Sri Lankan Monasticism in Canada: 
Monastic Adaptations and Lay Expectations

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A 00388882

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Masters of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies


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December 2016
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Abstract

Sri Lankan Monasticism in Canada: Monastic Adaptations and Lay Expectations

By Sirinanda Bandagiriye

Since 1976, around thirty Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monks have become residents in Canada. In this thesis, I explore the tenuous position of monks as they navigate both the cultural expectations of diasporic laity and traditional *vinaya* rules within Canadian social, cultural, and physical environments. Forces of globalism, parochialism, and localism theories (Soucy 2014) frame the context for this analysis. I consider the writings of scholars Busto (1996), Edaugh and Chafetz (2000), Hua (2005) and Kurien (2004), who suggest that ‘marginalization’ pushes diasporic communities into religious institutions and towards religious conservatism. I employ Appadurai’s adaptation of Benedict Anderson’s theory of ‘imagined communities’. Based upon eight ethnographic interviews as well as my personal experience as a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, several categories of conflict are examined. Monks acknowledge that in order to retain their position of authority and legitimacy within the Canadian Sri Lankan community, they must focus on satisfying lay expectations. In this new cultural context, *vinaya* rules are secondary.

December 2016
Introduction

Many Buddhist schools have been invented in the West, and, today, wide varieties of lineages are practiced in Canada. Ever since Asian Buddhisms left their homelands and arrived in the West, Buddhist monastics have felt the necessity to adapt to Western social, cultural, and physical environments. This thesis focuses on Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monastics and their struggle, on the one hand, to maintain strict Theravada vinaya rules, and, on the other hand, fulfill lay expectations within a Canadian context.

Theravada monastics follow a tradition that makes every effort to uphold the values and traditions imposed during Buddha’s time and to be compliant with the set of vinaya rules. Sri Lankan lay Buddhist migrants hold strongly onto Sri Lankan Buddhist cultural traditions. When immigrant monks engage in western cultural practices that are unique to North America, for some adaptations, some members of the laity respond negatively. As an example, I reference a recent incident that happened to me, as the sole Theravada Buddhist monastic in this region of Atlantic Canada. This incident occurred after the annual multi-faith celebration in Halifax in February 2015. At the end of the evening, in front of the large gathering of Sri Lankans and other Buddhists, a female organizer shook hands with me. Upon returning to the temple in the evening, I received several calls from lay Buddhists asking, “Whether it is okay for Buddhist monks to touch a woman.” This may have been the first time lay people in Halifax had seen a fully robed

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1 Vinaya is complex set of the disciplinary rules of Buddhist monastics. In this thesis, I use uppercase for the first letter (Vinaya) when referring to the name of the texts whereas the lowercase (vinaya) is used when referring this word in general.
monk shaking hands with a woman. This incident illustrates the complicated process of adapting Sri Lankan Buddhism to the unfamiliar social and cultural context in Canada.

From the late 1970s to the present, Sri Lankan Buddhist monks have taken positions as resident monks, in Canada. Before taking up residence, these monks visited Canada from time-to-time to perform Buddhist customs and rituals by invitations of lay Sri Lankan Buddhists who immigrated in the mid-twentieth century. These temporary resident monks continued to follow their Buddhist practices as closely as possible as they would have done in Sri Lanka. For example, the monks tried not to wear socks even in the middle of winter. However, when Sri Lankan Buddhist monks started to take up permanent residence in Canada, after 1976, the need to make adaptations; as such, wearing proper winter clothing became essential in order to survive the Canadian climate. Temporary monks did not need to make adaptations to the Canadian social and cultural environment; however, the permanent resident monks felt a dire need to make some changes.

1.1. Purpose, main argument, and thesis statement

The purpose of this thesis is to explore challenges faced by Sri Lankan Buddhist monks permanently residing in Canada, within the context of social, cultural, and environmental adaptations. The objective is to understand the experiences of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in Canada and to explore lay expectations of monastic behavior. I attempt to answer the question: What are the problems Theravada Buddhist monks face when practicing Buddhism in Canada and especially when interacting with the Canadian
social and cultural environment? While exploring the social and cultural environments in Canada, I focus special attention on how lay Sri Lankan people’s expectations are different in Canada, and what difficulties and challenges arise when interacting with local monastics. In addition to understanding how monastics overcome difficulties and challenges, I research local monastics’ solutions and adaptations.

This thesis explores the interaction between disciplinary (vinaya) rules for Buddhist monks, established during Buddha’s time (as Buddhists claim), and the interaction with contemporary practice of Buddhism as a living tradition. The hypothesis of this thesis research asserts that: Sri Lankan Theravada monks in Canada face the difficult challenge of negotiating for reasonable adaptations in an uncertain world. Canadian-based Sri Lankan Theravada monks are challenged daily with the demand to function in a foreign Canadian culture and uphold traditional Buddhist vows that often do not always fit within a Canadian context. The laity are keen to uphold traditions from the home country. However, some of these traditions and cultural practices do not make sense on a practical level within a Canadian context. In order to maintain the support of laity, monks uphold certain lay expectations even when the demands do not make sense, such as feeling obliged to make choices that are not always optimal for their health and well-being. This study analyses:

a) Some vinaya rules (textual tradition) are problematic when applied within a Canadian social, cultural, and environmental condition. How do monks navigate and uphold vinaya rules that do not make sense within a Canadian context?
b) The importance of lay expectations in influencing the monks and the subsequent choices/adaptations that monks make to accommodate lay expectations and also fit into the western social and cultural environmental context. In addition, this research explores how lay people react to monastic choices and adaptations.

My theory of this research is that a) diasporic displacement and minority role puts self-identity and heritage identity in flux; b) one outcome is that lay people create an imagined world. This provides a sense of stability and connection to the home country and tradition; and, c) this imagined world pushes on the monk’s authority and legitimacy in the aggressive questioning of his adaptations and practical choices.

1.2. Rationale

The spread of Buddhism as a religion in Canada is an ongoing process, and the number of people who identify themselves as Buddhists has rapidly increased. According to the Canadian census in 1901 there were only 10,407 Buddhists in Canada and in 2001 there were 300,345 (Beyer 2010:112). It is important to explore the process of adaptation of Buddhism in Canada to meet the needs of this vast growing Buddhist population. In the global context, Buddhism is a fast-growing religion, and Sri Lankan Buddhist monks have performed a significant role in bringing Buddhism into the western world.

The pragmatic issues in adapting to a new culture are not unique to Sri Lankan Theravada monastics in Canada, but also affect monks practicing other Buddhist traditions in Canada. To date, scholarly research does not exist on the challenges faced by
Theravada Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in adapting to the Canadian social, cultural and environmental conditions, including the interaction with the textual traditions (vinaya rules) and lay expectations (living traditions). McLellan and White (2015) reference Laotian and Cambodian monastics in Ontario who face similar issues due to the interaction between lay expectations and vinaya. The authors question whether in Ontario, the traditional Theravada monastic life can be fully functional, beyond the first generation of immigrants from those two countries. This is a significant question for current ethnic Buddhists in Canada. This is especially true for Theravada monastics, as tradition and practices are more conservative than other Buddhist sects.

The impetus for this research stems from my personal experience as a Theravada Buddhist monk in Canada living in two cities: Toronto, Ontario and Halifax, Nova Scotia. My experiences provide evidence that there are similarities to Laotian and Cambodian Theravada monks’ experiences noted in the literature (McLellan and White 2015, McLellan 2009, McLellan 1995). As mentioned above, though Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism enjoys almost half a century of history in Canada, it has been understudied compared to other Buddhist traditions in Canada. This thesis attempts to fill this gap in knowledge in the literature.

1.3. **Theoretical underpinning**

I consider theories from religious studies and anthropology as lenses to develop, validate, and question my hypothesis.
1.3.1. Sri Lankan Buddhist temples functioning in global society

Firstly, it is important to consider how Sri Lankan temples function within a global context. In the book, *Wild Geese*, Soucy introduces his theories on “Global Buddhism”, discussed more fully in the book, *Flowers on the Rock*. He argues that Buddhist globalism has had impact on virtually all Buddhists, both in Asia and in the West, even those in Asia who are seen as “traditional.” In other words, “traditional” Buddhists are not excluded from the influence of Buddhist globalism. Even though their homeland institutions function more traditionally, Western Buddhist teachers and Buddhist organizations in the West are still influenced by Buddhist globalism (Soucy 2014: 38). Buddhist globalism functions in relationship to two other forces:

![Diagram](image)

These three forces are observable in Sri Lankan Buddhist temples functioning in Canada. To illustrate, the Sri Lankan Mahamevnawa monastery system (a conservative and literalist Buddhist movement) operates in Canada with characteristics of Buddhist
globalism; however, in practice, they have influences of both parochialism and localism. The term *parochialism* means the inward looking or conservative predilection and localism is the situating of any form of Buddhism within its context (2014: 40). The force of parochialism has a major effect on other traditional Sri Lankan temples in Canada, but globalism and localism also have influences on these temples. This study is mainly focused on the local adaptations of Sri Lankan temples that is problematic to lay devotees. It is nonetheless important to comprehend these three forces to understand Sri Lankan Buddhist temples functioning in Canada and more broadly how localism challenges Sri Lankan monastic lives.

### 1.3.2. Diaspora and diasporic conservatism

I reference Arjun Appadurai (1991, 1996) to understand Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada. In Appadurai’s theory, there are five main ‘-scapes’ of global culture: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. Each of these is constructed by particular perspectives, created by social actors as imagined worlds similar to Benedict Anderson’s idea of the nation as imagined community. Appadurai believes that we now live in globally imagined worlds and not simply in locally imagined communities. We also live in a world in which *de-territorialisation*, the breaking-down of existing territorial connections, is a major force. By using the ethnoscape concept, Appadurai explains:

> the landscape of persons who form the shifting world where we live, that is, tourists, immigrants, refugees, or any moving groups and individuals of fundamental feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree (Appadurai 1996: 33).
Appadurai claims that this is not to say there are no relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure, as well as of birth, residence, and other filial forms. “However, it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the weft of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move” (Appadurai 1996: 33). Ethnoscapes allow us to recognize that our notions of space, place, and community have become much more complex, indeed a ‘single community’ may now be dispersed across a variety of sites. Technoscapes arise from rapid technological diffusion and flow across national boundaries. Appadurai believes these flows are increasingly complex and multidirectional, in contrast to older models of technological dependency. Finanscapes arise from rapid financial flows and the emerging global political economy. Mediascapes are results of the diffusion of the ability to produce media images and the global spread of media images themselves. Mediascapes are deemed to provide ‘large and complex repertoires’ of images and narratives to local groups around the world, which are used in creating local narratives and providing metaphors through which people live. These five scapes are considered within the context of this research.

Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada is necessarily a result of globalization, particularly influenced by global flows of ethnoscape. Sri Lankans began to migrate to Canada in the mid 20th century. Most Sri Lankans in Canada immigrated as skilled workers, as well as refugees, living in several Sri Lankan communities in major cities, where Toronto is the largest Sri Lankan community in Canada. All of these communities have characteristics, which Appadurai mentioned in his five-scape theory.
The theories of Busto (1996), Edaugh and Chafetz (2000), and Hua (2005) are useful in understanding diasporic conservatism. Each scholar warns that ‘marginalization’ pushes diasporic communities into religious institutions and, in addition, towards religious conservatism. As such, Sri Lankan immigrants in Canada are more involved and integrated within their local temple communities than those Sri Lankans practicing in Sri Lanka. Busto suggests the following:

The experience of racism and marginalization can also push immigrants toward religion and religious institutions since for racial minorities, emphasizing a religious identity can be one way to avoid being identified on the basis of race. (Busto 1996)

To further substantiate this idea, Edaugh and Chafetz (2000) point out that diasporic communities connect deeply with local religious institutions. These communities provide some relief from the daily pressures of marginalization. In this manner, religious institutions help people to cope by providing communal security, communal satisfaction, and leadership positions in their local community. Religious institutions also help immigrants cope with marginalization by providing fellowship, social services, and leadership positions to compensate for the downward mobility many experience (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000).

Another theory worthy of consideration is Hua’s (2005) diasporic theory of ‘collective memory’ and ‘nostalgia’. The import of memory and nostalgia helps contextualize the Sri Lankan diasporas’ disposition and their leanings towards conservatism and nationalism. Diasporic people have a wistful desire to return in thought or reality to a former space and time in their lives. Most migrants want to keep their families under the sphere of their homeland culture and protect their children from the
‘corrupted culture’ surrounding them in their new country. In terms of collective memory, immigrants living away may not understand modernization and globalization taking place in their home country. “One may cultivate a memory of an idealized homeland that has nothing to do with contemporary history, or one may pretend that the homeland has not changed since one left its shores” (Hua 2005: 196).

For certain diasporas, women are less nostalgic than men for the homeland. Hua cites the example of the Chinese and Vietnamese female diaspora in United States, who hold negative memories from their lives in the home country: “Diasporic women are less likely than diasporic men to have nostalgic memories about their homelands because of their painful recollection of patriarchal attitudes, customs, and traditions found in the “Old World” (Hua 2005: 195). Both ‘collective memory’ and ‘nostalgia’ drives diasporic communities towards the direction of conservatism and nationalism, even more than they were in their homelands.

As Hua points out, as in all human communities, power struggles exist within diasporic communities: gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, generation, disability, geography, history, religion, belief, and language are differences used; this means that those diasporic communities have sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, ageism, and other discrepancies and prejudices within their own communities.

1.3.3. Lay/Monastic expectations

To understand lay and monastic expectations, it is important to understand the “imagined communities,” a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1991: 193).
He believes that a nation is a community socially constructed, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. However, here I use Appadurai’s adaptation to Anderson’s theory “imagined world.” All people have their own set of expectations towards the world, this is what Anderson, and Appadurai call ‘imagined world.’

An important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined worlds (and not just in imagined communities) and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality surround them” (Appadurai 1996: 33).

I suggest that many of these adapting issues faced by monastics are due to the influences of the “imagined world” of lay people. Lay people have their own opinions of how monastics should be. In the case of Sri Lanka, they have an image that monastics, as a group of people, have abandoned worldly life, and are serene and calm. However, when they see something outside of the stereotype, laity make objections since their imagined world is challenged. For example, in Sri Lanka, monastics do not drive vehicles, and culturally Sri Lankan people believe that monastic should not drive. Once they see a monastic driving in Canada, their image is damaged, creating clashes between laity and monastics. This imagined world theory could apply to most lay expectation clashes in the Canadian context.

1.4. Methodology

In order to understand the subjective experiences of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in Canada, I employed two methodologies: ethnography and auto-ethnography.
Using ethnography, I conducted eight, in-depth personal interviews with Sri Lankan Buddhist monastics in Canada and Sri Lankan Buddhist lay people in Canada. Of the five monks that I interviewed, all were founders of their temples in Canada. I also interviewed three first generation Sri Lankan lay Buddhists who immigrated to Canada in the mid-twentieth century.

The empirical foundation for this research is comprised of these eight face-to-face interviews, conducted between February and June 2016, with Buddhist monastics and lay people in Canada. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions around particular facets of the participants’ lives. Interviews took place mostly in temples and one in a house where it was more comfortable for the participant. Each interview took approximately 90 minutes, although some were significantly shorter or longer. The interviews were semi-structured around key topic areas related to experiences as a monk in Canada or Buddhist lay person (see Appendix-1). After extracting anecdotal experiences and comments from the interviewees as they related to difficulties and challenges in Canada, the next analytic step was to place the examples within the context of the three theories: Buddhist globalism, diasporic conservatism, and imagined worlds.

In addition, I used an auto-ethnographic lens to include my personal experiences in Canada as a Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic. The role I performed as auto-ethnographer is what Reed-Danahay characterizes in the following way: “the autoethnographer as a boundary-crosser who assumes the role of a dual identity” (Reed-Danahay 1997: 3). Reed-Danahay also notes that auto-ethnographers possess qualities of often permanent self-identification within a particular group and full internal membership, as recognized by both themselves and those of whom they are a part’ (Reed-Danahay 1997: 5). The
challenge with taking on an auto-ethnographer role is, as Sumagi emphasizes, current auto-ethnography is subjective and can result in writing that does not go beyond a descriptive storytelling exercise (Sumegi 2014: 226). Sociologist Leon Anderson proposes the term “analytic” auto-ethnography in contradistinction to “evocative” auto-ethnography, which, in his own words “seeks narrative fidelity only to the researcher’s subjective experience” (Anderson 2006: 386). I agree with Leon’s term “analytic”, which includes the meaning that analytic auto-ethnography is not just a reporting from the data but also adding something else beyond that through narrative interpretations. It is my intention that this research provides a quality example of analytic auto-ethnography.

The purpose of analytic ethnography is not simply documenting personal experiences, to provide an “insider’s perspective”, or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to its use empirical data to gain inside into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves. (Anderson 2006: 386-7)

I should make it clear that I function as a Buddhist monk, a teacher, and a community leader for the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Halifax, as well as an academic scholar. Therefore, I am playing a double role in this research as an ‘observing scholar’ and a ‘monastic experincer.’ I intuited this thesis topic, as both academically and religiously significant, as a result of my personal experiences, which challenged me as a Buddhist monk living in Canada. I chose to use qualitative research for this particular project, as it provides a rich description of the experiences of Sri Lankan Buddhists (both clergy and laity) in Canada:
The use of qualitative methods provides an opportunity to develop an understanding of the social world from the standpoint of those perspectives and lived experiences that are often subjugated to accounts that are more dominant or official, if not missed altogether. (Smith 1987)

In this thesis research, I use this method to interpret narrative inquiry through my Theravada Buddhist monk’s lens. In this regard and for context, I entered monkhood in Sri Lanka when I was ten years old and was ordained nine years later. I first arrived the Toronto Mahavihara Temple (TMV), as a visiting monk and stayed for a period of one and half years (2013/2014). While at TMV, I was invited to open a temple in Halifax. A new Buddhist temple, The Atlantic Theravada Buddhist temple, opened November 6, 2015. Altogether, I have more than twenty years of monastic experience, including four years of experience in Canada. Based upon my background and experience, I incorporate my personal experience and reflections in this research.

1.5. Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into four chapters: the first describes Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada. The second chapter examines the literature and analysis from a monastic rules perspective. The third chapter explores the challenges presented by lay expectations as distinct from the textual monastic rules. Fourth chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

In first chapter, Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada, I discuss Buddhist monasticism in Sri Lanka, including both monks (Bhikkhu) and nuns (Bhikkhuni). I continue with an in-depth analysis of the beginnings and growth of Sri Lankan Buddhism in the Canada. The spread of Sri Lankan temples in Canada is also discussed in the first chapter.
The second chapter examines, interviewees’ contributions of which *vinaya* rules (textual traditions) are problems and how the monastics have navigated them in order to adapt to a Canadian context. I further explore how, even today, the monastics’ lives continue to be challenged by ancient *vinaya* rules. Using four case studies, I reflect upon the application and reinterpretation of *vinaya* rules.

The third chapter describes lay expectations of monastics’ behavior and social norms. Using a case study method, I consider the results from interviews that discuss the importance placed upon protocol, and the distinction between *vinaya* and lay cultural expectations for monastics. Several themes emerge from the interviews. I consider these themes using case studies to illustrate the points of discussion. Interview themes are considered within the context of the theories above on Buddhist Globalism, diasporic conservatism, and the imagined world.

Finally, the concluding chapter starts by addressing limitations to the research. These includes the size of the sample of interviewed monk and laity, and the possibility of regional disparity across Canada. The conclusion then draws together key themes, such as diasporic conservatism, and extrapolates upon the application of theories within a diasporic Theravada Buddhist Canadian context. It suggests some long-term implications of parochialism and conservatism in Canadian temple life. Further research is suggested in the areas of demographic segmentation and comparison with other Buddhist sects in North America.
Chapter 1: Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada

In this chapter, I discuss the arrival and spread of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada, the formation of Sri Lankan sangha community in Canada, and significant incidences within its Canadian history. This will provide the background for the arrival of the Sri Lankan form of Buddhism in Canada and a historical context for this thesis.

In his first discourse, the Buddha advised his disciples to spread his teachings in the world for the benefit of all human beings. Accordingly, all his disciples are bound by vinaya, to follow his instructions. He said,

Go forth, O monks, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men. Two should not take the same path. Teach the dharma, which is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end, both in spirit and letter. Proclaim the holy life, perfect and pure. (vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga Pali 2013: I, II)

In the months following the formation of the sangha community, disciples began traveling as missionaries and took the teaching of the Buddha to distant communities and, within the first millennium, to much of South, Southeast and East Asia. However, the spread of Buddhism beyond Asia is a relatively recent phenomenon. From the moment of the Buddha’s enlightenment at Bodhgaya, and as it spread into other regions and cultures, Buddhism has been influenced by and has absorbed practices and ideas of the indigenous religions practiced in these regions.

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2 The place where the Buddha attained enlightenment in India.
Knowledge of Buddhism spread in the West only in the 19th century, nearly twenty-four centuries after the passing of the Buddha. Within the last two hundred years Sri Lankans, have been active participants in Buddhist globalization and the spread of Buddhism to the West. Sri Lankan Anagarika Dharmapala’s 1893 address to the World Parliament of Religions is significant. His presence and speech signified the one of the first attempts to expand Buddhism to the West.

1.1. Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada and spread of Sri Lankan temples in Canada.

Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s inauguration of multiculturalism as a government policy in 1971 significantly influenced immigration to Canada and led to a large increase of immigrants from Asian Buddhist countries to Canada. ‘Keep Canada white’ (a popular slogan in the early 20th century) finally gave way to a multicultural and multi-ethnic population of new Canadians. Multicultural policy opened doors to immigrants from many nations and people with diverse ethnic identities to come to Canada, and these immigrants brought their religions along with other cultural baggage to create a “New Canada” that celebrated ethnic diversity.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist community, is one of many Buddhist communities in Canada, alongside Vietnamese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, and Thai communities, that practices its own version of Buddhism.

Currently, there are approximately twenty Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Canada, mostly in Ontario. Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Canada have fewer Western converts than the other national Buddhist communities; roughly 95% of regular
participants are ethnic Sri Lankans. Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in Canada, with more than 300,000 people who identify as Buddhists, in the 2001 Canadian census. (Beyer 2010: 112)

**Ethnic composition of Canada’s Buddhists, 1971-2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>15,520 (29.9%)</td>
<td>74,715 (45.7%)</td>
<td>163,570 (54.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>19,285 (37.1%)</td>
<td>63,265 (38.7%)</td>
<td>100,635 (33.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>10,320</td>
<td>10,510 (20.2%)</td>
<td>13,320 (8.2%)</td>
<td>13,380 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(63.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>495 (1.00%)</td>
<td>1060 (0.7%)</td>
<td>3875 (1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1050 (2.00%)</td>
<td>3290 (2.00%)</td>
<td>7105 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western European</td>
<td>2210</td>
<td>4040 (7.8%)</td>
<td>10,795 (6.6%)</td>
<td>22,215 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>105 (0.2%)</td>
<td>1570 (1.0%)</td>
<td>15,685 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16,175</td>
<td>51,955</td>
<td>163,420</td>
<td>300,345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Beyers 2010:115).

The above chart shows a steady growth in both percentage and absolute numbers of immigrants from South and South East Asia, regions with significant populations who identify as Buddhists. The largest proportion of South Asian Buddhists in Canada are Sri Lankans, with lesser numbers from both India and Bangladesh. Currently, all South
Asian temples in Canada are Sri Lankan. The majority of Sri Lankan immigrants who came to Canada in the past two decades, however, were not Sinhalese Buddhists but Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Sri Lankan Christians.

There are two types of Theravada Buddhist monasticisms in Canada, the first one being, the general stream of sangha, hereafter termed as “traditional sangha,” and a new lineage called *Mahamevnawa*. The Mahamewnawa, is a conservative sect, started in 1999, in Polgahawela, Sri Lanka, by Reverend Kiribathgoda Gnanananda. Within a short period of time, it became popular in the Sri Lankan lay community and its popularity enabled the Mahamewnawa to establish several other branch temples in the island as well as overseas. In Sri Lanka, and today in Canada, *Mahamevnawa* represents a significant development in Sri Lankan Buddhism. It is important to understand the *Mahamevnawa* movement to gain knowledge of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada. Four temples out of twenty in Canada are *Mahamevnawa* temples. Most Sri Lankan monastics in Canada assert that, “they, themselves are in the process of making global Buddhism.” What follows is an overview of the introduction and expansion of Sri Lankan temples in Canada.
Spread of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Canada up to date.

Primary research from the author.
Prior to 1978, no Theravada Buddhist temples existed in Canada. However, academics acknowledge that, prior to 1978, Theravada Buddhists practiced in their own homes, as well as opening their homes for communal religious activities. These efforts were also facilitated by Buddhist scholars, such as Ven. Dr. Dikwela Piyananada, the chief incumbent of the Washington D.C. Buddhist Vihara, who made frequent visits to Toronto.

The Toronto Mahavihara Temple, the first Sri Lankan Buddhist temple opened in Canada, followed the typical fashion of building temples in Canada: Buddhist groups who met frequently in each other’s homes (generally weekly) eventually rented larger spaces for ceremonial occasions, such as Vesak, to accommodate bigger crowds and invited Buddhist monks to direct religious services. In 1974, Buddhists in Toronto organized as the Canadian Buddhist Vihara Society (CBVS) and, in 1978, purchased a property at 3595 Kingston Road, Scarborough. This building, with a purchase price of $82,000, had a hall-space large enough for a dharma hall. However, even though the Buddhist Society had been operating for a few years, and the funds were raised from contributions of its members, the bank refused to issue a mortgage. In order to obtain the mortgage, two members, Dr. Bandu Madanayake and Mr. Susantha Peeris each personally signed as co-owners of the property and the two-roomed building was acquired by the CBVS on July 14, 1978. The inauguration ceremony took place on July 16, 1978.

Between 1974 and 1978, CBVS was renamed the Toronto Mahavihara Society (TMS). Over time, the small building was not sufficient to accommodate a growing membership. In 1998, TMS purchased the current building at 4698 Kingston Road,
Scarborough, a much larger building that also provided residential accommodation for the temple’s monks. On September 30, 2000, TMS expanded by opening a larger shrine room and more space for large gatherings. Since the early 1990s, Venerable Ahangama Rathanasiri has led this community.

In 1992, a major crisis occurred in TMS when two resident monks, Dhammawasa and Punnaji, were expelled. TMS’s decision was based on cultural expectations of a Buddhist monk’s comportment. The two main complaints against these monks were: firstly, they were driving cars, and secondly, they were wearing lay clothes (both major breaches of the vinaya rules imposed on the monks). As Hua (2005) pointed out, “there are always power struggles within diasporic communities” (Hua 2005: 193). It is obvious that the TMS vision of the comportment of Buddhist monks within the Sri Lankan community clashed with new Canadian ways that the monks chose to adopt. The underlying challenge for the Society was maintaining power and legitimacy of the temple within the Sri Lankan community. The two monks moved to the Washington, D.C. temple. However, by invitation of some close Toronto friends, Dhammawasa returned with another monk, Muditha, who was residing in California at that time. The two monks rented an apartment in Mississauga and started a second temple. This new west-end Buddhist temple opened in 1993 in an apartment in Mississauga. Venerable Kulugammana Dhammawasa, a former resident monk of Toronto Mahavihara, took on the role of abbot, opening this new temple with the support of Venerable Brahmanagama Muditha and Venerable Madawala Punnaji.

Reverend Ambalangoda Sudhamma, previously a resident monk at the Toronto Mahaviharaya (TMV) opened a third temple in Canada in 1996 in an Ottawa apartment.
Dr. Hilda Jayewardane, a Buddhist in Ottawa set the groundwork in motion for a new building. Dr. Jayewardane, reaching the end of her life due to cancer and in palliative care in the hospital, received blessings by Reverend Sudhamma. Sudhamma discussed with her the necessity of a permanent place for a Buddhist temple. Dr. Jayewardane, with the agreement of her Catholic husband, offered their residence to Reverand Sudhamma as the Hilda Jayewardanaramaya temple. The purchase price was $140,000 and was granted without a mortgage. Several years later, the Buddhist Congress of Ottawa, the management body of Hilda Jayewardanaramaya Temple, initiated a court case against Reverend Sudhamma regarding the ownership of the temple. This resulted in a court decision in favour of the Buddhist Congress as owners of the temple. Following this decision, Reverend Sudhamma left the temple.

In 2003, a new era began when the Ottawa community invited Reverend Kakanadure Hemalankara to be the resident monk at the Ottawa temple. After some time, the Buddhist Congress gain moved to expel Reverend Hemalankara, and initiated another court case that ended in favour of the Buddhist Congress. The main complaint against Reverend Hemalankara was that he was not explaining Dharma\(^3\) but just doing *puja*\(^4\) as Orthodox Buddhism considers the performance of *puja* to be of lesser importance than the learning of the dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. For example, as resident of the TMV temple, I observed that hundreds of people gathered for *puja* ceremonies, but fewer than five people gathered for weekly sutra discussions. The Toronto temple monks

\(^3\) Concerning this particular complaint, it is rare to see this kind of criticism since Sri Lankan lay people are generally more interested in engaging in *puja* activities rather than listening or discussing discourses.

\(^4\) Ritual performance of making offerings to (the Buddha) and chanting.
offered both Dharma talks and *puja*. In a sense, the Ottawa Society members appeared to want to offer the same level of service as the Toronto temple. Hemalankara left the Ottawa temple and established another temple in an Ottawa apartment.

The next temple in Ottawa to open was under the direction of Reverend Dr. Sirisumana, a visiting monk to Hilda Jayewardanaramaya at the same time as Reverend Hemalankara was abbot. He established another Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in Ottawa. Currently, there are three Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Ottawa. The Congress offered Hilda Jayewardanaramaya, operating at the time without a monk, the management of this temple to the Mississauga temple. In 2008, Reverend Dhammawasa, the chief abbot of Mississauga temple sent two monks, Reverend Indrarathana and Reverend Punna as resident monks to Hilda Jayewardanaramaya. In 2009, Dhammawasa appointed Reverend Muditha, as abbot of Hilda Jayewardanaramaya and Reverend Jinananda, as his assistant. Presently, they are running the temple along with Reverend Vijitha, a resident monk from 2010.

Moving westward, in 2006, Reverend Dedunupitiye Upananda, a resident monk at the Toronto Mahaviharaya, left the temple due to an internal conflict with the abbot. He established a temple in Calgary called Ehipassiko Buddhist temple. In 2015, a second temple opened in Calgary.

In 2006, Reverend Wipulasiri first came to TMV from Sri Lanka as a visiting monk. In 2009, he moved to Montreal to open a Sri Lankan temple there. However, within a few years, Reverend Wipulasiri was mandated to leave the temple when lay people did not accept his behavior. Reverend Wipulasiri handed over the temple to the Brampton Buddhist temple and left for Sri Lanka for some years. He returned in 2015,
but the original differences in points of view remained. Once again, Reverend Wipulasiri was forced to leave the temple. Today, there is no resident monk in Montreal; however, the temple is still open.

Most recently, the newest temple established is the Atlantic Theravada Buddhist meditation center, which opened on November 6, 2015 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Beside these traditional diasporic temples, 2006 Toronto established a new Buddhist center belonging to the conservative Mahamevnawa sect. The Toronto Mahamevnawa is their first overseas temple. Presently Mahamevnawa has two other temples in Canada, one in Saskatoon and another in Edmonton, as well as a Buddhist nunnery in Ontario. This is the first Sri Lankan Buddhist monastery for nuns or Bhikkhunis in Canada. Today, Mahamevnawa plays a significant role in the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada. As George Bond observed, all these fundamentalist Buddhist groups follow one major theme:

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5 The Bhikkhuni (nuns) order was introduced to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa by Bhikkhuni Sanghamittha, daughter of the emperor Ashoka (Bartholomeusz 1994: 18). Since that time, this order flourished at Anuradhapura for about 1200 years. As Bartholomeusz (1994) explains, with the fall of Anuradhapura to the Cholian invaders in AD 1017 and the annexation of the Anuradhapura Kingdom to the Cholian Empire, the Bhikkhuni order disappeared and became defunct. From the Cholian period to British colonial rule in 1815, “low caste” men and women were not allowed to be ordained as monastics” It is difficult to determine whether there was a tradition of female renunciation lay or “legitimate” during the centuries that followed the demise of the order of the nuns in the eleventh century” (Bartholomeusz 1994: 23). During the colonial period, under British rule, it was Anagarika Dharmapala who was the pioneer of the Buddhist revival. He opened the first nunnery in modern Ceylon at Darley Lane, Colombo. It was not a success. He was followed by Miss Catherine de Alwis who went to Burma and got ordained there as a Junior Nun without Higher Ordination. She came back to Sri Lanka in 1903 and founded the “Dasa Sil Mata” order of Buddhist nuns. Thus from 1903 onwards these “Dasa Sil Mata” nuns were the vestige and the representatives of the Bhikkhuni Sangha of old. They seemed to believe in the theory that half a loaf is better than no bread. Therefore, they had to be satisfied with observing the ten precepts of Junior Nuns or Samaneris. For the first time since its disappearance, the Bhikkhuni Order was restored at Saranath India on August 1996. The Sinhalese Nuns who received their Bhikkhuni Ordination there came back to Sri Lanka after one year and two months at the invitation of the Bhikkhuni Sasanodaya Society, Dambulla. Now there is a new reformist movement of Mahamevnawa anagarika which is parallel to Mahamevnawa monastic order for monks. Very recently, Mahamevnawa opened their nunnery in Milton, Ontario, and it is the first and only Sri Lankan monastery for nuns in Canada.
One basic theme of all the Sinhalese revivalists, whether neo-traditionalists or reformists has been an accent on Structuralism. No matters what their ideological stance, most reformers have turned to the texts to find authoritative foundation for their reinterpretations.’ (Bond 1992: 34) Tambiah (1976) calls this ‘an accent on scripturalism’ (Tambiah 1976: 219).

Conservatives employ basic early scripts (in case of Buddhism Tripitaka\(^6\)) base as their authoritative foundation, which is observable in the Mahamevnawa sect. More than any other Sri Lankan sect in Canada, Mahamevnawa functions as a global Buddhist organization with more than sixty-five branches; eighteen of which are overseas, including four branches in Canada. The expansion of Mahamevawa provides a framework for extensive “globalism”, while, at the same time, a more parochial outlook mitigates substantial deviation from orthodoxy than in any other Sri Lankan temple in Canada.

1.2. Diasporic Conservatism in Sri Lankan Temples in Canada

Like many other immigrant groups, religion seems to have become a marker of identity in Canada for Sri Lankan Buddhists. Many Sri Lankan Buddhist immigrants I meet mention that they have become more religious in this country, where, for the first time, they had to think about the meaning of their religion and their religious identity. Busto (1996), Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) and Hua (2009) identifies this diasporic conservatism as a response to the “marginalization” they experience in a diasporic

\(^6\) Tripitaka is the traditional term for the three sections of the Buddhist scriptures. These are canonical texts revered as exclusively authoritative in Theravada Buddhism, and are divided into three major pitakas (baskets): Suthra (discourses), vinaya (disciplinary rules), Abhidarma (Philosophical and psychological discourses).
setting. As Busto (1996) suggests, religious identity is one way to avoid being identified on the basis of race. The closer relationship of diasporic Sri Lankans to their local Sri Lankan temples functions as mechanism to deal with the marginalization that they experience as minorities. As Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) point out, diasporic communities connect deeply with local religious institutions. These communities provide some relief from the daily pressures of marginalization. In this manner, religious institutions help people cope by providing communal security, communal satisfaction, and leadership positions in their local communities. Religious institutions also help immigrants cope with marginalization by providing fellowship, social services, and leadership positions to compensate for the downward mobility many experience within a new culture. Hua (2005) identifies this religious conservatism as a result of nostalgia and collective memory of their past lives.

In Sri Lanka, temple practices focus primarily around chanting and *puja* with less focus on dharma interpretation. However, in Canada, laity more often request to study dharma at length. In the case of the Ottawa Buddhist temple, the society expelled the resident monk because “he was not explaining traditional textual dharma very well.” This demand for dharma interpretation illustrates an example of Tambiah’s ‘scripturalism’ (Tambiah 1976: 219). As noted earlier, conservatives employ basic early scripts as their authoritative foundation, Busto (1996), Ebaugh and Hua’s (2005), and Prema Kurien suggest that because of the pressures of marginalization diasporic laity desire to associate more closely with their temple than in the home country, due to a feeling or desire for belonging. Possibly this is why Sri Lankans in Ottawa tried to deepen their practice through dharma study rather than solely performing *puja* and chanting.
In diasporas, transmitting their culture to children is a main concern of the parents. As such, in Canada, many Sri Lankan parents desire to raise their children in Sri Lankan culture; they fear the local, modern, culture. As Kurien (2004) and Hua (2005) both agree, in order to raise children in a cultural frame, diasporic people are often deeply imbedded within their religious institutional culture. This desire to be connected to one’s own temple community is not only a trait of Sri Lankan Buddhists, but is shared by many other diasporic communities as well. For example, recently I traveled to Newfoundland to meet with Sri Lankan families, several of whom expressed an interest to move to Halifax in order for their children to have access to the Halifax temple, community, and culture. Similarly, as Prema Kurien explains, “American Hindus who claimed they were not especially religious when they were in India, nevertheless participated in Hindu organizations for social and cultural reasons, and ‘for the sake of the children.’” (Kurien 2004: 370).

While there are people in every temple community who are regular attendees, most often, interaction with monastics and Sri Lankan laity occurs in the temples during ceremonies, and some Sri Lankan Buddhists attend temples only occasionally and only for ceremonies. for example, Venerable Ajahn Brahmawanso said, “Most Sri Lankan Buddhists are New Year Buddhists and Vesak Buddhists” (June 16, 2014. Public talk, Perth, Australia). Most Sri Lankan Buddhists also visit the temple for New Year’s (in most cases, January 1st) blessings and Vesak celebrations. In all religious services, female participation exceeds male participation in every Sri Lankan temple in Canada, as well as Sri Lanka.
It is important to understand the functioning of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Canada. For Soucy (2014), “globalism” does not function alone but in connection to the two other forces, “parochialism” and “localism”. However, not all temples are equally influenced by these three forces, one is usually more dominant than the other two. Parochialism is more dominant in most Sri Lankan temples in Canada; however, “globalism” and “localism” also have influence. All religious activities and rituals in the Sri Lankan temples, with the exception of meditation retreats, replicate Sri Lankan customs and rituals in the home country. Most Canadian Sri Lankan temples have become not only places of traditional Sri Lankan Buddhist practices but also national cultural centers, catering to a community demanding an identity of “traditional Buddhist Culture” with which to imbue their children and protect them from alien cultural influences.

With regards to diasporic women in Sri Lankan temples, the two theories, namely nostalgia and diasporic conservatism, appear to clash. For example, Hua suggests that women are less nostalgic about their home country due to negative memories of their experiences. Women, in general, do not want to go back to the home country. On the other hand, women do exemplify the characteristics of diasporic conservatism. For this reason, women request that monks and temple culture uphold traditional values and practices.

Most Sri Lankan and other Asian ethnic temples in Canada are predominantly influenced by parochialism. As an example, some ethnic migrants say that Buddhist temples in their cities are for their own community’s religious needs, and that their temple is not open to other nationalities, practices, or cultural influences. From my
observation, Asian Buddhist groups in Canada want to practice within their own cultural
rituals in temples. They consider outsiders’ involvement in their temple as obstacles to
their own ways of practice. For example, one of my informants shared an experience
about when he was living in a Canadian city in which there was no Sri Lankan Buddhist
temple, and where the small Sri Lankan community attended a non-Sri Lankan temple.
After several visits, the temple’s regular devotees expressed some displeasure with the
Sri Lankan participants. The rationale for this was that the temple culture was attached to
the country of origin. As such, the members of temple did not welcome anyone outside of
their own ethnic group. This is not an unusual occurrence among communities. As a
personal example, last year, when I began teaching introduction to meditation sessions to
English speaking people in Halifax, I received several objections from members of my
own congregation. Some temples do not promote their fundraising lunch/dinner sales to
the general public, since they feel that it would cause problems due to Westerners having
different meal practices. Some monks have broken ties with their own temple when the
lay members did not want them to associate with non-Sri Lankan ethnic Buddhists.

The conflict between trying to live up to somebody’s idea of what a monk should be, and trying to bring the essence of my beliefs to the U.S. finally led to a breakup with the first temple I was associated with. There the lay people wanted to have a monk fit their image. They did not even want me to work with other Buddhists. (Piyananda Walpola 1993)

In order to sustain and grow the membership of a temple and interact with the broader
local public, it might make sense both economically and culturally to welcome Western
converters and practitioners from other Asian countries or traditions.
1.3. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the background for Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada, to gain a sufficient knowledge of the spread of Sri Lankan Buddhism and establishment of Buddhist temples across the country. On its way to becoming established in Canada, Sri Lankan Buddhism has taken many turns from its roots, through colonialism, to globalization. Both globalization and localization put pressure on traditional monastic operating models including the regimented conduct of monks as specified in the rules for the sangha. Colonialism that operated in Sri Lanka, by the Portuguese, Dutch and especially British, influenced local Buddhism and turned it into a global religion.

In doing so, attitudes and definitions of traditional Buddhism came to reflect the original impetus that established these temples: not as Buddhist monks venturing into foreign lands to spread the word of the dharma to the benefit of all mankind, but as sponsored institutions imported for catering to the specific purpose of protecting and propagating cultural practices of ethnic minorities, and ensuring their continuity in future generations.
Chapter 2: Analysis of Textual Tradition: Maintaining the legitimacy in Theravada Tradition and Vinaya Related Challenges

2.1. Introduction

The *vinaya*, or the rules governing the lives of Buddhist monks, is the most important element in Theravada Buddhist monasticism. The Buddha did not formulate the code of discipline in a single exercise. However, he instituted certain rules as and when the need arose. The *Vinaya Pitaka* and its commentary contain many significant stories about how and why certain rules were laid down by the Buddha. According to the *Maha Parinibbana Sutta*\(^7\), the Buddha proclaimed that some “minor” rules could be altered or amended to accommodate changes due to time and environment, provided they do not encourage immoral or harmful behavior. In fact, during the Buddha’s time, certain minor rules were amended by the monks with his permission. The Buddha also permitted monks and nuns who were ill to be exempted from certain *vinaya* rules. However, once the rules had been defined by the disciples, by tradition at the First Sangha Council\(^8\) convened three months after the passing away of the Buddha, it was decided that all the rules should be maintained, as no one was certain as to which of the rules should be altered. As a result, the disciples decided to uphold all the precepts prescribed by the Buddha. As time went by, however, the rules became fossilized, with some orthodox

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\(^7\) The Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta is Sutta 16 in the Digha Nikaya, a scripture belonging the Sutta Pitaka of Theravada Buddhism. It concerns the end of Gautama Buddha’s life and is the longest sutta of the Pāli Canon.

\(^8\) According to the scriptures of all Buddhist schools, the First Buddhist Council was held soon after the death of the Buddha, dated by the majority of scholars to around 485 BCE, (some earlier to around 400 BCE) under the patronage of king Ajatashatru with the monk Mahakasyapa presiding, at Sattapanni caves Rajgriha (now Rajgir.)
disciples insisted that the rules should be followed strictly to the letter rather than in the spirit. The Theravada sect is the more orthodox and claims their teachings came directly from the Buddha through pupillary succession, while the Mahayana and some other sects (which tended to be more liberal in their outlook and religious observances) have deviated significantly from the Pali Cannon, and have adopted literature developed since the passing of the Buddha to justify practices and beliefs.

Despite changing circumstances and environments, the Theravada sect has attempted to observe the rules of the *vinaya* to the very letter. Minor changes of the precepts had taken place from time to time, but these changes were not officially recognized, even amongst the members of the Theravada sect, who never developed a scriptural basis to justify these changes. Theravadins, who fixed their cannon in the 5th century CE, to this day consider the Tripitakaya as fixed and do not permit the addition of new text. The Mahayana cannon has never been closed, and they continued to include and consider later texts as canonical.

In this chapter, I introduce Theravada monks and the *vinaya* rules which they consider to be binding on all members of the sangha. I discuss the ways in which *vinaya* rules (textual traditions) are invoked and applied by monastics and the challenges that arise during the subsequent interactions within the context of monks struggling to adapt to Canadian social, cultural and environmental conditions. I will further explore how monastic lives are challenged by the ancient *vinaya* rules throughout the continuum of adaptations within a Canadian context. In addition to exploring some problematic *vinaya* rules in the Canadian context, this chapter focuses on the manner in which the Theravada tradition has made adaptations to their *vinaya*, the methods they use to continue to do so,
while at the same time maintaining the perception that the *vinaya* has remained unchanged. I will provide historical references to support this assertion. In the concluding paragraphs of this chapter I will attempt to explain how these contradictory understandings of Buddhist teachings, particularly the *vinaya*, are being reconciled and how some of the issues in contention are being accepted by the lay devotees who support the temples and the resident monks.

2.1.1. Buddhist monasticism

The monastic tradition of Buddhism is probably one of the oldest in the world and has certainly been the most widespread, both geographically and culturally (Wijeratne 1990: ix). According to the Pali Cannon, the monastic community was first established in the Deer Park at Benares, after the first discourse the Buddha delivered to the five ascetics. Many of the early Buddhist monastics were members of other religious groups who left their old practices to become disciples of the Buddha. Since they renounced their lay-life as ascetics under their previous leaders, and as pre-ordained monks, no extended training period was required. However, monks were trained for at least three months before going on missionary travels to spread the Buddha’s teachings.

Currently, candidates seeking to join the Sangha request ordination from the elder monks by using the traditional oath at a formal ceremony: “Reverend Sir, please take these saffron robes and with compassion, give me permission to join the noble priesthood to enter the path, to end all the suffering and attain the blissful nirvana” (Mahavagga Pali 2013: 232), an oath that states the main purpose of becoming a monastic. Monastics
relinquish everything for one main goal: to attain nirvana which is exemplified by the end of all desire and dissolving the ego-I. The practice encapsulates a gradual training called the eight-fold path involving ascetic and meditation practices to reach the goal.

Within the ordination process, monastics have two options to choose from: *Granthadura*, which involves an active life of scholarship and preaching, and *Vidarshanadura* (*Vanavāsi*), which means a life of renunciation separated from society entirely devoted to meditation and living in forest monasteries (Obeysekara, R., 1991: xxvi). The two types above are characterized as the “village (urban) monk tradition” and “forest monk tradition.” While, choosing which path to follow is dependent upon each individual, most often, when a young person becomes a Buddhist monk he chooses the *Granthadura* option, while elders tend to choose the *Vidarshanadura* option. When an older person enters the monastic life, generally considered incapable of practicing as a *Granthadura* monk, “It is difficult to find these five important qualities in people who have renounced lay life in old age: they are not good at speaking, learning, understanding, preaching and remembering” (Wijeratna 1990: 3, 4). Mostly, older people devote their time to working solely on seeking their own Nibana, during the limited time that remains of their lives rather than spend time working to help others and delay their own enlightenment. Sri Lankan monks in Canada also fall into these two categories and their expectations and attitudes are in accordance with their chosen option.

Monastic life requires that specific practices regarding clothing, lodging, money and food. Solitude and inner progress need to be practiced in accordance with the disciplinary rules, the *vinaya*. This is specified in a code of discipline and a set of regulations:
• *PatimokkhaSila*: The Fundamental Moral Code (major offenses related to immoral, cruel, harmful, and selfish activities.)

• *IndriyasamvaraSila*: Morality pertaining to the restraint of senses.

• *AjivaparisuddhiSila*: Morality pertaining to the purity of livelihood.

• *PaccayasannissitaSila*: Morality pertaining to monastic requisites (Sangharakshita 1987: 171).

A *Bhikkhu*, or monk, is bound by the rules listed in the above-mentioned, four-fold code, and to lead a life of the highest morality. These consist of a total of 227 rules, apart from several other minor ones. *Bhikkhuni*, or nuns, are required to obey 311 rules.

Forest and village-based monastics emphasize different duties for its members. Forest monastics are required to spend most of their time in meditation, while village monks undertake learning, teaching, preaching, and an obligation to guide laypersons in their day-to-day spiritual and ritual practices. In earlier times, the life of monastics was simpler, so monks took their robes and begging-bowls with them wherever they went. The monastics were content with only two necessities, robes to cover the body and begging-bowls to fill their stomachs. Their only obligation to society was to teach the dharma to the householders who offered them sustenance.

Overtime, as villages grew to become cities, the monastic life of village monks became more complicated. Monks living in contact with society were compelled to adapt to societal changes to fulfill their basic needs, and challenges arose from these changes.
Within a few centuries after the Buddha’s passing, Buddhist monastics began to acquire increasing political power and influence in society.

Crucial in understanding how the monastic traditions changed and adapted to changing societies over time and to the political power of the Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka, is the fact that monks became the leading advisors to the island’s kings and were highly influential in confirming the legitimacy of the successor upon the death of a king. Devout and grateful kings bestowed ownership and the revenue and corves levees of entire villages to monasteries, thereby giving control of entire villages to monastics. The same situation occurred in India, where Buddhist monks sat on the king’s advisory committee. Monastics came to hold administrative and academic positions in large monasteries and universities, and administrative control of villages. Monks also authored scholarly books on the Buddhist dharma. Nalanda University in India, founded by Buddhist monks in the 5th century CE, was said to house ten thousand student monks during its golden age (Gadkari, 1996:196, King, & Ācārya1995: 43). Takshila, Odanthapuri, Vikramashila, Vallabhi, Somapura were other prominent universities administrated by Buddhist monks. Buddhist monks also composed a large part of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese literature. Today, Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic traditions have greatly transformed from the early monastic practices. However, there are continuous efforts by today’s monks to keep the vinaya (disciplinary rules), as specified in the text.
2.1.2. Disciplinary rules (*vinaya*)

The *vinaya* is one of most important elements of Buddhist monasticism:


The basis of the monastic order which Buddha founded is “*Anumattesu vajjesu bhayadassavi, samadaya sikkhati sikkapadesu* (seeing with fear consequences of the *Samsara*, (the journey of the life after life) *the slightest fault they train themselves by undertaking precepts of training*)” (Vibhangha 2013: 244). Monastics are required to strictly obey these rules as their guiding principles. However, for the monks of the present day, there are challenges to the upkeep of these rules within modern society. Disciplinary rules for monastics evolved mainly as a result of incidents that occurred during Buddha’s lifetime, which makes their applicability of some rules within modern western society questionable. Walpola Piyananda, the Buddhist monk who immigrated to the USA in 1976 wrote, “I constantly faced the challenge of meeting the social customs of the U.S. head on, dealing with things which did not seem to coincide with the letter of the *vinaya*, our Buddhist monastic code of discipline” (Walpola Piyananda 1993: 3). Obviously the *vinaya* rules were developed in a different social context several centuries ago, and as such, some of the rules may not fit within modern society:

The Theravada Buddhist precepts were first enunciated 2600 years ago in a very different cultural milieu. They need to be reinterpreted for monastics practising in the modern western world today. For example, the Aniyata (indefinite) rules section prohibits a monk from sitting privately with a
woman on a secluded seat; any monk who does so is to confess the transgression. Applied to the modern urban and technological context, monastic today understand this precept to forbid a monk or nun being alone with a person of the opposite sex in a car, sleeping under the same roof with a person of the opposite sex. (Hori 2015: 340)

According to the Theravada tradition, the Buddha did not order any disciplinary rules for monks until the 20th year of his enlightenment. The prevalence of a generally accepted code of conduct followed by all ascetic renouncers, teachers, and sects of contemporary in the region would have made such a need redundant. All the rules were established in the latter half of his life as the Buddha did not specify any vinaya rules until incidents or challenges involving his own disciples made such rules necessary. At that time, disciplinary rules were mandatory unless they were altered or amended by the Buddha. Even today, Theravadins believe that all disciplinary rules were ordered by the Buddha himself, and no one is allowed to add or edit these rules. On several occasions, the Buddha himself changed vinaya rules: “The master did not hesitate to modify the rules to make the life of monks and nuns easier in different climatic and social conditions” (Wijeratna 1990: 53). In some cases, he adjusted rule up to eight times to fit to the societal needs and cultures. When exploring these changes, we observe two themes that Buddha considered: the place and the time. For example, the Buddha allowed monks to use single-layer slippers, while other ascetics required bare feet. However, those single layer slippers were sufficient in Sravasthi the capital city (better road conditions) or other urban areas, but not enough for rural areas. So Buddha changed the rule to allow for up to seven layers for rural monks (Wijeratna 1990: 53). The use of an umbrella rule also changed from place-to-place; in some places their use is only permitted in certain
circumstances (Qinggui 2002: 66). Another rule that changed from urban to rural is the number of monks in attendance for the higher ordination ceremony. Five monks gathering is considered enough for the rural areas while urban ordinations are required to have 25 (Gombrich 2009: 32). Taking a bath was only allowed twice a month in general; however, with daily bathing allowed during hot months and in hot places (Vinaya Pitaka, II: 48). Buddha ordered the precept of monks to have one meal a day. However, Reverend Udai challenged this rule, requesting that he wanted to eat twice a day, i.e., at noon and in the evening. Buddha allowed him to do so (Vinaya Pitaka, II: 63). Rules concerning monks’ association with women were changed by the Buddha, over time. (Maha Parinibbana sutta, in Digha nikaya, pt.ii, p.154, Spiro 1970: 297). In most cases vinaya rules were changed from their first iterations with alternatives or amendments to suit the social and cultural environments. Not only had the Buddha himself made amendments to the basic vinaya rules, but, later, some chief monks and kings also made the necessary changes.

Today, some practitioners claim that neither the vinaya nor dharma should be changed, nor any amendments be made. The primary meaning of the term “Theravada” is “continuation of the elder’s opinion.” The elders refer to 500 monks who attended the first Buddhist council. Thus, portraying the vinaya and dharma as coming straight from the Buddha, and, therefore unalterable, is central to maintaining the vinaya’s authority and legitimacy in the eyes of both the most conservative Theravada monastics and lay Buddhists. The most conservative Theravada practitioners insist on attempting to bring back Buddhism as it was practiced in the days of the Buddha, unchanged and as specified in the vinaya. This is considered an impossible task by others. Theravada practitioners
claim that the whole Tripitakaya contains the utterances of the Buddha and only a few discourses uttered by his principal disciples, which were also approved by the Buddha himself. For example, Dasuththara sutta and Sangeethi sutta in Majjima Nikaya expounded by Venerable Shariputta, which the Buddha accepted as conforming to the dharma. However, as Theravada practitioners themselves believe, Tripitakaya was completed with the last book, Katavattuppakaranaya, written in the 3rd century BCE by Reverend Moggaliputtatissa.

There are also several discourses in Tripitakaya written after the Buddha’s time. The Gopaka Moggllana sutta includes a sentence that clearly shows it was a later addition, “acira parinibbute bhagavati,” which means soon after the Buddha’s passing away. According to Dr. C.C. Pandey, 39 suttas [out of 152] in Majjima nikaya are suttas added later (ariyawimala 2014: 209). Vinaya Pitaka also show evidence of gradual development. A statement in the Anguttaranikaya mentions only about 150 vinaya rules: “sadhipidā bhikkhediyadda sikkhpādā sattā anvadda masaṃ uḍḍāṇā āgacchanti.sadhipidā diyaddha sikkhapādā sattā.” The Milindapañha, written several centuries after the passing of the Buddha, also mentions about 150 rules. However, there are 227 vinaya rules in Theravada Vinaya Pitaka today. These additional rules could not have been articulated at the time when the Anguttaranikaya and Milindapañha was written.

9 Tripitakaya is the traditional term for the three sections of the Buddhist scriptures. These are canonical texts revered as exclusively authoritative in Theravada Buddhism, and are divided into three major pitakas (baskets): Suthra (discourses), Vinaya (disciplinary rules), Abhidarma (Philosophical and psychological discourses).


11 Milindapañha is a Buddhist text which written in 100 BCE. In the Burmese tradition, it is inclusive to the Thripitakaya Pali Canon. However, this is not the case in Sri Lanka or Thailand.
Like Theravada Buddhists, other Buddhist schools also disagree with changing any single word of the Buddhist canon. For example, the Tibetan lama and film director, Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche, states in an interview in the *Shambhala Sun*:

> From the moment Buddha taught, the essence of the teachings hasn’t changed, and it shouldn’t change. Anyone who tries to modernize Buddha dharma is making a grave mistake. It’s important to make a distinction between the culture and Buddhism... dharma is the tea and culture is the cup. For someone who want to drink tea, tea is more important than the cup. The cup is also necessary bit it not the most essential. (Jones 2003: 37)

However, as described, changes continue to be made. For example, history records that Sri Lankan kings had made numerous efforts to protect Buddhism and Buddhist monasticism in Sri Lanka. They introduced several ecclesiastical codes for monastic *vinaya* which are separate amendments to the basic *vinaya* rules.

### 2.1.3. Amendments to the *vinaya* rules - Ecclesiastical Bills for Sri Lankan Monastics

Ecclesiastical bills for Sri Lankan monastics refer to some amendments to basic *vinaya* rules, which were made by the leading Buddhist monastics and governments, the first of which was created in 1165 BCE, “Polonnaruwa ecclesiastical code” (Polonnaruwa Katikawatha), by King Parakramabahu in the Polonnaruwa kingdom. Carved into a stone slab in 51 rows, the code included 21 *vinaya* regulations. The beginning of the code gives the main purpose of the bill in the king’s own words, in a Pali and Sinhalese-mixed language, describing the poor behavior of monks: “it is seen that these foolish monks need to engage in pure Buddhism. As an emperor, if I do not take any action Buddhism
will die, I make this amendment for Buddhism to ensure its continuity for five thousand years” (translated by me from Mahawamsa). In 1187, King Nishankamalla introduced a new bill for monks, and, in all, four ecclesiastical codes were made throughout Sri Lankan history. Today, in Sri Lanka, unofficial changes and modifications to the rules are sometimes made and imposed on its members by particular institutions and sects or *Nikayas*.

Therefore, it is clear that *vinaya* has been changed and altered. Imperatives within the Theravada tradition make amendments to the *vinaya* on the one hand, and conservative resistance to those changes on the other, live in tension; a situation with which the Sri Lankan Theravada monastics have been faced throughout its history. It is important to understand how Sri Lankan Theravada monastics handle this tension while maintaining religious authority and legitimacy.

In the next section, I discuss challenges to *vinaya* (disciplinary rules), and how Sri Lankan monastics residents in Canada handle these challenges through four different case studies: handling money; eating solid food in the afternoon and evening; performing lawn care; digging earth and garden maintenance; and using of body creams. These are based on themes that re-emerged several times in the course of my interviews.

### 2.2.1 Case study 1: Handling Money and Money Transactions

A highly contentious issue faced by Theravada Buddhist monks in Canada is handling money. According to the *vinaya*, monastics are not allowed to use, accept, or
keep money or any kind of valuable goods, exchange money or goods in any transaction, or engage in buying and selling. These are the 18th, 19th, and the 20th rules in the Pacittiya section of the Vinaya Pitaka. As stated in rule 18 of the Patimokka, if any bhikkhu should either receive gold or silver (the common exchanges of the Buddha’s time) or accept it when deposited on behalf of him, it is an offense (rule 19); if any bhikkhu should engage in any kind of monetary transaction, it is an offense (rule 20). If any bhikkhu should engage in any kind of buying and selling, it is an offense entailing expiration of the offense with forfeiture (Pruitt 2001: 39). It is obvious that most Buddhist monks, whether in an Asian or Western country, face challenges to keep up with these rules today, since the current economy uses money as a medium of exchange for almost everything. With the exception of forest monks, all monks need to use money at some point in their lives.

In Sri Lanka, rules for monks handling money have been radically revised to accommodate vinaya rules, although these changes are not entirely accepted by lay devotees. However, this is not the case in Canada. Regarding the use of money and services by monks, the monastic system in Sri Lanka has changed in the last half century, more so than ever before. Some Sri Lankan monks work as teachers in public schools, monastery schools, and universities, and receive salaries. Devotees offer money to monks for performing most religious services. Now in Sri Lanka, monastics are involved in politics, contest for office in elections, and sit in the national parliament as elected members of the legislature. Nine Buddhist monks were elected to the Sri Lankan parliament in 2004. Currently, most monastics in Sri Lanka handle money, and it is a similar situation in Canada. In the 1980s, the Sri Lankan government introduced a bus token system for monks. Lay people brought those tokens and offered them to monks.
Monks used these tokens for public transportation. The system of using these tokens worked as a substitute for money in ensuring that the provider of the service received his fare. However, this system was not used for long due to several practical difficulties. As one of my informant monks explained, once monks started to use the tokens, bus drivers did not stop buses for monks. This was because it was very hard for private transport providers to convert these tokens to money. The Canadian social system and culture does not make the same provisions for monks; as a result, monastics use money more often than in Sri Lanka. There are sects of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in Canada who handle money personally and those (e.g., Mahamevnawa monks) who do not handle money personally but require a trustee of their temple society to do so on their behalf.

As mentioned, in ancient times, monastics had only four basic personal requirements: clothing, food, housing, and medication. All these requirements were gifted by lay people. However, in Canada, there are other basic needs requirements. Monks need a way of obtaining certain necessities without burdening lay people. Two monks out of five participants in my study mentioned that they did not handle money in Sri Lanka, but they do in Canada. In my personal conversations with Canadian-based Sri Lankan monks, most of them handle money. The challenge, it seems, is that monastics in Canada are more concerned about the way they spend money rather than accepting money or keeping it. Besides, the monks who represent the Mahamevnawa tradition, monks from other traditions said that they handle money, and it is more important for them to handle money here in Canada than in Sri Lanka.

Reverend Hemalankara of Ottawa, shared his opinion about monastics handling money, “This rule may be good for the monks who are living in forests. The urban monks
who always deal with lay people need to use money.”

Rev. Rathanasiri of Toronto, also supports this same idea regarding money:

I know some religious institutions act differently in this case of monks handling money. In our case, monks handle money themselves. I have to use money personally because I do not have an attendant to do so. Although I use the money, I have no desire to amass it, when I am offered money by the laity, I accept it and spend it on something respectable.

Based on this interview with Rev. Rathanasiri, it is evident that he does not feel guilty using money that he receives for two reasons: he does not amass money, and he spends it for the benefit of others. I personally witnessed that he recently funded the opening of a Montessori School in his native village in Sri Lanka by investing funds gathered from donations given by Canadian Buddhists.

Most monks in the interviews tried to emphasize that they do not spend money inappropriately. In Rev. Rathanasiri’s opinion, an error would be using money for luxury items. He chooses economy class air transportation instead of using business or first class and does not stay in luxury hotels but instead stays in economical hotels. “I can give the money saved to people who are in need,” Rev. Hemalankara stated, “There is no fault in using money; however, the problem is if someone uses it beyond the limitations of monastic disciplinary rules.”

Rev. Sarada, a Theravada monk based in Cambridge, Ontario, has an interesting liberal opinion regarding handling money by Buddhist monastics. He believes

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that monks were handling money in accordance with rules of their resident country throughout Buddhist history, and that the Buddha himself respected the economic system of each country in which Buddhism became established. There is a popular story in Buddhist history:

Once while Buddha was waiting for a canoeist to pass a river with some of his disciples, an ascetic crossed the river using his magical power and the disciples questioned why Buddha does not use magical power to cross the river. He asked the canoeist how much he charges for one person. It was a very low amount of money and Buddha answered those disciples that the value of that ascetic’s magical power is no more valuable than that amount that the canoeist charges. I would pay this amount rather than using magical power to cross the river.  

I asked whether he meant to say that Buddha himself used money. Reverend Sarada answered, “I don’t know whether Buddha himself used it or Reverend Ananda (attendant of the Buddha) paid him.” It does not matter whether Buddha used money himself or any other monk used money for him in this case, but according to the Reverend Sarada monastics have used money for their day to day necessities, such as transportation, even in Buddha’s time.

One alternative suggested by lay people is that someone could be appointed to handle money on behalf of the monastics. One of my lay Canadian devotees in Halifax suggested this as a solution for me, as well. Most monks in Canada do not consider this a

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16 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
17 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
practical solution, since nobody can stay with the monk all of the time to assist them whenever they need to use money. Most monks in Canada, including Reverends Sarada, Muditha, and Hemalankara, do not agree with the idea of assistance. However, Reverend Rathanasiri considers having an attendant a possible solution, but he does not want the temple society to handle money on behalf of monks. “If I see someone poor and hungry, I want to help him. If the money is with a society, I have to get the approval of the majority, maybe I will not be able to help that man. What is the purpose of keeping money then? It is totally fine if I have an amenable assistant who manages my finances according to my aspiration.”\textsuperscript{18} In my experience, monastics from other Buddhist schools also experience this challenge, and they handle money themselves. “Nuns are sometimes required to manage temple finances. The nuns draw a firm distinction, however, between temple finances and personal finances” (Verchery 2015: 366).

I have heard that some monastics use card systems such as credit, debit, and gift, and cheques instead of using coins and cash directly. I could not find any Buddhist monk who subscribed to this system of using cards as an alternative, but I was able to gather general opinions from other monks regarding the use of a card system, and the compatibility of its use with \textit{vinaya} rules. I have seen in Sri Lanka, some people offer gift cards (from bookshops and shoe stores, for example) to monastics instead of offering money to ensure that the monk does not violate \textit{vinaya} by handling money directly. I assume that monastics who use cards and lay people who offer gift cards as an alternative for money, may try to avoid breaking the rules based on the literal meaning of the rule of

\textsuperscript{18} Reverend A. Rathanasiri, personal communication, February 10, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto.
prohibiting the handling money by monks. When we think beyond that common understanding of the rules, handling money is not just touching money, but it includes depositing and exchanging goods and services in one way or another. As conservative Theravadins argue, even though the monk may not touch money physically, the spirit and intention of the rule does break all three rules, just as in the handling of money. Most monks interviewed said that using those card systems are no different than directly handling money. Reverend Muditha mentions, “if you have $5000 credit in your credit or debit card, it means that you have $5000 in money.” However, Reverend Rathanasiri mentions that using cards system is slightly better than handling physical money and helps keep vinaya rules. Today in Sri Lankan society, Sri Lankan laity still condemn the monks’ use of credit or debit cards, or the direct handling of money

Some individual monks who are members of large organizations, such as Mahamevnawa, do not use the money themselves, but they have societies which handle all their monetary needs. Lay devotees donate money to the society for the welfare of the monks. Even though this institutional system seems an effective solution to the money handling issue, there are also criticisms. According to the 18th rule, money should not be deposited for monks in one way or another, and the 19th and 20th rules state that monastics are not allowed to be involved in transactions. As Aloy Perera explains, rules have two sides: exact precept and the underlying meaning. In his word the spirit of the rule needs upholding. The underlying purpose of not using money is to enforce a situation that reduces the access to worldly things for both the present and the future. The

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rule supports the practice of non-attachment, and also the demonstration to lay people of this non-attachment.

From a critic’s point-of-view, if a society handles money on behalf of monks, this does not support the true meaning of the vinaya rule. But most monastics worldwide use money for their day-to-day needs, and some monastics even save money for the future. The use of money is still controversial. Reverend Rathanasiri mentions, “there are some Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka who do not use the money, lay people respect them [more than other monks] because people believe that those monks who do not use money do not have an attachment to anything else.” On the other hand, people more strongly criticize monks who are money-oriented.

Most monks who use money said that they use money without attachment. However, according to Ajahn Chah, a famous meditation teacher from Thailand, as well as some other modern Theravada Buddhist teachers, and most of the lay Buddhists believe non-attachment to the benefits of money-based transactions are impossible.

He [Ajahn Chah] told me his practice was “non-attachment to all conventions.” “I [the interviewer] told him I didn’t know what he was talking about. ‘‘How about if I stay here,’” he asked, “and keep all my money but don’t attach to it. [sic] Money’s just a convention.’’ I said sure, no problem. ‘‘If you can eat salt and not find it salty, then you can use money and not be attached it.’’ (Chah, A. (n.d.)

Most lay people today understand that money is essential for monastics, and they offer money in religious activities as a donation. In Canada, the only way that monastics

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receive money is by donations, since, to date, there are no Sri Lankan Buddhist monks being paid. Some lay people understand the necessity of money for monastics in Canada, and they offer money for monastics.

This is a practical issue. In Sri Lanka, when going on a journey, sometimes bus drivers take monks free-of-charge from point-to-point, and of course some point to point there are temples and as long as you are wearing a robe, as long as you are a monk you can go to any temple. So, actually, there is no need for money. But today, in Colombo, and also definitely in Canada, monks have to use the money. I do not have any problem with monks using money. 

However, in principle, most lay people would prefer that monks uphold the rules in the strictest sense and not use money.

There is no doubt that money is essential today, whether in the West or East. In drawing conclusions, some monastics may use alternative ways to get around the money related vinaya rules in order to function on a personal and professional level. Most of the monastics in Canada, as with urban monks in Sri Lanka, use money in one way or another, even though it is prohibited according to the rule, although all monastics interviewed agreed that using money contradicts the basic vinaya rules. Solutions, such as credit and debit cards, are not accepted by lay Buddhists, and, in some cases, the use of credit and debit cards by monks is viewed more poorly than when monks handle money.

This example demonstrates the need for monks to circumvent basic vinaya rules in order to function within Canadian life. Even though Theravada practitioners work to keep all the rules as documented by the Buddha and his successors, in practice, monks at

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21 S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
times feel obliged to violate these rules. The demand to challenge traditional protocol is exacerbated for monks living in Canada in order simply to function. Monks are under vow to live frugally. The challenge for monks is that, in addition to violating the principles of not using money, Canadian-based monks have to continually assess their use of money: “Is this purchase one that be viewed as a necessity or an indulgence in the eyes of Canadian conservative diaspora?” A lack of practical guidelines regarding the use of money makes monastic life in Canada more difficult.

2.2.2. Case Study 2: Eating in the Afternoon and Food Related Vinaya Difficulties.

Early monastics (in the very first years during the life of the Buddha) did not have any restrictions regarding their food habits; they accepted food whenever offered. Following the time of Buddha’s meal precept of no food after noon, monastics ate food only once a day, in the morning before noon.22 Today in Sri Lanka, monks are offered food twice a day, early morning (time varies by the monasteries, but usually 6:00 am to 8:00 am), and before noon, around 11:30 am. Thereafter, for the remainder of the day, monks are not allowed to eat any solid food, only liquids. There were two reasons for this rule: people objected to having monastics undertake alms rounds in the night time, and consuming solid food in the evening made it hard for meditators to stay awake.

As mentioned in chapter one, most monastics who entered the sangha in earlier times practiced Vidarshanadura: monks spent most of their time meditating, and they

22 This was an accepted tradition common to all ascetics in Northern India before the Buddha’s time.
considered sleeping an obstacle, even at night time. Today, most Sri Lankan monastics do not go on alms rounds for their food and they do not stay awake the whole night. But even today, they have to keep the same *vinaya* precept of not eating after 12:00 pm (this is standard even for most sects of Mahayana Buddhist monks.)

When considering the importance of particular precepts, some Sri Lankan laity consider the precept of not eating in the afternoon as equally important as the four major *vinaya* rules (*Parajika*). The first category of rules called *Parajika* (literally “defeat”) lists the most serious offenses, the punishment for which is expulsion from the sangha. Reverend Hemalankara mentioned that eating in the afternoon is not a serious offense, but people treat it as such, “Eating in the afternoon is not a flagrant precept. However, people have built it up as a flagrant precept. It is a cultural thing. Some people take this as more than the *Parajikas.*” Most monastics including Reverends Muditha, Rathanasiri and Sarada agreed with Reverend Hemalankara that eating in the afternoon is not a major offense, but, unfortunately, many laity tend to measure the morality of the monastics by this single precept. Among Sri Lankans, it is common to consider eating in the afternoon a great offense. However, there are some Sri Lankan lay people who offer food for monks in the evenings, especially in the case of monks who are sick and to those monks on medication.

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23 The four core *parajika* rules are, “A Buddhist monk is prohibited from: 1) engaging in sexual intercourse; 2) taking what is not given; 3) taking human life); and 4) pretending to have attained a higher spiritual state than actually is the case” (Hori 2015: 337, Stenzel 2015: 352).

24 Reverend K. Hemalankara personal communication, February 21, 2016, Theravada Buddhist Vihara and Cultural Center, Ottawa.
In Canada, Sri Lankan monastics are changing their food habits to suit the Canadian context, such as not participating in the bindapata (a daily practice in which monks carry their offering bowl to homes and business to receive food and alms), as it is not practical to go for alms around in Canada. “Bindapata is no longer a common monastic tradition due to non-Buddhist neighbors, Ontario’s extreme cold during a large part of the year, and the location of many temples in semi-remote rural locations” (McLellan, White 2015 : 421, 422).

With regard to eating after 12:00 pm, from the Canadian-Sri Lankan monastic perspective, Reverend Sarada states that he eats some solid food in the afternoons, not necessarily rice or bread, but crackers or biscuits, which are considered a lesser offense, if he feels hungry: “I think in a country like Canada, sometimes we have to eat in the evening. In the snowy period, I have to shovel snow. Spending such energy makes me hungry, so I take some food.” Cold weather burns more calories and makes people hungrier than in warm climates. Reverend Muditha confirms that he has to take some food in the afternoon here in Canada: “I did not take any food in the afternoon when I was in Sri Lanka; however, I have to take small amounts of food here, since now I am on medication, and it is really needed in cold climates.”

According to vinaya, the rule can be relaxed for medication purposes.

It is the Theravada way that lay people provide all necessities to monks, including food. Lay people divide the calendar days among themselves. In Canada, as in Sri Lanka,

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families are assigned particular days to bring food for the monks, with one family undertakes the task of providing breakfast in the morning and another to provide lunch. This system is the same in other Theravada communities, “In general, Lao and Cambodian lay people bring food to the temple on a rotating basis to ensure that monks are provided with daily offerings” (McLellan, White 2015: 422). However, this system is different from other sects of Buddhism. One time, when I brought food for a Chinese monk living in Halifax, he stated that he rarely receives food from lay devotees, but prepares the food himself. Since most lay people have busy schedules, they tend to bring food the night before and the food is refrigerated for the next day. The exception is weekends and holidays. People bring food on the same day that is assigned to them.

Although bringing food the day prior to the assigned is practical within the culture of Canada, it is an offense according to basic vinaya rules. Rule 38 in the Pacittiya section states, “if any bhikkhu should chew or consume solid food or soft food, having stored it up there is an offense entailing expiation” (Pruitt 2001: 59). A Canadian lay family who offers monthly food for me hesitated to bring food the night before rather than the same day. On the other hand, monastics are not allowed to prepare their own food. This could also apply to warming up refrigerated foods.

Nevertheless, sometimes lay people forget to bring food for monks in Canada. This also occurs in Sri Lanka. In these situations, monastics cook something if time allows or otherwise they go out for food, mostly to a nearby restaurant. If a monastic is in a new town or when traveling, he may have to go to restaurants regularly for his food. However, according to the 31st precept of the Pacittiya section, monastics are prohibited to go to the same public restaurant more than once. “One meal in a public rest house is to
be eaten by a bhikkhu who is not sick. If he should eat more than that, there is an offense entailing expiation” (Pruitt 2001: 57). For example, I once ate a meal in a local restaurant in Halifax. The management would not accept my payment. In order not to burden the restaurant owners, I will not frequent that restaurant again.

To summarize, *vinaya* rules state that monks are not to consume food after 12:00 pm, with a few exemptions. Although senior monks interpret these particular rules as not rigid, Sri Lankan laity view the taking the food after 12:00 pm as a serious offense. Unlike the warm climate in Sri Lanka, the Canadian climate requires people to eat more food to function. Therefore, monks break the food rule. Once again, because there are no guidelines regarding which foods consumed are deemed a lesser or greater offense, monks are obliged to make a personal food choice which may not be acceptable for lay people. Food is a basic necessity of life. The Buddha was asked, “What is the first thing?” And the Buddha responded, “It is food.” (Samanera Pannah, Mahapirith potha 2003: 3). The lack of directives around the taking of this basic life requirement, and the concern for being judged harshly, caused undue angst for Canadian monks. In order to survive, most Sri Lankan monks in Canada do not take the food related rules too strictly. Most monks have a small amount of solid food in the afternoons, they go to public restaurants for food, even visiting the same restaurant more than once, and they often sit and eat with lay people, although this practice is not widely accepted. The food dilemma continues to be a challenge for Sri Lankan monks in Canada. Monastics in Canada agree that certain *vinaya* rules, such as meal consumption, should not be considered as major offenses, since adaptations are necessary in order to function on a practical level.
2.2.3. Case study 3: Lawn Care, Digging Earth, Cutting Grass and Trees

The 11th precept of the Pacittiya, “in causing damage to plant beings there is an offense entailing expiation” (Pruitt 2001: 49): monastics are not allowed to harm any plant in any circumstance accordance to this rule. It is the 10th precept in Pacittiya that, “if any bhikkhu should dig the earth or have it dug, there is an offense entailing expiation” (Pruitt 2001: 49): Monastics are not allowed to dig earth for any reason even for planting.

When establishing the vinaya rules, the Buddha made every effort to listen to public opinion. Ascetics during the Buddha’s time considered harming plants, and insects living on the plants, as a sin. For this reason, some monks did not even walk on the grass. When people noticed Buddha’s disciples stepping on grass and behaving differently than other ascetics, they protested against these monastics. Lay people expressed concerns over monks cutting down trees and cutting grass. Consequently, the Buddha ordered the monks to cease harming vegetation to avoid public backlash. Buddha advised his disciples to observe the rainy season, so as not to harm the new growth of vegetation. In the rainy months, other ascetics did not walk outside. However, Buddhist monastics did walk outdoors and on grass. Lay people protested against monastics stepping on the newly growing grass; thus, Buddha ordered monastics to stay at temples.

However, some monastics in Asian Theravada Buddhist countries do not strictly impose these particular vinaya rules today. Monks do lawn care and dig the earth for construction projects and grow things, doing the planting themselves. On the other hand,
monks prefer not to cut trees or grass themselves, as there are generally volunteers
committed to doing this kind of work for them. In Canada, it is difficult to find lay people
to take care of the temple lawn every time lawn-care is required. Normally, monks have
to mow the lawn and take care of the property themselves. Reverend Muditha mentions
that Buddha advised monks to operate in accordance with the state law and to bend
monastic law to fit state law. Reverend Muditha continues saying that lawn care work is
essential for Canadian monastics today.

According to the law in Canada, we should keep our environment clean, and it is
our responsibility to clean our land. If not, we have to pay a fine or otherwise go
to court. It is advised by the Buddha to behave in accordance with the state law.
So I believe that monastics in Canada may have to cut trees and grass, since it is
hard to find someone to do it all the time and temples are not in the financial
position of hiring someone for these kind of tasks.27

This implies that there are *vinaya* rules that should be changed to respect the government
environmental regulations.

There are differences between Sri Lankan temples in Canada for the above
mentioned *vinaya* rule. As a monk from Mahamevnawa explained to me, Mahamevnawa
monks do not cut trees and grass. He explained the extent to which they carry this *vinaya*
rule: “if, by a mistake I harm a tree, sometimes [for example], while sweeping, I reveal
the fault28 to the sangha.”29 Lawn maintenance is a pragmatic issue for Sri Lankan monks

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28 Revealing the fault is one way of the purification for some minor rules.
29 Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, personal communication, February 11, 2016, Mahamevnawa Monastery, Toronto.
in the Western world. In one instance, one of my Canadian devotees complained to me about a Thai monk. The Thai monk had advised this devotee to dig a canal on the temple premises, and the lay devotee was concerned about this, although he completed the task and fulfilled the monk’s request. *Vinaya* rules say monastics are not allowed to dig in the earth themselves, nor ask someone else to do the task for them. Most lay people understand that this kind of work is not appropriate for the monks. A Toronto-based lay Sri Lankan Theravada devotee shared the following:

> Bhanthe this kind of work is not appropriate for monks. That kind of work should be taken care of by the dayakas [lay people who contribute to the upkeep of the temple]. However, we need to understand why you are doing this, you want to keep the temple clean. I think in this sense, I don’t think monks cleaning the temples, lawn care, and digging earth is going against the *vinaya* rule.\(^30\)

From the perspective of Seneviratne and most Canadian monastics, for practical purposes, it makes sense to modify the *vinaya* rules.

Similar to money and food challenges above, monks sometimes find themselves in a dilemma around lawn care. For practical and legal reasons, monks feel they need to tend to lawn care personally. However, there are no guidelines with regard to what is acceptable within the perception of Sri Lankan conservative diaspora and *vinaya* rule. For example, is mowing the lawn a minor transgression and cutting down a tree a major transgression? Monks find themselves in trying situations without practical solutions.

\(^{30}\) B. Seneviratne, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto.
2.2.4. Case Study 4: Using Moisturizers and Lip Balms

Typically, people living in Canada apply moisturizer and lip balm to counter the effect of the Canada’s dry weather, especially in winter. This is especially true for immigrants from tropical countries, whose skin is not acclimatized to this dryness. In comparison to the Sri Lankan climate, the Canadian climate is quite variable and requires adaptation.

Sri Lankan monastics in Canada use moisturizers and lip balms for health reasons, and many of the off-the-shelf moisturizers are scented. According to vinaya, monastics are not allowed to use scented products, moisturizers, or lip balms, which are classified as cosmetic unguents. All monastics, interviewed, agreed that they should use these creams and moisturizers as medical treatment. In my study, when I inquired about this, monastics said that they use moisturizers as medical treatments, to prevent their skin from irritation. When I inquired about the concerns regarding scent in the cream, Reverend Sarada said that, “we cannot expect to make specific creams for monastics. But we have to use the generally available products with different intention.” Intention is the main concern in vinaya rules: if one’s intention is clear, one can apply the vinaya rule according to that intention. However, lay people will not condone monks wearing scented products.

With regard to lay expectations, some lay people do not object to monastics using body creams, moisturizers, and lip balms. As Reverend Rathanasiri, Muditha, Sarada and Reverend Y [anonymous] from Mahamevnawa mention they do not buy creams or lip

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31 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
balms themselves, but people offer these products to them. It is not different in my case. I have never bought any moisturizers or body cream, but lay people offer these products to me. As I quoted earlier Reverend Rathanasiri states, “in Canada, you must try to keep five rules, four major vinaya rules (Parajikas) and lay expectations. Once people realized that something is a necessity, they offer these items to you. If people offer these items, we are good to use them.”32 Nevertheless, lay people do not want monks to wear scents and perfumes. “You know bhanthe lay people use a lot of things perfumes, deodorants and so on. I don’t think monks want to use those things but just to be comfortable and to protect themselves and remain in good health, monks should use body creams and lip balms.”33 Lay people offer monks these items because they accept that monks need to use these products to remain in good health.

Within the Canadian culture and climate, there are unique considerations for monks with regard to the use of moisturizers, deodorants, and lip balms. The Canadian climate, in particular the winters are dry. The use of moisturizers and lip balms is useful to avoid cracking and reddening of skin. Monks in this case, use these products as medication. The intent in this case, makes the use of these products legitimate for both vinaya and laity. One challenge is that some of these products are scented and scented products are not acceptable. Monks in this case, need to source unscented products in order to uphold vinaya and retain laity approval. Although unscented products are available in Canada, monks seem not to be aware of how to obtain them. Consequently, they use scented products at times, and this is a transgression in the minds

33 B. Seneviratne, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto.
of laity. With respect to body odour, there is a significant cultural difference between Sri Lanka and Canada. In Sri Lanka, if monks give off body odour, out of respect, this is not considered an issue. However, for Canadians, body odour is not acceptable. Body odour opens the door to being judged as “other”, which is a disservice to the monks in their attempt to integrate within Canadian culture. Monks in Canada used deodorant primarily to fit within the Canadian culture, and the deodorant may be scented. If a laity smells scented deodorant from the monk’s person, he or she may judge the monk as making a transgression of *vinaya* and also indulging in perfumes. As well as breaking a *vinaya* rule, this contradicts their image of monks. Without guidelines and agreement, the monks once again, are put in a compromising position.

### 2.3. Summary and Discussion

Many Buddhists, monks as well as laypersons, claim that the *vinaya* rules were promulgated by the Buddha himself twenty-six centuries ago in India. With the passage of time, and now in differing cultural and climatic contexts, most monks claim some *vinaya* rules are no longer practicable. Handling money contradicts basic *vinaya* rules, all monastics and lay followers in my research agreed that handling money is not allowed according to the *vinaya*. However, most monks in Canada and Sri Lanka handle money and consider this act essential to meeting daily practical needs. But monks who do not touch money, as well as many lay people, are against ordained monks using money. This conservatism appears to be more observable in Canada. As Busto (1996), Edaugh and Chafetz (2000), and Hua’s (2005) suggest, diasporic communities operate under more significant orthodox religiosity than they do in their native countries. They want to see
ordained monks to live according to the *vinaya* as specified in the texts, observing these rules literally without succumbing to modernization.

A more controversial subject than handling money centers on the *vinaya* restrictions of a monk’s meal times. The *vinaya* rule states that monks may eat only one meal in the morning before twelve noon, and solid food is forbidden after noon. They are permitted *chathumadura*[^34] and fruit juices, but solid food is forbidden. Most monks I interviewed explained that upholding this rule is not practical in countries with harsh winters, such as Canada. Another area of contention in Canada is the strict prohibition against all physical activity that is not related to the spread of dharma and basic sustenance. Although monastic rules forbid the use of body creams and scented cosmetics, their use is generally acceptable to laymen when used as a precaution against dry skin.

These misunderstandings between the laity and the Sangha arise from the failure to recognize that today’s Buddhist monks have fundamentally separated themselves into two broad groups: as ascetic renouncers whose primary objective is seeking nirvana for themselves, and the village or urban monks who integrate themselves into the communities that support them, and view that teaching the dharma to the laity and administering to their spiritual needs as their primary responsibility. When faced with similar situations, other religious orders, for instance the Christian monastics, defined themselves in two groups as monks and friars—those who have isolated themselves from

[^34]: A traditional food made with a combination of butter, gee and honey.
society and others who live as monastics but still maintaining contact with secular society.

The *vinaya* rules were never meant to apply universally to every place, to every time, to every individual monk. The texts record instances of how these regulations were changed when monks were faced with different climates as when the first missionaries traveled in the Himalayan regions and were granted exemptions from the strict regulations that governed personal possessions and clothing to accommodate outer garments and shoes to cope with snow.

Even in Canada, the early disputation that led to the expulsion of monks from viharayas for driving motor vehicle are now tolerated and accepted (earlier the layman who invites the monks to their residence had to provide transport to and from the residence), as is the acceptability of providing food for the next day (most lay supporter are from working families where both parents are employed in full time work). The acceptance of these practices are mainly because of the convenience it offers to the *Dayakayas* (lay supporters), for it enables the monks to travel by themselves to the houses of laymen for the performances of cultural rituals (evening *pirith* chanting on special occasion, and almsgiving by inviting the monks to partake in the mid-day meal at a layman’s residence), and causes minimal disruption of their morning schedule of preparing children for school and reporting to work on time.

It is apparent that what is most important is ensuring that the original reason and purpose of the rules is always kept in mind, and that the violations that they are meant to prevent are not transgressed even though when looked at superficially and taken literally. Most lay followers readily accept these changes and refrain from literal interpretations of
vinaya, especially when such changes are more convenient for them. The major objections are an apparent reaction by layman against monks who have abused such interpretations for personal benefit, to acquire wealth, and pursue political power. However, this has not been the case in Canada.

As I explored above, Theravada vinaya has changed and has adapted to the time and place throughout the history of the Sangha. Kings and chief monastics of the Theravada countries made periodic amendments to vinaya. From the monastic perspective, it is time to reconsider the problematic vinaya rules and assist with a smoother adaptation to the Canadian culture and environment.

Changing vinaya in the Theravada tradition is not easy. Who has the authority to change vinaya is the main concern. The fact that there is no particular sangha nayaka (chief monk) for Sri Lankan Buddhism, but several monks for each sect whose authorities are still questionable, opens up the possibility of contestation regardless of decisions that individual monks are forced to make to adapt to the Canadian context.

Chapter 3: Preserving the gap: Monastic Social, Cultural and Environmental Adaptations on Lay Expectations.

This chapter examines the importance of lay expectations in directing the actions of monks and the subsequent choices/adaptations that monks make to fit into western social, cultural and environmental contexts. In addition, this chapter explores how and why lay people react to monastic choices and adaptations. In Canada, both lay people and monks are highly invested in maintaining a distinct separation from laity, which I refer to
as “the gap”, creating unique and ongoing challenges for Sri Lankan monks in Canada. In this chapter, we delve into the implications of monks’ adaptations from a variety of perspectives. Diasporic conservatism, collective memory, imagined worlds, and authority and legitimacy theories are each considered within the unique world views of both monks and lay people.

3.1. Introduction

Immigrant Buddhist monks within Canada face many challenges connected to their new social, physical, and cultural environments, and some key issues of concern include their personal, social and financial stability. Most monastics living in Canada whom I interviewed agree that life was easier in Sri Lanka, partly because the social environment is culturally adapted for monastics. Consequently, some Sri Lankan monks, who had come to Canada with the purpose of serving in Buddhist temples, have returned to Sri Lanka and some have even disrobed.35 There are many reasons why a monk may disrobe, and disrobing is not unique to immigrant monks. Throughout history, Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka often disrobed due to an inability to adapt to monastic life, but this is not the only reason for disrobing. In Canada, the main reason for monks’ leaving their posts and returning to Sri Lanka, or disrobing, is the pressures from the expectations of lay people, since keeping and obeying lay expectations is a difficult challenge for the immigrant Sri Lankan monastics.

35 Return to lay life.
Most monks agree that satisfying lay expectations is more challenging than satisfying *vinaya*. “[To survive as a monk] in Canada you must obey five rules, four major *vinaya* rules (Parajikas) and lay expectation.” The difficulties are partly due to disparities between lay and monastic expectations. Both groups have expectations on one another related to their “imagined world.” As with other Theravada Buddhist communities, (McLellan, White 2015: 428) Sri Lankan lay people consider monastics as “fields of merit” and they expect monastics to differ from them physically, verbally and mentally. For example, monastics are not allowed to drive, surf the internet, or use cellular phones (Hori 2015: 344-345). In this way, the gap is maintained with a clear distinction between “them” and “us”. This preservation of the gap, and differing cultural expectations between Sri Lankan monks and lay people, creates many challenges and is a significant factor in some monks’ decision to disrobe or return to Sri Lanka.

### 3.1.1. Cultural influence on Sri Lankan People’s Expectations

The lay expectations which affect the adaptations made by Sri Lankan monks are not random needs, but are intimately connected to the culture of the lay population. In this section, I will be argue that the cultural influences on lay expectations varies, as there is not just a single culture at play, but multiple cultural contrasts. Sri Lankan monks, therefore, must be aware of the different lay expectations stemming from, not just their own culture, but also from other cultures with which they may be less familiar.

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At this point, it is important to establish a clear definition of “culture” and to discuss which cultures have direct impact on Sri Lankan monks in Canada. Apte, summarized the problem of defining culture as follows: “Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature” (Apte 1994: 2001). In this thesis, I apply Matsumoto’s (1996) definition of the term culture. He interprets culture as, “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.” (Matsumoto 1996: 16). In addition, Hofstede (2001) asserts that culture is a stable concept that changes quite slowly.

Sri Lankans in Canada generally have a common set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that they bring from their homeland. This is reflected in the Sri Lankan diaspora community in Canada. Even after moving to western countries, Sri Lankan Buddhists still want to maintain their culture. Consequently, as a living culture, it is generally viewed as rigid and unchanging. In general, the laity expect Buddhist monks to behave culturally in exactly the same way as they did in Asia, or more precisely in Sri Lanka, and to maintain the traditions of their country. This is consistent with other traditional Buddhist diasporas. According to McLellan and White, Cambodian and Lao monastics also hold onto their traditional Buddhist culture (McLellan, White 2015: 428). The expectation to maintain cultural traditions held by Buddhist lay people increases the pressure on monks, who find it difficult to behave exactly the same way as they did in
their traditional culture. Monk Reverend Walpola Piyananda, a resident of Los Angeles, in an interview with Seager, expresses these cultural pressures:

> They [Sri Lankan community in Los Angeles] expected me to be an ideal, perfect village monk. They did not want to see a monk wearing shoes, socks or sweaters. They could not bear to see a monk even shaking hands with women. This was difficult, as in dealing with Americans if I refuse to shake hands, people took offense. (Seager 1999: 139)

In this statement, Piyananda highlights how cultural pressure can have a significant influence on monastic behavior. It is interesting to note that the monk Walpola Piyananda abandoned the temple and moved to another because of these pressures.

But it is not the full picture, so it is important to understand what kind of cultures are present in North American temples. Reverend Walpola Piyananda explains that there are two distinct lay cultures in his temple, the laity from Sri Lanka and western North American laity. Are these two cultures playing a similar role in Canadian Sri Lankan temples? Within my research, all of the participating monastics confirmed that their congregations are comprised mostly of Sri Lankans. One interviewee, Reverend Hemalankara, for example, acknowledged that 99% of his congregation are Sri Lankans. The make-up of congregation distribution of Sri Lankan monks in other temples are as follows: Hilda Jayewardanaramaye’s temple in Ottawa has 90% Sri Lankans; the Toronto Mahaviahara temple, the Mahamevnawa temple, and the Cambridge temple each have 95% Sri Lankan lay participants. On average, among all Sri Lankan temples in Canada, 97% of the members are Sri Lankans, 1-2% are made up of other Asian groups, and 1%  

37 Participants of the religious ceremonies, regardless whether they provide financial support or are registered members.
are western converts. Based upon the numbers of Sri Lankan attendees, these temples function as Sri Lankan cultural centers. Outside of meditation retreats (which generally do not take place in Sri Lanka) all other rituals and ceremonies in Canadian temples follow Sri Lankan cultural traditions. Most religious services regularly incorporate lay remembrance of their ancestors. The demographic composition of the congregation, therefore, leads to cultural challenges for the monk, as both monks and laity try to maintain Sri Lankan traditions within a cultural context that is very different to that in Sri Lanka. As a result, it is difficult to establish common cultural traditions among these two groups.

Since the devotees who attend North American Theravada Sri Lankan temples are predominantly Sri Lankans who share common expectations regarding the upholding of Sri Lankan traditions, even within a new cultural context. This focus on retention of tradition is common among most immigrant communities. “In immigrant communities, the local Buddhist temple functions primarily as a cultural centerproviding a place where people of the immigrant group can speak their own language, eat traditional food, and maintain the old world culture” (Hori 2015: 337). Hence, Sri Lankans attempt to maintain their traditions from Sri Lanka within the context of Canadian temple life. Sri Lankan temples in Canada could be considered islands of Sri Lankan culture within the ocean of Canadian culture. Sri Lankan parents are motivated to save their children from drowning in the “corrupted” cultural ocean of Canada. As Busto (1996), Edaugh and Chafetz (2000), Hua (2005) and Kurien (2005) suggest, marginalized diasporas work hard to maintain their cultural identity and religious institutions serve this social, cultural and
religious need. In fact, the temple may be the only place, outside of their homes, where diaspora can express their cultural identity freely. The relationship between Canadian Sri Lankan laity and their Theravada Buddhist temple is somewhat closer than what is traditionally seen in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan temples in the diasporic communities’ function as community centers for newcomers. As the theory of diasporic conservatism suggests, religious institutions are often the most important place them in diasporic communities. Most immigrants contact the temple before arriving or upon arrival, and many of their immediate needs, such as food, lodging, and other daily needs, are supplied through the temple. Monks take on a significant responsibility with regards to their new congregation members. During my interviews, several lay people spoke of how the monks were the first helpers for them when arriving in Canada. One family who moved to Halifax told me in an interview that when they first moved to Mississauga, Ontario fifteen years ago, all their essential needs were met by the community overseen by Reverend Dhammawasa, abbot of the West End Buddhist Vihara. “We were given almost everything: a van full of stuff, including rice, pots and microwave oven.” When they first arrive to a new town, newcomers often turn to monks to help meet many different needs including transportation requirements. They turn to monks for two reasons: they perceive monks as trustworthy and monks offer their assistance for free. From the monks’ point of view, they perform services for congregation members because doing so reflects their humanitarian background; it is their duty as a monk to work for others as is advised by the Buddha.
Even though they are dominant, the Sri Lankan community is not homogeneous and so individual expectations vary. Congregation members belong to different subcultures that often have their own unique expectations. Some customs and rituals accepted in one subculture may not be accepted in the other subculture. For example, within the main cities in Sri Lanka, it is not acceptable for monks to get a ride on the back of a motorcycle. However due to a lack of transportation options in rural areas, riding on a motorcycle is sometimes acceptable for monks in these regions. The presence of subcultures within the Sri Lankan main culture often further complicates the challenges monks face, especially due to contrasts between the subcultures and monks’ potential ignorance of the differences among the subcultures. For another example, the Kathina ceremony, representing the end of the rain retreat (season), is an island wide ritual that includes the making of a money tree as an offering to monks, and in most of the places occurs on the last day of the rain retreat. In some Sri Lankan subcultures, however, the making of the money tree occurs for the entire period of rain retreat, not just on the day of the retreat conclusion. Canadian Sri Lankan monks are obliged to attempt to meet the expectations that arise not only from the principle living culture but from other perhaps less familiar subcultures. Most monastics in Canada originate from Colombo or other main cities, while lay people come from regions spread across the entire island. Consequently, monks are in the difficult position of trying to meet a wide spectrum of cultural and subcultural expectations.

In Canadian Sri Lankan temples, three main cultural influences are acknowledged. Sri Lankan culture is dominant in temples’ culture, but there is also the
presence of members from other Asian countries, and Canadian converts. Sri Lankan monastics in Canada not only have to please the Sri Lankan main culture, but other sub cultures of Sri Lanka, since the Sri Lankan members of the temple are from all over the island Sri Lankan from different subcultures, as well as these other groups to some extent.

3.1.2. Lay Expectations for Monks in Canada and Preserving the Gap

Culturally, Sri Lankan Buddhists hold a stereotype regarding monks. They expect monks to be serene, to wear maroon or yellow robes open on one shoulder or covering both, to carry a begging bowl hanging over the shoulder and a yellow umbrella in their hand, and to walk bare footed or wear sandals. If a monk steps beyond the frame of this image, other monks and lay people often feel uncomfortable and offended at some level. As an example, one evening when I was about to retire to bed, I heard someone ringing my doorbell and I opened the door. It was a devotee who was bringing my next day’s meals. As we were talking, my devotee asked, “Reverend Sir, once you have time, let’s go shopping for new robe-colored shirts.” Then I realized that I was wearing an ash colored nightshirt. The devotee did not want to see a monk wearing lay people’s clothes. Devotees in Sri Lanka only see monks wearing clothes that match robe colors and this could have been the first time he had seen a monk wearing ordinary lay clothes, and it seemed to upset him. This lay perspective contrasts with my observations in western

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38 It is a custom in Sri Lanka, and considered a meritorious deed, for people to provide monks with daily meals regularly and the literature supports that it is similar in other countries. “In general, Lao and Cambodian lay people bring food to the temple on a rotating basis to ensure that monks are provided with daily offerings”. (McLellan, White 2015: 423).
countries, where I have observed that western devotees do not have the same expectations regarding my monastic clothing. Having lived in western countries for some time, my attentiveness to this cultural custom had slipped, and I had not checked what I was wearing prior to opening the door. Now, whenever Sri Lankan devotees bring offerings to the temple, I make sure to put on my robes. Upholding tradition and culture requires diligence for monks, and even more so within a Canadian cultural context.

Both Sri Lankans and Western Theravada practitioners acknowledge and uphold rituals and ways of comportment that continue to support the gap. However, the assumptions underlying their actions are different. On the surface, it would appear that for native Sri Lankan Buddhists, the gap is based upon respect and a long standing tradition of honoring monks as leaders of spiritual and moral authority. For example, there are specific, respectful words that laity use that refer to the monastics: *Kanawa* is the general word for eating, and the word *waladanawa* is used when referring to monastics and eating; the word *yanawa*, which means go, is replaced with *wadinawa* in reference to monastics. Another example of the way the gap is maintained can be seen in the way that there is a reserved seat on all public transport for monks, and monastics do not have to wait in any line-ups. For Western converts, they are attracted less to tradition because they have not, in most cases, been exposed to a lifetime of the Buddhist tradition or lived in Buddhist-centric cultures. Serious western converts are attracted to the monks as spiritual Dhamma teachers, mentors, guides, and especially role models regarding the benefits of years of disciplined practice and living a renunciate life. Westerners may be moved to relinquish unhealthy habits and patterns and live instead from a disposition
cantered on Buddhist principles such as equanimity, loving kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy. Western converts understand at some level the possibility of eliminating craving or seeking with the final destination being the dissolution of the ego or attaining a state of nirvana. Whereas Western converts focus on meditation practice as a means to achieve these qualities, ethnic Sri Lankans, by tradition, generally feel that generosity, morality, and meditation are all paths to achieving nirvana.

The personal motive behind honouring monks is dependent upon whether the person is born and raised in a Buddhist culture, or as a Westerner, becomes a spiritual seeker and a Buddhist convert. However, the difference in perspective between Sri Lankan ethnic Buddhists and Western converts is not that straightforward. Even the Buddha, reflected upon the two differing worldviews. In Buddha’s time, the group which focused on the teachings of the Buddha was called Dharmadhara, and the second group which focused on vinaya were called vinayadhara (Baruah 2000: 49). The divisions in Buddha’s time are almost identical to the divisions today. Therefore, to make generalizations on why people honor monks, based upon either ethnic origin or Western convert, is misleading. In fact, many Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhists are inspired by monks more by Dharmadhara disciplines than the vinayadhara disciplines, and as such, when they hold monks in reverence, it is often a deep appreciation of monk’s life-long Dharmadhara practice. Why are the divisions relevant in this inquiry? They are important when a traditional religion like Theravada Buddhism is transported to a new culture like Canada with a myriad of unique cultural norms. What is in question are the
underlying personal belief systems that operate either consciously or subconsciously in laity around judging acceptable or unacceptable behavior of monks.

In the end, maintaining these cultural traditions and behaviors is of great importance for a monk, in both Sri Lanka and Canada, because of the preservation of the gap serves as a form of job security. The dissolution of the gap, for example by a monk choosing to wear lay clothes, can quickly escalate and limit a monk’s career (as previously discussed in chapter 1, where the monk was expelled from a temple in Toronto for wearing lay clothes.) The gap sensitivity is even more heightened in Canada, where Sri Lankan culture is limited to, and is therefore magnified in, the temple community. In addition, diasporic conservatism, prevalent in Canada, increases the propensity for disputes around monks’ comportment. From the monks’ perspective, they want to maintain the gap, however, for practical reasons in a new culture, the old rules do not always work. But even so, the laity expect monastics to be different from them in almost every way from their mode of dress, to their social behavior, and deviation from these norms creates career risks for a monk.

Based upon an analysis of my interviews with the Sri Lankan monks and laity in Canada, I identified four scenarios in which challenges arise for monks because of conflicts between vying cultural expectations, or between cultural expectation of laities around behavior of monks and what actions are practical within a given context. Cultural challenges arise when (1) monks drive motor vehicles in Canada, (2) monks wear clothes, other than triple robes, and use shoes, boots or sunglasses, (3) monks perform physical exercise, and (4) monks associate with women. These scenarios demonstrate that
expectations held by the laity and sometimes by the monks themselves arise out of cultural beliefs which do not necessarily take into consideration the very different social, cultural and physical environments between Sri Lanka and Canada.

The next section examines various case studies to illustrate how Sri Lankan cultural beliefs around appropriate monastic activity and behavior create expectations that have specific consequences in Canada’s very different social, cultural and environmental context. The expectations behind traditional beliefs often put pressure on monks to choose between what is expected by laity and what is practical, and even appropriate, within new social, cultural, and environmental contexts.

3.2. An Analysis of Various Case Studies:

3.2.1. Case study 1: Driving Cars

From time to time in Sri Lankan newspapers, there appears a news story about a monk who has been spotted driving a motor vehicle. One lay person told me the following story:

Way back in the 1950s there was a monk who bought a car, a Fiat just like a small Fiat we have now. He took the car out onto the road, “Lankadeepa”\(^3\) published a picture of this monk driving out in their cover page that is the last day that he could drive. Everybody, the whole country condemned.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) A national newspaper in Sri Lanka.
\(^4\) S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
That this event inspired such negative attention goes to show how unusual it is to see a monk driving, and attests to how contrary such an act is to the expectations of the newspaper’s readership (Samarasinghe: 2013 November 5). Although monastic disciplinary rules do not explicitly mention whether or not it is acceptable for monks to drive (the act of driving was not an issue when Buddha established the rules), lay Buddhists consider monks driving a vehicle, even a bicycle, as a great offense. Most Sri Lankans state that monks in Sri Lanka should not drive, but the same interviewee expressed the thought that maybe a time will come when it is accepted: “Time has not come yet to drive in Sri Lanka.”41 Women only started driving in Sri Lanka early 1990s and people objected at that time; today, after two decades, however, there are now a lot of female drivers on Sri Lankan roads. Therefore, Aloy Perera’s conjecture may become true one day for monks, but it is not true as of yet.

All monks who were interviewed agreed that driving is not offensive according to basic Theravada vinaya regulations. However, Reverend Rathanasiri mentioned that he had read an article written by a Burmese monk, in which the Burmese monk stated during Buddha’s time, one particular monk was subject to punishment because of paddling a canoe. Also, monks are not allowed to drive carts. Theravada monastics believe all vinaya regulations are passed by the Buddha himself which suggests a time period around 600BC (Wijeratne 1990: 33). The vinaya rules, therefore, do not explicitly address the question of whether or not driving a car since our current social system is significantly

41S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
different from that of 600BC and people are no longer traveling in carts, either in Sri Lanka or in Canada.

Sri Lankans who reside in Canada have at times also considered monks driving as an offense. During my interviews with Reverend Rathanasiri from TMV and Reverend Muditha from Hilda Jayewardanaramaya in Ottawa, both monks stated that according to Sri Lankan culture, monks should not be driving in Sri Lanka. Reverend Rathanasiri explained the history behind this sanction against driving: In Sri Lanka, “when an accident occurred, people may dispense justice without following the island laws. As a result, after a serious accident, in retaliation, the party feeling injustice may actually arrange the killing of the other driver.” This is a rare occurrence, however, since monks are revered in the community, every effort is made to keep them safe. The main reason for taking the law in their own hands is that people in Sri Lanka do not have confidence in the justice system. As stated by the Buddha, Buddhists believe killing a monk is one of the most sinful acts. As such, the ancient vinaya rules imposed by Buddha are responsible for instilling a cultural belief around the killing of monks.

This fear of committing such a sinful act has direct, practical implications on present day monks. Reverend Rathanasiri is concerned that a confrontation around an accident occurs and monks are involved, the situation can become even more serious, for both the monks and any laity involved in the accident. Consequently by driving, monks are increasing the risk of a sinful act (getting themselves killed and thereby inflicting great sin on another), rather than diminishing that risk. As such, people who observe

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monks’ driving often hold less respect for the monks. Reverend Rathanasiri continued, “Culture is more powerful in a country than civil law. Even if the law permits monks to drive, monks should defer to the local culture.”

Reverend Muditha also expressed concerns about driving in Sri Lanka: “Nowadays people in Sri Lanka do not have good manners in driving. If monks make driving errors and get in trouble with the police and the court for driving related offenses, this will have an impact on lay people’s respect for clergy.”

A further rationale for this aversion to monk’s driving in Sri Lanka, is that people think a car is a luxury item instead of a necessity. The cultural perception of owning a car as an indication of wealth influences the thinking around monks driving, since monks are not to live a luxurious lifestyle but cope with only bare necessities. However, as Reverend Rathanasiri points out, “I don’t believe that Sri Lankans have objections regarding monks’ ownership of cars but they do object to monks driving.”

There are elite temples in Colombo that own multiple vehicles. Most of those vehicles at these temples fit in the category of luxury cars. The temples owning luxury cars is acceptable to the temple community. Most urban temples in Sri Lanka now have vehicles, though very few are registered under the temple or society name but are listed

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under the monks’ names. Also, the government encouraged monks to buy vehicles by giving rebates for import taxes, which they called “car permits.”

In Sri Lanka, a monk owning a car raises the status for the temple and himself. One Buddhist monk I know, a popular preacher in Sri Lanka, justified having a luxury car as a way of gaining respect from the community. “Sri Lankans only pay attention to you if you wear an expensive robe, use an expensive car, and live in urban temples.” This monk rationalizes the use of expensive vehicles in order to get people’s attention. He is not claiming that monks who chose luxury vehicles are simply justifying their desire for a luxury car, generally monks do not care about luxury items. However, wealthy, urban temples in Colombo attract more donations than the poor rural temples, and as a result the monks who live there have a more luxurious lifestyle. Temples depend on lay donations and if rich people are attracted to wealthy temples such as the temples that have cars, then those temples can be further developed to guide people on the right path. On this issue, monastics expectations and laity expectations offer dual perspectives. On the one hand, monks think that temples having cars will attract devotees who can spare money to develop the temple such as expanding the buildings, whereas lay people feel cars are luxury items not suitable for monks.

Even in Sri Lanka then, there are contradictions regarding what is culturally expected of monks by laities in terms of owning or not owning a car, and driving or not driving a car. The challenge of determining what is appropriate behavior regarding

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46 Sri Lankan vehicle market prices are very high because the government imposes import taxes in the vicinity of 100% -400%. The government issues rebates on the taxes for select groups such as government employees, Members of Parliament, doctors, judges, and monks.
driving is further complicated when these cultural expectations are transferred to a new social and cultural context in Canada. The monks I interviewed offer various explanations of how they respond to laity expectations that arise out of Sri Lankan culture within the Canadian context.

In the case of Canada, most monks that I interviewed, with the exception of the monk who represents the Mahamevnawa monastery, agree that while it has been a challenge to gain acceptance of the lay community, it is important for monks in Canada to drive so that they do not have to depend on the lay community for transportation. Sri Lankan monastics drive cars themselves in order fulfill their personal and community service needs. However, other Theravada temples in Canada such as Laos and Cambodian temples, limit the driving for specific reasons only: “Monastic driving varies, with some Cambodian temples in Ontario permitting their monks to drive to medical appointments, attend school class, or run errands” (McLellan and White 2015: 422). This example suggests that lay people need to relax their expectations to suit new cultural norms, without abolishing the tradition completely.

In the early times of establishing Sri Lankan temples in Canada, monastics did not drive vehicles. Around 1992, when monks start driving, laity objected strongly. For example, the Toronto Maha Vihara society (made up of predominantly Sri Lankan laity) expelled two monks because they drove motor vehicles and also wore everyday clothes such as lay people would wear. Laity in Canada expect to see the behavior of Canadian monks to be identical to authentic Sri Lankan village monks. After several decades of monastic driving in Canada, people are still concerned. When I asked one of
my lay participants in this study, Bandara Senevirathne, what the lay opinion is about monks driving, he stated that “I don’t think everybody accept it, bhanthe.47 I am not sure how the division is. I know that some people accept it and some people are against it. The people who are against it, they may have various reasons something like why should monks drive, if they want to go somewhere we, devotees, can offer rides. Hard feelings arise, but time will come, Bhanthe, they [laities] will understand the situation.”48

Most Sri Lankan temples in Canada have specific monks who are responsible for driving the other monks. At the TMV, the West End temple, and the Brampton Buddhist mission center, it is the abbot who drives. When I asked Reverend Rathanasiri about why he drives and does not have another monk drive for him, he stated, “It is hard to do it because many of the monks in temples are visiting monks. Once they pass the driving education course and get prepared to drive, they reach the end of their visiting time.”49 The abbots of these three temples each expressed the desire for another resident monk to do the driving, but so far it has not occurred for two reasons: immigration problems and monks disrobing. TMV then tried to get one monk from Sri Lanka who could perform the duty of driving on a permanent basis, but over a five year period, the monk was refused a visa application more than seven times. Reverend Rathanasiri had two young monks, for example, who performed driving duty for a time, however both disrobed.

47 Reverend Sir is the translation, an honorable word to refer monks in Theravada tradition.
48B. Seneviratne, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto.
It is useful to further consider examples relating to monks driving in Canada and the challenges they faced initially. Reverend Rathanasiri shared his experience. I paraphrase his story. Resident monk X of TMV had an Indian friend who drove a taxi. This monk practiced driving with the friend. From time to time the monk drove the taxi to the temple. The monk was careful to park the car at a neighbor’s driveway instead of parking it in the temple’s own driveway. The monk hesitated letting people see the car since he understood that they would protest against his driving. When the people came to know that there was a monk driving a car, let alone a taxi, they gossiped that the monk was working as a taxi driver. A large protest against the monk ensued. This story describes the kind of social sanctions monks experience from Sri Lankan laity when they do not conform to the cultural expectations such as not driving. However, despite the risk of experiencing such sanctions, Sri Lankan monks living within the Canadian context have many practical reasons why they need to drive. When I asked why is it important to drive in Canada for monks, Reverend Sarada answered, “You are useless if you cannot reach your community when they need your service. For example, if a devotee is hospitalized, or someone died in their family, can you ask them to arrange transportation for you to visit them? These are the most important occasions where people seek spiritual guidance.”

(Reverend Sarada did not drive at the time of our meeting but was scheduled to take his road test.) All the monks who stated the necessity of driving in Canada had reasons as to why they should drive. As Reverend Rathanasiri mentioned, the main reason that monks need to drive is “they had to go beyond their religious services, such as

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50 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
to perform temple administrative functions, and they have to be able to get to all members of their congregations.” Driving for monks in Canada is therefore a necessity.

Another reason monks began to drive in Canada was to avoid Canadian peoples’ reactions to them as monks, which was often racist and discriminatory. Two elderly monks in Canada, Reverend Muditha, and Reverend Rathanasiri revealed that there were incidences of non Buddhist Canadians discriminating against monks in the early days, such as teasing, throwing coffee cups at them and showing the middle finger to them. It posed great difficulty for monks when they took public transportation. As a consequence, because of the mistreatment they experienced at the hands of the Canadian public, some monks totally abandoned public transportation. Today, this discrimination by Canadian public is still present at times for monastics.

Therefore, the responsibility falls on the monks to educate the laity as to the rationale behind letting monks drive. During my interview with Reverend Rathanasiri, he explained the response of his congregation to his own driving and how it was that he came to see a degree of change in the perceptions of the laity. He describes what he felt was an important moment when cultural beliefs from Sri Lanka shifted so as to accommodate the Canadian context:

On one evening a group of people came to have a meeting with me and said: “we talked about that you are driving a car, we don’t like that, and also many people criticize and have displeasure over that.” So I said yes, I agree with you. Who is going to give a ride if I need transportation? Then one of them volunteered that he will come after 5pm after work, and again I asked anyone who can come in the daytime if we need transportation? Everybody was silent and finally, they agreed to monks driving and asked to minimize trips and I again clarified to them that

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monks never travel here and there without any reason. Then we started driving in public. I believe this was the turning point of driving in Canada.\textsuperscript{52}

Though the practice of laity driving monks can be considered as a form of respect to keep the gap, monastics I interviewed indicate certain challenges that arise out of being dependent on laity for transportation. Reverend Rathanasiri of TMV tried to start this practice many years ago but failed. For Mahamevnawa monks in Toronto, they arrange their transportation needs by telephoning the person who had agreed to drive monks. Mahamevnawa monk said that “all of their transportation needs are community needs and it is the duty of lay devotees to offer transport to monks.”\textsuperscript{53} Mahamevnawa monks use a system which is easy for lay people. When someone offers to drive monks, this person informs the monks of their free time, as well as how much notice they should be given and how long it will take them to reach the temple. When resident monks need any transportation, they seek out the most available person from that list and let them know about their needs. Those people always offer free service and the monks do not worry about paying for anything such as gas or parking. However, this system is criticized by Reverend Sarada. He suggests that with this system monks can begin to feel dependent on lay people and are at risk of feeling that they may be considered a burden on someone else for the fulfilment of the monk’s needs. Laity did not accept monks driving in Canada initially however with proper explanation they have begun to accept it with certain restrictions.

\textsuperscript{52} Reverend A.Rathanasiri, personal communication, February 10, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto. 
\textsuperscript{53} Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, personal communication, February 11, 2016, Mahamevnawa Monastery, Toronto.
Upon further examination, although Sri Lankan monastics have been driving in Canada for around twenty years, still they hesitate to drive to religious ceremonies. This sentiment is common even in other Theravada communities. “But for ritual ceremonies (for example, to attend a funeral, perform house blessings, or take part in a community event) the monk is always driven by a layperson” (McLellan, White 2015: 422).

Reverend Rathanasiri has driven for almost twenty years in Canada, yet he still hesitates to drive to give sermons. 54 “It looks odd if I drive to a place where I give dhamma talks.” 55 Reverend Hemalankara, an elder monk from Ottawa who managed a temple for fifteen years in Canada, also does not agree with driving to any religious services. Both Reverend Rathanasiri’s and Reverend Hemalankara’s decision not to drive to religious services is their way of maintaining good relations and keeping the respect of the laity; the result is that monks are summoned and accompanied to home-based religious services. My assumption from these examples is that the monks are attempting to maintain tradition. If monks drive to religious services, it will definitely reduce the gap which monastics always try to maintain between themselves and laity.

The aforementioned discussion leads to the question whether or not monks driving will lead to a reduction in their respect from lay people. Culturally Sri Lankans believe that driving is lay people’s business. Laity have an image about how monastics

54 Preaching sermons is one of the most popular rituals in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. Householders invite their relatives and friends to their house and they invite a monk to give a talk on Buddhism. Most of these occasions are for commemorating their ancestors. In Sri Lankan culture, there are specific dates to perform those religious events. This preaching sermons takes place on the seventh day and the ninetieth day (in some cases on the forty-fifth day) after the death of a loved one and thereafter annually on these days. It is not just to give a talk but mostly is a cultural event with a handful of rituals.

should behave. They believe that when monastic attend a religious service, in order to maintain this decorum, at the very least, monks should not drive. If monastics drive, this may diminish the gap between monastics and lay people. The imagined world theory can be applied here in that laity assume that monks should maintain a certain comportment and that it should not change with changing times.

In this section, I explored the question of monks driving from both lay and monastic perspectives and found evidence both for and against. The supporting arguments are threefold: to meet the monks own needs; to establish independence from lay people (not burden them); and to make religious services to laity more efficient by reducing transportation issues. The arguments against monks driving are threefold: monks driving may create disrespect for monks; monks driving cars diminishes the gap between laity and monks; and monks giving rides to women may instigate cultural disputes. (I will explain in the last case study of this section.)

In conclusion, most monastics in Canada are of the opinion that driving in Canada is a necessity to better serve their congregation, to reduce dependence upon laity, and to more efficiently accomplish temple needs. Both monks and the laity have expectations based on Sri Lankan cultural traditions regarding the role and accepted behavior of monks. These expectations sometimes conflict with the necessities and practicalities of living within the Canadian context. The tension between Sri Lankan cultural expectations and the Canadian context creates challenges for the monks; the monks simultaneously want to meet lay expectations and still function on a practical level within Canada.
3.2.2. Case study 2: Using clothes other than triple robes and the use of shoes/boots, and hats.

3.2.2.1. Clothing issue related to the gap.

The Theravada Buddhist monastic robe is the symbol of monastic identity, and it is not just a ceremonial dress for monastics but also their general clothing. The robe makes the obvious outer distinction between laity and monastics. Sri Lankan lay people in Canada are not yet ready to accept adaptations on the monastic robe as monks wearing common clothes may lessen the gap between both parties. So, I would like to begin with an auto-ethnographic explanation. In late 2012, when I first received a visitor’s visa to come to Canada, a family in Sri Lanka offered me some thermal underclothes and socks saying that “Bhanthe, you have to use these items in Canada, because the climate is totally different and you cannot imagine that much cold, until you get there.” I realized the truth of their statement once I landed in Canada in the middle of winter. I did not know how cold it could be in Canada and I did not have any idea what I should wear for the cold climate. In Colombo area of Sri Lanka, where I spent almost two-thirds of my life, the temperature does not go below 23 degrees Celsius. Adjusting to the new climate is a common problem among other immigrant monks:

I have met many monks, ninety percent of those monks…. not ninety more than that when they arrived here first from Sri Lanka always certain unpreparedness. But does not take much time, like fish into the water they get
used to it. They get use to wearing hats, wearing sweaters, or jerseys or whatever get used to that. I have never seen that any problem with it.⁵⁶

According to Theravada vinaya rules, monks are only allowed to use a limited amount of clothes, called triple robes; the inner robe covering the lower body (Antarvāsa), the robe covering the upper body (Uttarāsaṅga) and the outer robe (Saṃghāti). Sri Lankan monks in Canada use ordinary lay clothes as supplements to the above three parts of robes for two reasons; to hide the Buddhist monk identity and avoid discrimination, and to protect the body from exposure to the cold climate. Given that half a century ago the robe was new to Canada, early monks faced several difficulties in public. In those early days, for their own safety, they wanted to hide the robe from the public. This scenario happened throughout North America. “Asian immigrants in the British Columbia faced intense racial discriminations” (Hori 2015: 336, Lai and Paper 2005: 90). Other schools of Buddhism also changed their outer look to fit within mainstream Canadian culture. Some sects sacrificed their own cultural identity and reshaped their tradition to fit within Canadian religious norms. Hori states, “Understandingly pure land Buddhist temples, seeking to avoid public attention, called their temples ‘churches’, seated their ‘congregations’ in pews, addressed priest as ‘minister’ and sent their children to dharma school” (Hori 2015: 336).

All the elderly monks in Canada who participated in my research stated that they had difficult times in the early days of establishing Theravada Buddhism in Canada.

⁵⁶ S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
They faced community resistance from westerners when they saw robed monks in public. Reverend Muditha mentioned that this challenge did not happen only in Canada. There were other movements like Hare Rama – Hare Krishna who were judged harshly, and the Ku Klux Klan who sold hate in the United States. These group added fuel to a racist mentality and contributed indirectly to the negative treatment robed monks received in Canada. "People threw coffee cups and stuff over the monks on roads, they showed fingers and shouted using bad words while passing by in cars."\footnote{Reverend B. Muditha, personal communication, February 22, 2016, Hilda jayewardanaramaya, Ottawa.} Westerners sometimes yelled discriminatory statements and racial comments towards those in the unfamiliar dress, of the robe. There were also incidents of violent acts. Several years ago in Montreal, a man hit a monk in Montreal in a supermarket using a coconut. Reverend Henepola Gunarathane described an incident in his autobiography, Thumpanen Amerikawata (To America from Thumpane)\footnote{The small village in Sri Lanka where this monk was born.} One day a man who met him on the road, referring to the robe, asked him “why did you bring your bed sheet with you instead of leaving it on the bed in the morning”\footnote{Reverend B. Muditha, personal communication, February 22, 2016, Hilda jayewardanaramaya, Ottawa.} (Gunarathane 2006: 85). Alternatively, some early monastics in nineteenth century in North America used ordinary clothes to avoid these situations. In some situations, monastics have used coats in which to hide the robe. However, the wearing of a coat raised concerns for Sri Lankan lay people. For the laity, the wearing of the coat by the monk represented the monk moving away from a privileged position towards one of familiarity. Another example, is that one day I was wearing a coat indoors in a shopping mall. A member of my temple saw me but refused to acknowledge me. My sense was that the man was uncomfortable seeing me wearing a
coat over my robes. The gap, based upon this man’s personal beliefs was, for that moment, in question.

Secondly, it is obvious that for monks who are residents in climates with intense winters like Canada’s it is necessary to use extra clothes other than those traditionally permitted, including thermal underclothes, winter coats, raincoats, socks, gloves, and boots. As I mentioned above, lay people bring strong judgements based upon tradition with regard to appropriate and acceptable use of clothing by monks. As iterated earlier, some monks were expelled from Canadian temples for wearing ordinary lay clothes. “Accommodation for life in the North American context, however, gives rise to modification regarding the traditional three-robe requirement” (the bare shoulder is incompatible with northern climates) (McLellan and White 2015: 421).

Across the western world, the laity’s struggles with monks’ comportment are well documented. Reverend Walpola Rahula writes that some Buddhist monks asserted that Buddhism will not take hold in the West, if monks are not allowed to wear shoes and socks.

In those early days of Buddhist missionary activities in England, a monk spent a couple of years in London for missionary purpose. On his return back to his temple in Sri Lanka, after a period of not agreeable existence in the West, he stated that it would perhaps be written in the history for future reference that Buddhism could not be established in the west because monks were not allowed to wear shoes and socks (Rahula, 1974: 10).

According to my research participants, every monk agreed that, in order to survive Canadian winters, monks should supplement their wardrobe with additional articles of clothing. However, there is no accepted boundary established as to what kinds
of ordinary clothes should be used or avoided. For example, some monks revealed that in winter, they do not use thermal underwear, and wear socks and winter coats, while some others do not use winter coats but use thermal underwear and socks. The principles are agreed upon (that adaptations need to be made in Canada), but the boundaries are problematic because these issues are perceived as endangering or playing with the gap that is required to be maintained based upon fixed tradition.

These traditions have a symbolic element. As a common perspective, Laity want to see monks attired in robes only. Therefore, the accommodation for the weather should require only the minimum impact on the monk’s habit. The robes represent a major symbol of the gap around the distinctions between monks and laity.

Buddha ordered *vinaya* for the convenience of the sangha community and he altered and replaced some *vinaya* regulations to fit the time and region. Of course, we have to make some changes to adapt to the Canadian climate. We have evidence that Buddha himself did that, Buddha ordered a *vas satakaya* for rainy retreat. As Reverend Madihe Mahanayaka Thera\(^59\) says, it is like a winter coat, but at the time nobody in Sri Lanka knew how to make the *vas satakaya*, since they had not used it in Sri Lanka for a long time. However this *vas satakaya* is a rough and suitable cloth for a cold climate.\(^60\)

As Reverend Rathanasiri states, Buddha himself adapted to the cold climate using alternative clothes such as *vas satakaya*. Reverend Muditha also agreed that monks should use alternative clothes. According to him, the main purpose of the passing triple robe rule during rainy season was to reduce the cold, to decrease troubles with flies and mosquitoes, and diminish exposure to cold winds. Consequently, after covering his body

\(^{59}\) Reverend Madihe Mahanayaka Thero was a most venerated monk in Sri Lanka. He performed great service to the Buddhist community. He passed away in 2003.

\(^{60}\) Reverend A. Rathanasiri, personal communication, February 10, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto
with triple robes, it is not an offense to use supplementary clothes if a monk still feels the cold. Reverend Muditha also stated, “I would like to see monks even in Sri Lanka also using shirts under their robes. It is more convenient.” Reverend Sarada offered an even more liberal opinion than other monks around the question of attire. According to Reverend Sarada, regardless what the vinaya rules state, or what are lay peoples’ expectations are for the monks, monks should have the final decision-making ability. He offers an interesting story to justify his argument: “There is a Zen story, once some monks were meditating in the jungle. Suddenly they faced an emergency, a bad snowstorm. They only had one piece of wood, a wooden Buddha statue. They had to make a decision whether they protect the Buddha statue and die or to burn the statue and live. Finally, they came to the second option.” According to Reverend Sarada, it is more important to be practical than theoretical. He continues stating that using ordinary outer clothes in Canada is an instance of this sort of practical need. However, monks must use them appropriately. These actions may challenge ancient vinaya rules, but, monastics believe that in order to function those changes need to be made.

Lay expectations are different. Lay interviewee Aloy Perera of Toronto, is concerned with monks using different types and colors of outer coats and jackets in Canada. According to his view, monastics should wear clothes that clearly distinguish them from laity.

This is my personal view is that there must be a way of distinguishing that person is a monk, that person given up a lay life to a monastic life. That

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62 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
exactly what Buddha meant, also the spirit of Buddha recommending *civara* [robe] is giving up. However if you wipe out this spirit there is no sense of using *civara*. There must be distinct outward sign which monk is recognized.63

Aloy’s statement is indicative of most Sri Lankans’ concerns. One day in Toronto while walking in a shopping center, a Sri Lankan family recognized me as a Sri Lankan monk and they came and spoke with me. While we were talking, the man expressed concern over my winter hat. It was not a fancy hat. He did not actually say that I should not wear a hat, but he pointed out that there was a logo on the brim of the hat. He suggested that I should not wear a hat with a logo. However, my feeling is that he was actually concerned with me wearing any hat at all. This might have been the first time this man had ever seen a monk wearing a hat. Monastics do not use hats in Sri Lanka and according to *vinaya*, they should not wear them. As 22nd Sekhiya says in Patimokka, “I shall not go with my head covered into a village” (Pruitt 2001: 93). Early monastics in Canada hesitated to cover their heads. Aloy Perera tapped his memory, “Once the Venerable Madihe chief monk came to Toronto and we took him to Niagara Falls. It was a windy day and his whole body become wet within short time and we asked him to wear a hat but he refused to do so.”64 However, within a short period of time people were able to convince him to use an outer coat and a hat. To summarize, wearing outer clothing other than robes in Canada is a necessity and yet the act of dressing for Canadian winters in the beginning created a quandary for both monks and laity. In another example, lay people in Halifax

63 S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
64 S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
witnessed Mahamevnawa monastics walking outside in the winter without wearing socks in their sandals. Lay people requested the monks wear socks and offered them socks and covered shoes to protect their feet which the monks accepted.

As a further example, one of my informants in Toronto mentioned that Reverend Rathanasiri once met a young monk from Mahamevnawa monastery at a community gathering. It was the middle of winter and this monk was not wearing a hat leaving his bald head exposed. An elder monk, Reverend Rathanasiri advised the young monk to use a hat in the winter in order to stay healthy. Even elderly monks steeped in tradition understand the practicalities of proper clothing in Canada, and advise other monks to use protective clothing. As my informant informed me, in her own words: “it was like a father advising a son.” These days, Canadian-based Mahamevnawa monks implemented changes to early policies and they wear clothes other than triple robes, they wear socks, hats, and winter coats. According to Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, monks still try not to use winter coats as much as they are able. He explained that, “When we are going to a sermon or other religious service we do not wear our winter coats but still do wear socks and hats. When the car (which is normally heated) is parked close to the door we go and sit in it, People try to park the car as close to the houses as possible and we go inside quickly.” When I asked the Reverend whether not wearing a coat makes sense from a safety perspective, he smiled and said

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65 Manuja Perera, personal communication, February 20, 2016, her residence, Toronto.
66 Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, personal communication, February 11, 2016, Mahamevnawa Monastery, Toronto.
“no”. This comment indicates the fact that monks often have to go way beyond what is reasonable and practical, and even put their health at risk, in order to please laity.

The robe conundrum is not unique to Sri Lankan Buddhist temples. In 1990, Robert W. Foddle, the American security officer wrote to the head of the Mahanikayas of Thai monastics pleading for an alternative monastic dress. While cotton robes were suited for south Asia, he argued that their continued use during Midwestern winters put monks at serious health risk. “It is easy to picture a car-load of monks being driven to a meeting during the cold winter months, having their car break down and freezing to death before help could arrive. Easy to see the possibility of a furnace breaking down, and monks hospitalized with hypothermia” (Seager, 1999: 141). Most Sri Lankan lay people in Canada also agree that monks should use winter coats and socks to prevent exposure to cold weather and reduce the chance of related sicknesses. However, laity want to see monks wearing only limited types of clothing such as socks, winter coats, sweaters, and hats and only as a necessity to keep them warm in the winter. This is an intent to maintain the gap. Monastics should be careful about the colors of supplementary clothing in order to avoid lay objections. Only monastic color clothing is acceptable, orange or maroon only.

3.2.2.2. Boots and shoes

Using covered shoes and winter boots are matters that challenge disciplinary (vinaya) rules. According to vinaya rules, monastic should not wear shoes that are covering the toes, which therefore means, monastics are not allowed to wear covered shoes or winter boots. In Sri Lanka mostly monastics wear sandals and in some cases slip
on shoes which are opened in both front and back. During the period when Buddhism was getting established, monastics were only allowed to wear single layer slippers. Buddha increased the number to seven layers in order to protect soles from harsh road conditions. However, monastics still do not use covered shoes or boots in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, in Canada, every Sri Lankan monastic including Mahamevnawa monks, wear winter boots and covered shoes as protection from Canadian weather and to assist in keeping physically healthy. Reverend Muditha introduced boots and work gloves to monks in his temple in Sri Lanka, to protect them from rain and work hazards, however, he understands that many Sri Lankans are still not culturally ready for these changes. He continued, “When I go to Sri Lanka I do not change my shoes or shirt until I get to the temple. I see some people at the airport and on the way looking at my shirt and shoes, as it is unfamiliar to them.” Introducing cultural changes in Sri Lanka to meet the Sri Lankan weather conditions may still be premature. Again, this laity expectation regarding monastic shoes is based on preserving the gap. If a monastic wears the same shoes as a layperson, this act may indirectly impact preservation of the gap between monastics and laity.

3.2.2.3. Sunglasses

According to Sri Lankan culture, sunglasses are considered fashionable items and it is offensive for monastics, who have renounced life’s comforts, to wear sunglasses.

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67 Reverend B. Muditha, personal communication, February 22, 2016, Hildajayewardanaramaya, Ottawa. 98
I assume it is a culturally acceptable notion in Sri Lanka that since sunglasses are considered a fashion statement in Sri Lanka, rather than a utility item even in extremely sunny weather. The issue of sunglasses, is not only a matter of concern to Sri Lankans, but also for other traditional Buddhists. In 2013, there was a big pushback in Thailand, when monks wore sunglasses and earphones (Press, T. A. 2013). Personally, I have never seen a monk wearing sunglasses and I will definitely feel odd whenever I see one wearing sunglasses in Sri Lanka. However, it is no longer simply a fashionable item in Canada, most monks who drive use sunglasses as a necessity. Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa mentioned that “Lokuhamuduruwo 68 has advised monks to use sunglasses when they have problems with their eyes and to protect from sun glare.” 69 Reverend Rathansiri uses transition lenses which get darker in sunlight. He hesitates to use these glasses in Sri Lanka since people may consider his sunglasses a fashion statement. As I mentioned earlier, most Sri Lankans still hold onto their strict monastic culture in Canada and they do not want to see monks wearing sunglasses, a sign of modernity. As some people believe, it is in Sri Lankans’ mind that if someone uses sunglasses, it means that he is wearing them to show off and not for simply covering his eyes from the glare of the sun, out of necessity.

Interviewee and laity, Aloy Perera confirmed this notion. “In Sri Lankan culture when you wear sunglasses, it narrows the gap between monastics and laity. In Sri Lanka, sunglasses are suitable for lay people only. In addition, men in Sri Lanka tend to

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68 The chief monk of their organization ‘mahamevnawa’.
69 Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, personal communication, February 11, 2016, Mahamevnawa Monastery, Toronto.
feel fashionable wearing sunglasses and the sunglasses are a means to attract women. As a result, common people generally do not have a good opinion about a person wearing sunglasses. When a Buddhist monk wears sunglasses, people judge them to have lowered themselves to the level of ordinary lay people. That is Sri Lankan culture.”

Personally, I was offered sunglasses by a devotee in Halifax and I accepted the glasses and wear them. According to Aloy Perera, Sri Lankans believe that monks should use sunglasses while in Canada. “We wear sunglasses. It is a question of your eyes and the sun, it has nothing to do with some personal view about it. If someone objects, that is because of his ignorance. You should clarify your intention for them.”

In summary, the above discussion pointed out the reasons for using ordinary clothes and other items to adapt to the climate, however these actions are felt to pose a threat to the gap between laity and monastics that is a fundamental lay expectation, and this is a concern. With regard to monastics views, there is a lack of consensus, and new traditions such as Mahamewnwa Temple do not allow monks to wear sunglasses. Most people are concerned about preserving of the gap and all of them accept the necessity of protection from the climate. For example, a lay person suggested there should be a unique design of a winter coat that is suitable for monks so that they are distinguishable from others. It may be time to revisit textualism to suit living traditions in Canada and other western world. Canadian monks could create clothing standards for all monks across

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70 S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
71 S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
Canada such that monks support standards that continue to preserve the gap between laity and monastics.

3.2.3. Case study 3: Monks doing physical exercises

As I elaborated earlier, Sri Lankan people expect monks to model the ideal character - morally, spiritually, physically, verbally, emotionally, and mentally. As a result, laity does not accept monks performing physical exercises other than brisk walking. The usual expectation in Sri Lanka is that monks walk very slowly without moving their head and hands unnecessarily. If a monk does not do so, both laity and monks consider this inappropriate form which may impact the gap that both parties are working to maintain. I suggest that this matter has two sides: The Sri Lankan mentality around exercise is not based on the health benefits of exercise but for body building. Almost everybody who goes to exercise in a gym in Sri Lanka has the main goal of building or strengthening their muscles and making their physical body attractive. Within this lens, Sri Lankan laity believe monks should not do physical exercise. And secondly, the sights of monks exercising such as bicycling or weight lifting is unfamiliar. The image of a Buddhist monk meditates under the shade of a tree. The act of physical exercise can also be interpreted as monks appearing like lay people and thus narrowing the gap.

Most Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in Canada walk regularly to maintain their health. Reverend Muditha suggests, “It is totally okay to do physical exercise to keep
healthy since the intention is the most important part in Buddhism. I don’t think any Sri Lankan monastics in Canada do physical exercise for building their muscles but to keep them healthy.”\(^{72}\) Some lay people offer a more moderate view towards monks doing physical exercise. As Aloy Perera mentioned; “It is totally okay for monks to do physical exercise. However, if you ask me if monks should take memberships in physical exercise outlets, well I will say no, you don’t have to do it there but you can do it in the temple.”\(^{73}\)

In gymnasiums, monks can be exposed to women wearing limited clothing to cover their bodies which can arouse primal urges. This exposure does not support the monks’ practices of non-attachment. Accordingly, monks carrying out physical exercise should confine this practice to their space of residence.

Another reason to exercise is as to counteract an unhealthy diet. It is customary that Sri Lankan monastics receive all meals from different lay families and most of those foods are made to high standards of taste while compromising about health for example fried, salty and sweet foods. Due to lack of exercise and poor food choices, many Sri Lankan monks in both Canada and Sri Lanka have diabetes and high cholesterol. Doctors have advised monastics to do physical exercise to prevent further complications related to heart disease and diabetes. It is necessary for monks to do physical exercises to keep their health and thus to be of better service to lay members of their temple. When I first came to Halifax, several Sri Lankan lay people asked me to go to the university gym for physical exercises and they provided me with suitable clothing.

\(^{72}\) Reverend B. Muditha, personal communication, February 22, 2016, Hildayewardanaramaya, Ottawa.
\(^{73}\) S. Aloy Perera, personal communication, February 16, 2016, his residence, Toronto.
and shoes. However, to date, I have never been to the gym. I understand that not all Sri Lankans accept monks going to a gym. These people feel that the gym should not be included in the monastic daily schedule.

In conclusion, although not mentioned in the scriptural traditions, in accordance to Sri Lankan culture and lay expectations, monastics are not allowed to do physical exercise. However, understanding it as essential for physical health, today some monastics do exercise in Canada, such as walking and riding a treadmill inside the temple. Keeping the exercise activities within the confines of the temple and out of sight of the laity, serves to preserve the gap between monastics and laity, and to keep monks healthy.

### 3.2.4. Case study 4: Association with women

*Vinaya* rules and expectations continue to offer challenges for monks and female laity. Sri Lankan Buddhist women are more engaged in religious services than Sri Lankan Buddhist men. In Sri Lanka, more than three quarters of regular participants in temples are women. The ratios are no different in Canadian than in Sri Lankan temples. Monastics interviewed confirmed that more than eighty percent of their congregation is female. Reverend Sarada confirmed: “The temple is the place where women are more actively engaged in. For every religious activity that we organize in the temple, most of
the organizers are women.”  

Given that women are more involved than men, it makes sense that some monks may have difficulty to maintain the separation protocol between themselves and women.

To associate with women is one of the main areas of criticism that monastics face today. Reverend Rathanasiri and Reverend Muditha advised me many times: “you have to be careful with two matters in Canada: the association with women and misusing donations.” These are the most controversial matters. In the past, there were accusations against monks regarding association with women in Sri Lankan Buddhist history in Canada. In some cases, women came to temple unaccompanied, and stayed at the temple to very late into the evening. In other cases, monks gave car rides to women. Some monks believe that giving rides to lay people may narrow the gap between monastics and laity. When I asked the opinion of Reverend Mudith, he said that, “It also has two sides; it is not good to take contracts and performed the duty of the taxi driver, but in another hand I do not consider it as an offense to helping someone in need. The problem is, it will disgrace.”

There were some incidents in the past where people raised concerns over monks giving rides to women. Reverend Muditha said “as long as your intention is pure, you are good to do.” But Reverend Rathanasiri said that “even though your intention is pure you may have to consider what other people think about you. Monks should not act

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74 Reverend K. Sarada, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Waterloo Wellington Buddhist Monastery and Meditation Center, Cambridge, ON.
in ways that create disputes with lay people regarding their discipline.” 77 This statement indicates that monks have to adjust their behaviors according to lay expectations.

Women who immigrated without male family members expect and require more help from monks than other Sri Lankan immigrants require. Monks need to handle help these women judiciously. At times, monks help women by giving rides, food, and day to day needs all done in private, without public awareness.

In most of the cases, monks giving rides to women was considered a major infraction by monks, and lay people do not approve of this assistance. The principle is that monks cannot treat women differently from men, even though the women are the ones who need the most help. Lay people who shared this opinion with me did not have a direct concern about monks giving rides to women. They suggested more appropriate ways the service should be gifted. “It is better if a lady is accompanied by someone else in the car. If this is not possible, I think the lady should not sit side-by-side the Bhanthe.” 78

In Canada, women visiting the temple unaccompanied still concerns some Sri Lankan laity. However, most monks interviewed do not consider this to be a problem. On the day when I met Reverend Muditha in Hilda Jayewardanaramaya in Ottawa, a woman brought lunch for the monks and she was unaccompanied. Reverend Muditha explained that, “if the woman who visits the temple does not have a sexual intention regarding the monk or the monk does not have an intention about the woman, and the intention is to

78 B. Seneviratne, personal communication, February 17, 2016, Toronto Maha Viharaya, Toronto.
perform religious duties, then there is no concern. Especially in countries like Canada when they cannot find a man to accompany them.”

According to Reverend Rathanasiri, “this principle should be understood by everybody. Women may have to visit the temple even in the late evenings to perform religious duties. Men and women in Canada work full time and they may have to prepare and bring food for monks after work.”

The Mahamevnawa monks have a different position on this matter. They do not allow women to come to the temple alone any time of the day or evening. This protocol stands not only for women visiting the temple. If a woman wants to talk with a monk, she should be accompanied by someone else, not necessarily a man but someone should sit next to her during the entire conversation. “We do not preach any single verse to a woman when she is alone.”

Reverend Y (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa asserted. On the other hand, the protocol also supports the monks. As example, Reverend Muditha expounded, “however, monks should protect themselves from lay criticism. There is a new threat in the western world for Buddhist monks.”

According to Theravada Buddhist culture, Buddha also received accusations from women such as Magandiaya and Chincimanavika. In case of Chincimanavika, she accused the Buddha saying that she got pregnant because of the Buddha.

I know some incidences happened in the USA and Australia; Women came to the temple with the intention of blackmailing monks with sexual harassment

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81 Reverend (anonymous) from Mahamevnawa, personal communication, February 11, 2016, Mahamevnawa Monastery, Toronto.
complaints. On the other hand, monks have been found guilty of sexual misconduct, in Australia a monk was jailed for six years. If there had been another witness, it may have provided more details of the incidences. Reverend Muditha described another incident.

There was an incident in the USA recently, a young woman had come to the temple and was talking with a young monk who was the abbot. The telephone rang and the abbot went to pick up the phone and the lady left the temple quickly. When the monk saw her through the window, he noticed that she was carrying a big knife.

Based upon these examples, the protocol of having a women accompanied with another person provides a witness(s) in the room.

As I mentioned earlier, it is challenging to suggest a solution for these cultural problems. Other than educating people and introducing a systematic procedure for monastics to associate with women, the entire issue is not black or white, but operates in the gray area. As a possible directive, the Theravada school believe Buddha has given an answer for this question.

When asked by Ananda, his beloved disciple, how monks are to conduct themselves with regard to women, the Buddha answered:
“As not seeing them, Ananda”
“But if we should see them, what are we to do?”
“Not talking, Ananda”
“But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?”

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The point here is that *vinaya* rules that were imposed by Buddha seem to be impractical in Canada. Within Canadian living traditions, gender equality, women’s independence need to be balanced with the interdependence and cooperation that is required to sustain community.

### 3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined how lay expectations influence monastic behavior beyond the rules laid out in *vinaya*. The pragmatic issue of preserving the gap between monastics and laity is echoed in each of the scenarios above. The gap directly or indirectly influences all monastic behavior: driving cars, wearing clothes, eating food, being in the company of others, and all behaviors at large. Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined world”, which Appadurai further developed, directly applies to both laity’s and monk’s preservation of the gap. Both monastics and laity have their own imagined worlds, and the gap is the principal delineation of the boundaries between the two groups. The four case studies presented above support the argument that lay cultural expectations are rigid and subscribe to ancient textual traditions (*vinaya*). For monastics some of the traditions are impractical and actually detrimental to the monks’ health. There are several challenges. On one hand, maintaining lay approval at all cost supports the preservation of the gap, while on the other, it poses several problems. Firstly, the expectations often do not fit with Canadian culture. As such, lay expectations force monks to endure unnecessary daily life challenges. A slip in protocol and monks’ authority can be easily usurped. The alternative is to lessen the intensity of expectations around protocol.
challenge in this case is that over time, with more and more flexibility, the distance between laity and monastics, the gap, diminishes. This fear of reducing the gap is real for the monks, as monks have more at stake.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis has explored the interaction between Buddhist textual traditions that depict disciplinary vinaya rules for Buddhist monks, traditionally claimed to have been established during Buddha’s time, and the interaction with contemporary practices of Buddhism as a living tradition applied within present monastic life in Canada. The hypothesis of this thesis asserts that: in many cases, the imperatives of lay expectations, especially in a diasporic setting, outweigh the importance of textual Vinaya, monastic rules. I attempt to validate the hypothesis that monastic lives are challenged by expectations of lay followers throughout a continuum of adaptations to social, cultural and environmental conditions of Canada. With regard to modern cultural norms, laity are often highly critical of the monks’ choices to apply practical solutions to everyday problems, for example driving a car or handling money.

As with all studies, there were certain limitations to this research. I interviewed a subset of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks and laity. I interviewed five monks out of a possible thirty monks living in Canada, as well as three laity out of approximately fifty thousand Sri Lankan laity in Canada. This research focuses primarily on monastic perspectives, and lay interviews were supplementary. These interviews were supported
by auto-ethnographic observations based upon my personal experience. I have been working as a monk within the Sri Lankan laity community for more than twenty years, including four years in Canada. Even though I conducted only eight formal interviews for this paper, I informally discussed at length the issues addressed in this thesis with many other Sri Lankans, including both clergy and laity. However, the opinions in this thesis may not be generalizable to all Sri Lankans living in Canada.

This thesis discusses how the Buddha himself altered vinaya rules to suit specific geographical regions and cultural issues at the time. Since Buddha’s time the number of vinaya rules has expanded from one hundred and fifty rules to two hundred and twenty-seven rules. Over time, rules were added to fit the situation, as such there is precedent for changing rules to fit the context. As well, since the time of Buddha, both monks and kings adapted vinaya rules to fit the situation. The 18th century delineated a sharp dividing line between traditional culture and modernity. Colonialism especially in southern and Eastern Asia, directly influenced modernization and the formation of “Global Buddhism.”

Although, Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism in Canada is relatively new, it is now firmly established in most major cities. There are nearly thirty Buddhist monks maintaining and serving lay devotees in twenty Sri Lankan Buddhist centers across Canada, representing more than twenty thousand lay followers made up of both ethnic Sri Lankans and converts. More than ninety seven percent of these congregations are Sri Lankans. As with many other diasporic traditional Buddhists, this thesis demonstrates, Sri Lankans judiciously working to keep their traditions, culture, and sub-cultures alive in
Canada. Interpreting the expectations and demands of the diaspora create challenges for monastics who struggle to adapt within a new Canadian context.

Although there is a precedent for altering ancient *vinaya* rules and traditions to suit the context, in Canada, lay expectations imposed upon monks supplant practical revisions and adaptations. Often monks are forced to walk a precipice in satisfying in laity concerns and traditional expectations, and supporting the *vinaya* rules, while simply functioning. When adapting within the Canadian culture, the laity expect monks to behave to the letter of *Vinaya* (textual tradition), even when the rules as originally stated are no longer practical, particularly within the Canadian social, culture and environmental context.

Based upon interviews with five monks and three lay people, I examined problematic situations, and the subsequent choices/adaptations monks are making in order to uphold lay support and retain authority. I explored the impact of the lack of precedents within Canadian monastic culture, as monks themselves hold differing opinions regarding acceptable comportment and actions. For both monastics and laity, the goal of preserving the gap, regardless of practicalities and common sense, sometimes places monks in dilemmas that are not optimal. Reinterpreting the rules within a modern context creates challenges. Often monks are forced to make concessions that impact their personal well-being in areas such as health, emotional state, status in the community, and livelihood in Canada. Tension is exacerbated between the diasporic conservatives and the texts of early *vinaya* rules which were established twenty five centuries ago. In Canada, Sri Lankans function in their day-to-day lives within a context of an ethnic minority. The
impetus to preserve homeland culture and tradition is strong. Consequently, diasporic Sri Lankans are often more conservative and rigid in their beliefs and values than their Sri Lankan-based counterparts.

As most monastics in Canada claim, certain vinaya rules contradict modern times. Handling and possession of money raises a major contradiction within basic vinaya rules. All the monastics and lay followers in my research stated that according to basic vinaya, handling money is not allowed. However, most monks handle money as a means of exchange for goods and services. Monastics who handle money consider this as essential today, while those monks who do not use money believe that monks handling money is inappropriate. As well, some lay people support the position that monks handling money is inappropriate. Some monastics use alternatives to the physical handling of money through transaction methods such as debit cards, credit cards, and cheques. Opponents feel that these methods contradict basic vinaya. However, the Buddha advised monastics to function in accordance to local laws, and these laws supersede even the basic vinaya. For example, according to vinaya, monks are not allowed to perform lawn maintenance. However, in Canada, it is the law to maintain one’s property. With lay volunteers, in principle, monks in Canada would not need to cut the grass on temple grounds. However, there is sometimes a shortage of volunteers. As such, monks’ actions are alignment with the Buddha’s advocating of upholding the local law.

In this thesis, I establish the fact that Sri Lankan Buddhists, both the laity and clergy, are committed to preserving the gap between each party. Most cultural challenges are a result of the enforcement of preservation of this gap. For example, in the early
stages of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Canada, monks faced difficulties commuting on public transportation when required to travel. Monastic attire was a new phenomenon for Canadians, and at times monks were harshly mistreated to counter these problems, monks began driving private cars and wearing lay clothes. However, these two adaptations were in cultural disagreement for the Sri Lankan laity. Consequently, monastics started driving secretly for their personal commuting needs. Most monastics state that they need to drive in Canada for two reasons: to serve the community better and not to depend on laity for their transportation needs.

There were two main reasons for monastics to start using ordinary lay clothes in Canada: to hide the robe from the public to avoid discrimination, and to adapt to the winter climate. However, both monastics and laity believe that there should be a limit to what accessories should be used. In the area of personal well-being, today. In addition to triple robes, all monastics in Canada wear other garments, and they also wear accessories such as boots, sunglasses, and hats.

Another area of contention is the domain of physical exercise. According to the Sri Lankan culture, monks should not engage in physical exercise for two reasons. Firstly, Sri Lankans’ attitude towards physical exercise is that it is for building muscles to become more attractive, therefore monks should not build their bodies. Secondly, monks should present and practice a demeanour of physical restraint, according to vinaya they are not allowed to move the body unnecessarily. However, most monks in Canada do physical exercises such as walking and riding the treadmill to maintain their health. For some laity, monks performing physical exercise remains a contentious area.
Another significant cultural challenge for Sri Lankan monks in Canada is their association with women. Monks are required to keep their distance, both physically and socially from women. However, as women represent the most engaged and active group within Sri Lankan temples, sometimes monastics have to maintain closer relations and contact with women than men. In some cases, women visit the temple on their own. Most monastics do not have concerns with this, while Mahamevnawa monks strictly refuse women to visit temple on their own.

Across Canadian Theravada temples, the interpretation of *vinaya* and level of accommodation to lay expectation is inconsistent. This lack of commonality among application of rules presents intense challenges for both monks and laity as each party works to preserve the gap. Preserving the gap within a Canadian cultural, social, and environmental context is much more challenging than in Sri Lanka. I suggest that there will likely continue to be problems meeting lay expectations until a consensus can be achieved for all temples in Canada. One idea could be for Canada-based Theravada monks to meet and consider a modern interpretation of *vinaya* that upholds the rules within the practicalities of Canadian social, cultural, and environmental context, preserves the traditional textual essence of Buddhist *vinaya* as possible, and incorporates Canadian Sri Lankan laity’s expectations where practical. A document detailing modifications to fit *vinaya* in Canada could be produced, upheld, and self-regulated by Monastic sangha. This set of guidelines could be presented to laity in temples across Canada as the new standard in monks’ comportment in relation to current day Canadian living challenges. This set of rules could be a living document, and could regularly be updated to meet new situations and
changing conditions. This idea is offered as simply one possibility to ease monks’ adaptation to the Canadian context within conservative diasporic culture.

Further research could focus on the perspective of lay Buddhists, as well as including many participants across Canada with segmentation according to demographic characteristics, such as age and education of the monks as well as age, gender, education, and first or second generation of the Sri Lankan laity. Another possible research area could be to compare the adaptations and challenges of lay expectations and application of vinaya rules with other Buddhist traditions across Canada, USA and other European countries.

Most Sri Lankan lay community living in Canada rely on local monastic sangha and temple life for their spiritual, cultural, and social well-being. Lay people consider the presence of monks as fields of merits. Challenges encountered lay expectations are the result of preserving the gap between monastics and laity. For the present, monks continue to straddle this deep chasm.
Bibliography


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Interview Questions for Sri Lankan Buddhist monks

Demographic Background

1. May I have your name please? 
   (Your name will only be published with your separate written consent)
2. How old are you?

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1. What is your education background?
2. What was the reason come to Canada?
3. How long have you been living in Canada?
4. In which city do your currently reside in Canada?
5. What city in Sri Lanka was your temple?
6. What is your English knowledge? (Read/write/speak)
7. What is your sect?
8. Are you resident in a monastery, Temple, House, or other?
9. What is your congregation? (How big is it? who are they?)
10. As a monk, how important have a mentorship from more senior monks been to your development?

Social Environmental (a) transport

1. How do you commute to meet your own needs?
2. Do you drive a car?
3. Do you give rides to others?
4. What about women?
5. Do you get rides from women?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

Social Environmental (b) finances

1. What is your experience about handling your own finances in Canada?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
2. What difficulties do you face when you handle or not handle money?
3. What do you feel about someone else handling money on your behalf?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
4. How do you feel about monks handling other financial transactions?
   (Ex. Gift cards, credit cards, e-transactions)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
5. How do you handle your friends / relations/family member’s financial need in an emergency?
   (Ex. Mother’s hospital bill)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

Social Environmental (c) Gender

1. What concerns do you have regarding your interaction females?
2. How do you feel about having female friends?

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1 Buddhist monastic code of disciplinary rules.
3. How do you differentiate the relationship between male and female friends
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

4. What is your opinion about gender equality in Canada?

5. What is your opinion about gender segregation in the temple?

6. What is your opinion about female members coming to temple alone?
   - What time of the day?
   - When?
   - For what purposes?

7. Do you have specific dress code for female/male temple visitors?

8. In an emergency situation how would you help a woman?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

**Physical Environmental (a) clothing**

1. How do you make adaptations to the Canadian cold/snow climate?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

2. How do you feel using robes other than three-fold robes?  
   (Ex. Socks, thermals)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
3. What do you think using sunglass or snow boots?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

4. How about use of lip balm, body cream etc.?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

**Physical Environmental (b) Lawn care**

1. What is your opinion about cutting grass, trees and lawn care in Canada?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

**Physical Environmental (c) Food and Health**

1. What do you do to keep your health?
2. Do you do physical exercise?
3. What type?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

4. How do you feel about two means a day rule?
5. How about eating at certain times of the day?
6. What is your opinion about eating certain times a day and physical health?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
- How challenges it to *vinaya* rules?
- How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

7. What is your opinion about monk’s vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism?
8. How about if fish/meat/eggs offered for the meal?

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**Summary**

1. Please explain what kind of *vinaya* rules easy to protect in Canada than Sri Lanka?

2. What kind of *vinaya* rules difficult?

3. what kind of things you think better to bring here from Sri Lanka
Interview Questions for Sri Lankan Lay Buddhists in Canada

Demographic Background

1. May I have your name please?  
   (Your name will only be published with your separate written consent)

2. How old are you?

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3. What made you to come to Canada?

4. How long have you been living in Canada?

5. What is your education background?

6. In which city do your currently reside in Canada?

7. How many Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in your city?

8. With how many Buddhist temples do you actively engaged in?

9. How often do you go to temple?

10. How is your connection with temple?

11. What are the noticeable differences between them?

Social Environmental (a) transport

1. How do you feel if a monk drive car to your home for religious service?

2. What do you feel if they give rides to others?

3. What do you feel if that is a women?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to *vinaya* \(^1\) rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

\(^1\) Buddhist monastic code of disciplinary rules.
Social Environmental (b) finances

1. What do you think Sri Lankan Buddhist monks using their own finance in Canada?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

2. What do you feel about someone else handling money on behalf of them?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

3. How do you feel about monks handling other financial transactions?
   (Ex. Gift cards, credit cards, e-transactions)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

4. How should they hand their friends / relations/family member’s financial needs in an emergency?
   (Ex. Mother’s hospital bill)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

Social Environmental (c) Gender

1. What kind of relationship do you prefer for Sri Lankan Buddhist monks to have with female?

2. How do you feel about Sri Lankan Buddhist monks having female friends?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

3. What is your opinion about gender equality in Canada?

4. What is your opinion about gender segregation in the temple?
5. What is your opinion about female member coming to temple alone?
   - What time of the day?
   - When?
   - For what purposes?

6. Do you believe that male/female temple visitors should have a specific dress code?

7. In an emergency situation how would Sri Lankan Buddhist monks help a woman?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

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**Physical Environmental (a) clothing**

1. How should Sri Lankan Buddhist monks adapt to the Canadian cold/snow climate?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

2. Should they use other than three-fold robes in Canada? (Ex. Socks, thermals)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

3. Should they wear sunglass and snow boots?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

4. How about use of lip balm, body cream etc.?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to vinaya rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
Physical Environmental (b) Lawn care

1. What is your opinion about cutting grass, trees and lawn care by Sri Lankan Buddhist monks themselves?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to *vinaya* rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?

Physical Environmental (c) Food and Health

1. Do you accept Sri Lankan Buddhist monks to do physical exercising
2. What kind of exercise should they do?
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to *vinaya* rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
3. How do you feel about their two meals a day rule?
4. How about eating at certain times of the day?
5. Does this conflict with their health?
   (Ex. If diabetic, gastritis)
   - How do you consider it different from Sri Lanka?
   - How challenges it to *vinaya* rules?
   - How challenges it to Sri Lankan cultural norms?
6. What is your opinion about monk’s vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism?
7. How about if fish/meat/eggs offered for the meal?

Summary

1. Please explain what kind of *vinaya* rules easy to protect in Canada than Sri Lanka?
2. What kind of *vinaya* rules difficult?
3. What kind of things you think better to bring here from Sri Lanka?