

Monastic Rules on the Consumption of Victuals in Early Buddhism

PHRA MAHA SOMPHONG SANTACITTO

Abstract: Theravada Bhikkhus (Pāli: “monks”) aim to live their lives according to how the Buddha acted in his lifetime, and therefore the monastic “system” devised by the Buddha, still has imperative relevance in the contemporary world. What do the sacred texts — especially the Vinaya Pitaka (“basket of discipline,” which deals mainly with monastic rules for monks and nuns) — mention regarding the proper consumption of food and beverages? From the source literature, can we gauge to what degree this was a pressing concern in the world the Buddha inhabited 2558 years ago? I will address these and related topics in attempting to comprehend how consumption was thought about in early Buddhism.