *kamma* and its effects. I also emphasize going beyond the rule to further extremes: celibacy and directing oneself toward *Nibbāna*. Unfortunately, most people are not prepared to go that far. So, the information is below. After that, you have been "informed," and my work is finished.

Summary

Normally, you will hear "sexual misconduct" refers only to rape, adultery, incest, blackmail, or extortion for sex. This also includes underage sex and any type of non-consensual sex or having sex with one who does not have the ability to consent according to modern law definitions. Some of the better teachers say that one should be in a loving, committed relationship and avoid promiscuity.

The real rule that is not being passed down in English is: You need the woman's consent *and the protector's consent* (parent or guardian) to engage in sexual activities (including oral sex) at any age. If not, you are breaking the third precept of sexual misconduct, even if you are married in some cases. Government law also comes into effect as a "protector" and the definition of consent or ability to consent. The consequences outside or, in addition to the law, are *kamma*.

In modern society and social norms, there is not so much of a problem if only one life is to be lived, hence the hedonistic phrase, "you only live once." However, Buddhism, which encompasses a multi-life *kamma* approach, will explain why it is important to follow this rule. In short, we will not always have modern ameni-

ties, modern social norms, internet, communication, free and stable governments, and most importantly, birth control. Eventually, this modern age will all end, but the habit will continue and then the real trouble will begin.

Among the many times you have come across this precept, you probably have never considered the original rule and its purpose outside of the high violations usually mentioned. Based on the original wordings, if you are unwed and sexually active, the chances are that the precept is being broken. Please pay specific attention with an open mind to the multi-life *kamma* viewpoint given. You are probably not going to like what you read. However, consider its validity and authenticity when you apply morals to your daily actions and activities that give results in future lives. The pinnacle of wrong view is when people fail to consider the big picture of Saṃsāra. So please pay attention carefully if you are a *real Buddhist*.

The rule in the Buddha's words

The Three Baskets (*Tipitaka*) of the Buddha's teachings work like an intertwined system. Each basket, *Vinaya* (Discipline), *Sutta* (Teachings of *Dhamma*), and *Abhidhamma* (Ultimate Realities or Higher *Dhammas*) all can reference and cross-reference each other. That is why one should be skilled in all three baskets as taught by a qualified teacher before one makes judgments about the validity of one of them. Habitual *kamma* and its possible effects in future lives are taken indirectly from the *Abhidhamma* and the Commentaries. The *Sutta* and *Vinaya* baskets will be referenced for this article below.

The definition of the rule can be taken from the *Saleyakka Sutta* (MN 41).

Aj. Thanissaro, MN 41

> "He engages in sensual misconduct. He gets sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man."

Bh. Nyanamoli, MN 41

> "He is given over to misconduct in sexual desires: he has intercourse with such (women) as are protected by the mother, father, (mother and father), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also with those that are garlanded in token of betrothal."

The same thing is listed in the *Anguttara Nikaya*.

Definition of sex

This is actually defined in the *Vinaya Pitaka* or the Discipline Basket under *Pārājika* 1, the first training rule ever made by the Buddha. I will be brief here and summarize what is said. There are the male and female genitals, anus, and mouth. A matrix of all of these is given and mouth-to-mouth combinations are excluded. Every other combination is considered sex.

In Brief: Oral, vaginal, and anal sex count as sex, among other things. Anything not listed in the matrix is not considered sex for this rule. However, any involvement with someone who is "taken" will be a very bad idea. It is like killing an animal versus injuring an animal. You do not want to do either act, though one is worse than the other.

What most have heard

Just about all teachers of all Buddhist traditions in the West teach that sexual misconduct refers to the extreme violations of the rule such as: rape, extortion, adultery, or causing adultery. The local laws also play a role in terms of consent and ability to give consent. Some teachers speak about avoiding promiscuous behavior and that one should be in a committed and loving relationship before they have sex as part of the rule. However, most teachers just say "sexual misconduct" and let you decide what it means. Does this sound familiar?

Of course it does, and most people consider this a no-brainer rule and feel good about the rule because they believe they are following it correctly. This would be good if you were actually following the rule because, most often, one is not.

These teachers are not lying to you. It is all somewhat true what they are saying because consent and ability of the woman to give consent are a factor. They are just leaving out an important part of the rule, like a "protector." Because of this, chances are high that you are breaking the third precept if you have not been given a formal wedding ceremony with the daughter's parents' consent. Usually, if they give consent, they are present for the wedding. Because of this, it is very possible to be married and have consensual sex and still break the third precept by eloping. This is probably new information for you. Do not worry. Almost everybody in the West does not know, and because this is likely to be the first time you hear this, you will question and object to what is said. No real Buddhist wants to be a breaker of the basic five precepts.

The "protector" is an Asian term from Asian texts. The term is still in use today without ambiguity. One is protected for as long as she is alive or formally given away in marriage.[1] Please recall that the father "gives away the bride" in a wedding. This is also how it is in Asia. A *protector* is a foreign term for Westerners, and it should

be clear that a protectee does not expire. Although the word is from Asia, its meaning is universal, like all *Dhamma*.

Age does not matter?

The special thing about parenthood is that you think you are rid of it after age 18 or college. It is a secret that your parents may want you to believe so you can become self-sufficient. If you are a parent of an adult, then you know this secret, that it's a myth. When trouble falls on your daughter, you will most likely take her in and help her out, especially if she is carrying your grandchild. If you are not a parent, ask around to those who are.

The rule is simple. You need the consent of the woman and the consent of the parents or, what the suttas call, a "protector." This would mean "parent or guardian." A brother, sister, or relative could also be a protector if the parents are no longer living. *That is why the original source has a list of 20 possible protectors.* The government and, therefore, laws are also a protector. The same for those who are in a religious order (i.e. a nun is protected). Since the word *guardian* is similar in meaning to the word *protector*, this word will be used often to cover many cases of a "protector" in this article. It does not matter how old or independent the woman is because fortunes and independence can be lost overnight. If you were to elope, you would be breaking this precept because you did not get the guardian's permission.

This is somewhat of a universal precept, too. Not long ago, the groom-to-be would ask the parents for the hand of their daughter. Even today, no matter how old she is, the father "gives away the bride" in most wedding ceremonies. The parents of the bride are usually the ones who hold the wedding. In Sri Lanka, a Buddhist country, the parents offer a dowry to the groom for marrying their daughter. In Thailand, another Buddhist country, one needs to pay the parents of the daughter.

In the West, *parental consent was once a tradition, too.* How else would we have the sad story of *Romeo and Juliet*? If there was no tradition of parental consent, the story would not exist, or they would have *lived happily ever after*. We will discuss the "Happily ever after" cliché later in this article. Another example: My brother-in-law actually asked my parents if he could marry my sister before he popped the question to her. I remember my mother telling me, "He did not have to, but it was really cool of him to do so." So, even though it is no longer a common practice in the West, the tradition still lingers by a thread as "customary" or "traditional." The fact that it existed in the West, shows that it is a universal *Dhamma* and once held a moral position in Western morality in place. However, whether or not the tradition still exists does not matter, and it will be explained in the section of habitual *kamma*.

One Venerable Sayadaw from Pa-Auk Forest Monastery agrees with this advice, and he was a little surprised about sexual practices in the West until I told him. For instance, I told him that if one were to switch sexual partners every 2 years, then this would be considered a "responsible" sexual practice. In the course of 20 sexually active years, 10 sexual partners would be common if marriage never occurred. He was surprised, and that was only speaking about the "responsible" sexual practices according to Western beliefs *on the basis that every relationship was responsible and lasted 2 years.* Many don't.

In contrast, in Myanmar, one of my local friends, a son of a monastic friend of mine told me, "Bhante, I must confess to you that I eloped with my wife." It was very likely that he was a virgin before marriage and waited until he was married before sex. Even after 8 years of being married and winning over the father's acceptance, he was still remorseful. His eloped wife was from a Muslim family. The Muslim father finally came to like the son-in-law, but only after grandchildren were appearing. Both the father and son-in-law are lucky that things worked out in the end. Did you know

that there are stories from the *Dhammapada* about revenge taking place in future lives based on what happened in past lives? (see *Buddhist Legends*, Burlingame, archive.org)

The law says 18 is OK?

The law and the *Dhamma* sometimes agree and sometimes they do not agree. As morality among the people deteriorates, so will the laws for its citizens made by those very same people.

Some things are legal in the United States but are not proper in Buddhist morality. For instance, abortion is legal but not proper Buddhist morality. Lawmakers want euthanasia to become legal, and already some countries allow it, but it is not proper in Buddhist morality. You can also legally kill animals for food or sport under certain conditions, and it can be your legal livelihood as well. Lastly, you can legally perform cruel LD50 experiments on rats and some regulators require this, too. All of this type of violence, killing, and cruelty is legal yet against Buddhist morality. So what is morally acceptable by law and society may not always be acceptable in *Dhamma*.

Lastly, there may be ways where one keeps a precept, keeps the law, but it still leads one downwards. For instance, it is allowable in the third precept to go to a licensed, government-recognized brothel and hire a prostitute because the madams or pimps are considered the protectors and you have their permission if you pay. However, we know this is wrong and the *Dhamma* says this is wrong in a very famous *paritta* called the *Parābhava Sutta*[2] (SN 1.6)

> "...he is seen with prostitutes...that is the cause for his downfall."

Some countries which have a reputation for being moral and civil, like England, still have laws in place to prevent eloping to some degree. It should be noted that it is still illegal to elope immediately for the purpose of giving the parents a chance to stop the wedding.

> In England, a legal prerequisite of marriage is the "reading of the banns" — for the three Sundays prior to the intended date of the ceremony, the names of every couple intending marriage has to be read aloud by the priest(s) of their parish(es) of residence, or the posting of a 'Notice of Intent to Marry' in the registry office for Civil ceremonies. The intention of this is to prevent bigamy or other unlawful marriages by giving fair warning to anybody who might have a legal right to object. In practice, however, it also gives warning to the couples' parents, *who sometimes objected on purely personal grounds*. To contravene this law, it is necessary to get a special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury — or to flee somewhere where the law did not apply, across the border to Gretna Green, Scotland, for instance.
>
> Wikipedia, "Elope"

How to follow the precept in the modern world

First, one should consider that the "free sex movement" and "Women's Equality Movement" are fairly new if you account for the history of humans. The revolution was caused by the popularization of oral contraception in the 1960s. In this way, women have taken control of their sexual destiny without the worry of kids or, even worse, abortion. However, the pill can cause a post-egg-fertilization abortion. Abortion has been around since the time of the Buddha. It is not new, and it is certainly considered killing under Buddhist philosophy.[3]

Birth control is not a problem in Buddhism unless it is possible to destroy the fertilized egg, like "the morning after pill," IUD, oral contraception, injectables, patches, or any other form that works *after fertilization*.[4] Oral contraception and other modern birth control methods, which are new in human history, helped women escape from being "barefoot and pregnant" as a result of sex. Equality of gender has developed as a direct result of birth control. If sex happens without a protector's consent, the guardians will be

burdened for support if pregnancy occurs. Not getting pregnant is a freedom for women. Melinda Gates of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has made injectable contraception availability one of the organization's main priorities for women.

So, sexual *kamma* is fairly strong. If one engages in sexual behavior and both of the parties are fertile (and most are), a baby will result. The problem of such behavior takes place in many forms. First and foremost, we shall take a look using a multi-life *kamma* view. Second, we will look at the guardian's mind. You do not know what the parent will be thinking. Will they really mind?

Habitual *kamma* and multi-life effects

Happily ever after?

If you are not willing to get married and you are taking on multiple partners in your adult life, you will develop a habit: a habitual *kamma* will result. There are two types of *kamma* that are very powerful, heavy *kamma* and habitual *kamma*. Heavy *kamma* may be something like killing with first degree murder or donating an extremely large donation. Usually, it is a once in a lifetime type of donation, like a monastery, large dwelling place, or a multi-billion-dollar world foundation. If the act of taking life can be considered heavy *kamma*, then what could be said about the act that causes the giving of life? It has been said that:

> "Even if one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other, for a lifespan of 100 years...while doing...one still would not have done enough for one's parents, nor would one have repaid them."
>
> AN 2.4.2, translation by Ven. Bodhi

The other type of very powerful *kamma* is habitual *kamma* (*accinna kamma*). (Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw was named after Pa-Auk

Village when he was appointed as the abbot by the previous Pa-Auk Sayadaw before he died. His real *bhikkhu* name is Sayadaw U Accinna. He lives up to his name and is an example of habitual *kamma*. Meet him one day and you will know.) The habits you develop today will be likely to continue in future lives. Just like neural pathways in the brain become stronger with repeated practice and habit, the same thing happens on a *kamma* level. In Buddhism, monks have standard *Pāli* phrases that are memorized. In one of these stanzas, we say *kamma* is the only thing you will inherit from life to life.

> "It is actions that I own, it is actions that I am heir to, it is actions that I am born from, actions are my kinsfolk, actions are my refuge...whatever actions I perform, whether good or bad, to that I will be the heir"
>
> A.10:48

As a Westerner, you are probably interested in Buddhism because you have practiced Buddhism in your past life. This is habitual *kamma*. So, develop good habits and be happy with the good ones you already have!

The Eightfold Noble Path: right livelihood versus right action

Did you ever wonder why we have both right action and right livelihood within the Eightfold Noble Path? Since they both fall under the category of right action, it might seem redundant. However, right livelihood covers direct and indirect means for breaking the five precepts as a full career to be repeated again and again. For instance, the selling of weapons or poisons is wrong livelihood because it will result in the breaking of the first precept of killing. The same goes with rearing animals for the sale of flesh/meat even though one may not do the actual killing. There are five

forms listed, but it can logically be expanded to anything directly or indirectly related to breaking the five precepts. The main reason we have right livelihood *on top of right action* is to emphasize the massive scale of *kamma* and habitual *kamma* effect that comes from one's livelihood. If one goes on a fishing trip a few times a year, this is bad and considered wrong action. However, what is the scale if one is a fisherman or owns a commercial fishing vessel? I think you can see the magnitude in that case. So one's own sexual practices are commonly a routine like one's livelihood, and it is no trivial matter. That is why we have a third precept and right livelihood.

How long will the renaissance last?

One of the big problems with modern society is that we believe we will always have the modern amenities we have today: open communication lines, phones, internet, free government and press. You should consider if birth control and the liberal sexual attitudes born in the 1960s will always exist in the future. What will your habit be *when* the future takes a U-turn? How many years before all of this "stuff" disappears? How many lives will it take? Consider one life to be 100 years for easy calculation. Do you think that in 100 years we will have all of this "stuff?" What about two or three hundred years? Most people think it will be less than that. Albert Einstein said,

> "I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."
>
> — Albert Einstein

If not war, what about climate change, asteroids, and the race for energy?

Please consider carefully what life will be like in the future. You might think the rule as stated is "outdated" for "modern

Westerners," but you should consider that only in the past 50 years out of 13,000 years has this open sexual practice started to grow. Fifty years plus how many more will this continue before our U-turn? Let us consider a mere two hundred years of a possible "open sex" culture out of thousands of years in the past and a few more thousand after we take a U-turn. Where will your habitual *kamma* be? One should learn about human civilization and how new our current life is and consider the future. I recommend the Aventis- and Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* by Jared Diamond.

Homosexuality

Today's renaissance-age for acceptance in the West of homosexual practices would also fall under the same conditions. In other words, you really would not want to be homosexual two or three hundred years ago. It would be extremely terrible to be born as a homosexual in such a time. The same conditions may happen when the social norms, technology, and communication of the future take a U-turn.

If you are a self-actualized, out of the closet, and sexually active homosexual, the chances are that you will be homosexual in a future life if you are born human again. *Human rights are wonderful and should be supported and included for all humans and all species.* However, how long will human rights last? What habits will be in full force after human rights are gone? While homosexuality is rarely a choice and one is born with such a condition, one can choose to reinforce this condition for future lives or let its momentum lapse. There are no wrong or right actions. There are simply actions that lead to future results. There are habitual actions that lead to future-life tendencies.

Soulmates

Even in today's time, the habit can come from the past. Many people who are "in love" speak of "soulmates." If you have had only one lover in a past life, *maybe* you will only have one soulmate in this life. If someone is considered "responsible" for having one sexual partner for every 2 years, after 20 years, 10 potential soulmates will be created. This can be a big problem in a future life when you make a family commitment with one woman as your soulmate and then *another soulmate* comes along later. You have a fling or switch to the new one, and then another one comes along. "How many can there be?" you might ask.

One of my brother's old high-school friends and academic competitor, who was one of the smartest kids in his class, committed suicide later on in life. He was married, and he got a mistress pregnant... twice. He couldn't take the stress anymore and killed himself in a not-so-pleasant way.

So the advice of being in a committed and married relationship with the guardian's consent is wise for as long as you are choosing to wander in Saṃsāra. It is wiser to rid yourself of all that and join the Theravadan monastic order that follows 100% of the monastic rules, so *you can focus on leaving Saṃsāra*. If you fail, you will still have habitual *kamma* as velocity leading you toward *Nibbāna*.

Is a multi-life view required to be Buddhist?

In order to be a *real Buddhist*, you must have a multi-life view and believe in *kamma* and its effects in Saṃsāra. It is like a Christian who does not believe in Jesus but celebrates Christmas and checks off "Christian" on the census form. There is no such thing as secular Buddhism. It is true that you can call yourself a Buddhist, and there is much benefit to partial beliefs. However, you are not a *real Buddhist* until you adopt this multi-life view (among other things,

too).

If you cannot do the real commitment and the consensual marriage thing, you still need the guardian's permission. Remember, if you are not ready to commit in this life, you might meet again in another life and another and another. Be wise on this idea before you act. The funny part is that in your future life, you will believe you have met your soulmate! Would you really like to meet all of your past sexual partners again in future lives? What about the partners you have not had but you have wished for? Probably not, especially if you will have to marry one of them.

The aim of restraint

Nevertheless, a habitual *kamma* of receiving the consent of the partner and the woman's protector is better than nothing. Restraint is always better than no restraint at all. A way around such an awkward question to the guardians is to have the woman ask the parents privately herself if she is granted her own sexual freedoms and control of her body. The man should get a recording of this so he knows for sure what was said by *both* parents. Does this sound a little creepy? In the end, the conversation may lead into, "Sure. It's your own body, and you are 25 years old, but why are you asking us?" Then she will talk about the morality of her new boyfriend who won't touch her otherwise. So, who would you rather have date your daughter? The guy who restrains himself only according to your daughter's beliefs, or the guy who considers the parents' beliefs to trump in veto power? *It should be noted that the mind of the man who chooses this option should not be directed at getting permission to have sex. Instead, his mind should be restrained, intending, and bending toward keeping the third precept. If the conditions are not right, he is willing and prepared to abstain.*

I would imagine a ballpark figure that 70% of all parents of women aged 18 years or older in the West will reluctantly, with

caution, give their daughter the freedom she has requested. However, there is a chance you are intimate with the wrong daughter. Remember that the 30% may say "no." One should also consider the culture of who is involved, too. Is she from another country? Is she Islamic? Are her parents religious? Those are the subsets that you want to avoid. You can never know for sure, so you must get clear permission for every partner or back off. Making sure everything is OK is a better habit over nothing. Why? If a time exists when it is not OK, you will not indulge because you want to keep your precept. If the parents claim to still be the protector, you will respect that. That will be your habit now and after a social U-turn occurs. When that U-turn comes, permission will be given *in marriage*.

After this freedom is granted, you will be following the precept according to specification. However, keep in mind that *kamma* and habitual *kamma* are always being generated. Remember that just because the precept is followed to specification, you are not always guaranteed that you are doing the right thing as I stated above. However, if you are breaking the precepts, it will lead to unfortunate results. The power of wrong is difficult to measure. Saṃsāra is a dangerous place and there cannot be any guarantees of safe passage. *Kamma* is so complex that only a Buddha can know. It is like taking a glass of ocean water and knowing which drop came from which river. We can only know that unwholesome behavior can give bad results.

Sexual *kamma* can create children. In the past, families were much larger. *Since most contraception is not 100% effective*, the woman can still get pregnant with all of the complications that pregnancy and raising a child can cause. Her life will change, and maybe yours, too. Since having options is known to reduce satisfaction with one's current situation, the woman or man might become dissatisfied with future relationships because of sexual experience. Lastly, both parties will have a habit of sexual indul-

gence, which is the most dangerous. Craving in general is unwholesome. It is the cause of Saṃsāra, and it can lead to one's downfall.

Quite often, the majority of one's life is directed for sex. People go to the gym to increase their sex appeal. Dressing and fashion styles, makeup, jewelry, diets, medicines, skin creams, surgery, hairstyles and hair tonics, orthodontics, and money to afford all of these are all part of the sex appeal industry. Sex appeal is often coupled with most other products in advertising, too. They try to make one believe they will be sexier with such products. It could be said that the whole economy is directly or indirectly revolving around sex. Some make money more or less so they can afford keeping the opposite sex happy or to add an attraction factor to their sexual portfolio.

Sexual behavior is very close to the animal realm. In fact, we have idioms and words depicting animal behavior for sex and sex organs, some of which are quite crude. The mascot for Playboy has the iconic bunny ears. In the forests of Sri Lanka, you will inevitably see monkeys having sex to the point where it becomes clear that it is a distinctive animal behavior. If you wish to have "all the sex you can eat," you might end up as a monkey. So be careful what you wish for. Suppose you are lucky to be human, but still wish for unlimited sex, in the next life, you might be sold off as a trafficked child prostitute.

While there are no monkeys in the West, there are plenty of dogs, and although dogs are no longer roaming the streets like before, dog language is common for labeling numerous sexually related people and their behaviors. The funny part is that as society has "modernized," dogs have become more civilized, living alone in luxurious homes, and are more celibate than humans![5]

Take a moment to think about how much of your life has been directly or indirectly devoted to getting or maintaining a (sexual) relationship, whether meaningful or not. Everyone knows that sex is close to the animal realm. Think about right livelihood and why

we have it. Think about habitual *kamma*. To be human is to be humane, and that does not have sex in its formula. There was once an ascetic named Puṇṇa who imitated dogs thinking it would lead to a favorable birth. He thought it would be enlightening. When the Buddha saw him, he said,

> "Here, Puṇṇa,
> someone develops the canine practice completely and constantly,
> he develops the canine habits completely and constantly,
> he develops the canine mentality completely and constantly,
> he develops the canine behaviour completely and constantly.
>
> Having developed the canine practice completely and constantly,
> having developed the canine habits completely and constantly,
> having developed the canine mentality completely and constantly,
> having developed the canine behaviour completely and constantly,
> he, on the breaking up of the body after dying,
> arises in companionship with dogs.
> ...
> ...
> I, Puṇṇa, say that there is one of two bourns for one of wrong view:
> either Niraya Hell or animal birth.
>
> So it is, Puṇṇa,
> that the canine practice,
> on prospering,
> leads to companionship with dogs,
> on failing,
> to Niraya Hell."

MN 57, PTS translation, www.Buddhadust.com

Leading toward *Nibbāna*

I am not promoting sex, and I go on the record as advising one to become a celibate lay follower or to join a Theravada Monastic Order that follows the *bhikkhu* rules so that one can direct oneself toward *Nibbāna*. That is what all monks should recommend first.

The next best thing would be to be in a committed relationship and wait all the way until one gets married off by the guardians of the daughter.

Lastly, if you are going to "indulge," make sure the guardians agree on the woman's sexual freedom. This is just about all that can be said about the rule.

But I didn't know

It is likely the "modern world" has been ignorant of this rule. Ignorance does not excuse one from the effects of *kamma*. Remember that ignorance is foremost in the cause of suffering. The more ignorant one is, the less chance one has to break the habit. Why would anyone quit smoking in the 1950s when the ignorance was so high? In contrast, how many people smoke today in the West? While it may be unlikely you will follow such advice, you have been advised. That is what Buddhist monks are supposed to do. We tell people about *kamma* and its effects so that educated decisions can be made.

If you know that you are doing something wrong and you do it anyway, you will be protected from more harm than if you did not know. Like a child who sticks his hand in a fire not knowing it is hot, he will get burned more than an adult who does the same knowing the dangers. It is like a smoker who knows and believes the dangers of smoking. He knows he must quit every time he lights up. While he is not free from the effects of smoking, the momentum of his habit is far less than an uninformed smoker

from the 1950s, *even if they smoke the same amount per day*. There is no reason for someone in the 1950s to quit smoking, and he is likely to never quit. The one who knows he should quit may continue to light up but also has a quitting mind. A knowing mind may help reduce his cigarette dosage. A knowing mind has a chance to stop and perhaps may stop all together.

In review

You now know:

1. What the original rule completely says.
2. How abstaining from sexual misconduct was applied for the past 2500 years (and much longer before that).
3. How things have changed only in the past 50 years since civilized human history.
4. Habitual *kamma* and its effects for multiple lives.
5. The multi-life consequences from having multiple partners (soulmates) in this life.
6. The effects of a multi-life habit if consent from the partner and guardians is given.
7. The effects of a celibate life as a lay follower or joining a Theravada Order that follows the rules, thus directing oneself toward *Nibbāna*.

You are now one who has been informed and can make the proper choices. The choice and its effects are yours.

"Monks, strive with heedfulness. Rare is it that Buddhas arise in the world. Rare is it that one obtains a human birth. Rare is it to have the good fortune of being in the right time and place. Rare is it that one has the opportunity to take the going forth. Rare is it that one has the opportunity to listen to the true *Dhamma*. Rare is it that one has the opportunity to associate with good people." (c.f.

D.32-33 & A.8:29)

I invite you to spread this word about sexual misconduct in your communities and to all you know. It is such a basic, fundamental rule that is not being taught correctly. At a minimum, one should know how the rule is taught in Asia.

Rare is it to get the proper *Dhamma*...

The End.

Notes

1. This rule actually excludes normal adult males because of pregnancy and protecting her for marriage. Of course, it applies to boys who are not of age or able to give proper consent.
2. In Asia, even today, a wife is more or less anyone you are having sex with. A prostitute is considered a "temporary wife."
3. Please see: *The Social and Economic Benefits of Women's Ability to Determine Whether and When to Have Children*, p. 32, Sonfield, Hasstedt, Kavanaugh, and Anderson, www.guttmacher.org; *How the contraceptive pill changed Britain*, by Rebecca Cafe, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15984258.
4. Buddhism believes that consciousness begins in the very early stages of pregnancy, most likely at the time of fertilization. Since it is uncertain, we must recommend against anything that happens after the act. It should be noted that the commentary literature says, "Up to seven days," which can mean 0 to 7 days.
5. This is because of leash laws in the West. Most dogs live alone and are locked up inside a house or a secluded fenced-in property as pets. When they are allowed to go outside "for a walk," the law requires that they must be placed on a leash with the owner present. Dogs found on the street with no owners are picked up and placed in kennels/dog pounds where they will be most likely killed if a home is not found within a certain allotted period of time.