

# Intervention of Vatta and Sīla in Interpersonal Relationships: A Review of Vattakkandhaka within the Theravada Vinaya Piṭaka

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## Abstract

Although interpersonal relationships are frequently perceived as a modern phenomenon, their roots extend to ancient eras, evolving progressively alongside the development of human interactions. Over the last seven decades, literature on interpersonal relationships within the context of modern contemporary management has developed significantly and added up as a result, with multitudes of ideas, concepts, and theories relating to interpersonal relationships. The Vinaya Piṭaka constitutes one of the tree divisions of the Tripiṭaka detailing the monastic regulations and management by the Buddha approximately 2,500 years ago, which significantly shaped the social relationships within Buddhist monasteries. Although current Buddhist literature has studied interpersonal relations via the Sutta Piṭaka, it lacks notable studies relating to the Vinaya Piṭaka. This study aims to address the existing gap in understanding interpersonal relationships within the contexts of modern management and modern Buddhist literature by examining the Vatta concept as defined in the Vattakkandhaka, employing a semi-structured review within an inductive thematic approach. The Vatta concept incorporates the guidelines provided by the Buddha to regulate the daily monastic life of monks in order to facilitate the development of Sīla practices. The findings of this study are that concepts of proximity and distance, behavioral traits—wholesome and unwholesome—and the nature of people's setting and achieving of objectives in their relations within the objectives of the society are essential to understanding the overall dynamics of interpersonal relationships in society.

**Key Words:** Interpersonal Relationships, Proximity and Distance, Sīla, Vatta, Unwholesome Behavioral Trait, Wholesome Behavioral Trait

## Introduction

Besides mere documentation, history is also a process of critical analysis and understanding of complex human experiences (Tosh, 2015). Lewenson and Herrmann (2008) discuss that history is a factor in the formation of human identity, and human beings should approach it as a strong guidance that fosters growth and maturation of human beings. Therefore, history is the foundation of human interconnectedness and can be likened to the DNA of human cultural identity. They also argue that the capacity to

create new ideas, values, and experiences results from an powerful knowledge of one's past (Lewenson and Herrmann, 2008). Similarly, Goh (1988) asserts that the capacity to fabricate new ideas, values, and experiences relies greatly on a serious knowledge of one's own past. These writers believe that one has to pay more attention to historical studies because it is not practical to neglect history when pondering human progress that currently and in the future exists. In this context, the investigation of religious history seems to provide a critical beginning for the development of new insights pertinent to modern society. Grossley and Karner (2005) hold that religious traditions explained firmly epics, biographies, genealogies, and narratives of historic great people, and hence the study of religion in historic contexts cannot be evaded. Nath (2015) highlights the significant impact of religion in human society as it influences a variety of fields, including economics, politics, human behavior, and morality. Raimy (2024) points out that religion is the required pillar of human identity and culture, and it assists humans in comprehending the profound networks that exist among people. Raimy puts emphasis on the fact that religion provides people with a moral framework and a force to direct them in how they interact with other individuals (2024).

Collectively, these writers' views prove that religious scriptures are a positive input to historical study in a variety of subjects and are positive observations that one can utilize to structure and build modern society. Typically, the diverse interactions among individuals are regarded as the cornerstone of human development throughout the annals of history. Currently, there exists an ongoing scholarly discourse regarding the theories, concepts, and methods that examine the interactions among individuals as depicted in ancient religious texts and their extensive ramifications within the context of human history.

Unlike other world literatures, Buddhist literature stands apart in its extremely wide variety of topics and the thorough analysis of each topic. The *Tripiṭaka* is a highly significant historical text in Buddhism and is recognized universally as the major source of the Buddha's doctrine. The Buddhist canon is thus, in a position to claim a history of more than two thousand five hundred years (Bodhi, 2005). Contemporary Buddhist literature offers insightful discussion of interpersonal relationship theory, principles, and practices derived from leading teachings in the *Tripiṭaka*. Hoa's (Rev. Dhammananddi) discussion indicates that, in relations, the *Ambalatṭhika Rahulovada Sutta* informs that an individual is morally responsible for his or her actions and the consequential effect of the actions on other individuals (2003). In this review, Hoa (2003) stresses the importance of developing love for all sentient beings, as a mother would love her sole child, as the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* teaches. The *Sutta* innovatively presents a concept of interpersonal relationships, defined by a universal love toward all living beings, likened to a mother's love for her only child. Prasanthi (2015) discusses the concept of interpersonal relationships through different *Sutta* teachings. According to Prasanthi, the *Sigāla (Sigālovada) Sutta* outlines 61 duties pertaining to six social classes in the practice of interpersonal relationships. Other than that, Prasanthi also sees that *Purisabandana Sutta*, *Īṭṭibandana Sutta*, *Parābava Sutta*, and *Dhammapada* all touch on interpersonal relationships in which ethics will foster good relations.

The reviews above of interpersonal relationships in contemporary Buddhist literature seem to have been adapted from the *Sutta Piṭaka* of the *Tripiṭaka*. The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, on

the other hand, offers a reflection with regard to different kinds of relationships that existed among members of the monastic community. *Vinaya Piṭaka* is a fundamental book in the canon of *Tripiṭaka* and it encompasses not just the rules and laws that control the day-to-day actions of *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* but also a broad assortment of procedures and ethical principles meant to facilitate cooperative interactions among them (Vinaya Piṭaka, 2007, Online). The *Vinaya Piṭaka* implies regulations that dictate conduct, methods for resolving disputes, and emphasizes the necessity of fostering harmonious relationships to uphold the integrity of the monastic community (Gethin, 1998; Rahula Thero, 1974). It is noteworthy to recognize that modern Buddhist literature appears to be deficient in discussions concerning scholarly analysis of interpersonal relationships as implied in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. In a close reading of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, one can sense that the theories, practices, and corresponding concepts of interpersonal relationships are traceable in the teachings prescribed in this canon. This suggests that the *Vinaya Piṭaka* could contain knowledge of interpersonal relationships that has not yet been explored. If such potential exists for creating new knowledge of interpersonal relationships through the study of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the knowledge so attained would be of great value in making meaningful contributions toward shaping the practice of interpersonal relationships.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, an important part of Buddhist literature, seems to offer knowledge on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. In light of this, it is vital to investigate the historical development of interpersonal relationships through the views of contemporary management. The earliest focus on interpersonal relations as a formal concept in the world literature dates back to 1885 (Clark, 2023). With ongoing criticism of the theory of interpersonal relations by researchers and theorists in human behavior, the concept of interpersonal relationships has been constructed as a prevalent concept in the modern world over the last fourteen decades. It may be argued that the theory of interpersonal relationships in modern literature has now arrived at an advanced stage in its construction.

A close reading of the literature reveals that the concept of interpersonal relationships in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* has been neglected in modern management literature and modern Buddhist literature. Thus, the current study aims to explore the nature of interpersonal relationships as presented in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, particularly through its analysis in the chapter of the *Vattakkhandhaka*. The study is more interested in the interpersonal relationships in the monastic order via a study of the *Vatta* concept as introduced in the *Vattakkhandhaka*. The study also seeks to provide a theoretical model that may be applied to facilitate the management of interpersonal relationships in contemporary organizational and societal contexts based on the various dimensions of interpersonal relationships according to the *Vatta* concept.

## Method

The general purpose of this study is to examine the Buddhist perspective of interpersonal relationships. To realize this, the study focuses on the *Vattakkhandhaka* chapter of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, as it is the focal text within the *Tripiṭaka* canon. The *Vattakkhandhaka* prescribes thirteen *Vattas* that relate to the daily interactions and lives of the monks in the monastic community. In the analysis of documentary sources, a semi-structured review method is applied in connection to the research phenomenon. According to Snyder (2019), analysis and synthesis of data in this semi-structured review method can be done through

several strategies. This study conducts an analysis and synthesis of the theme of interpersonal relationships as proposed in the *Vattakkandhaka* through a semi-structured review in an inductive thematic strategy.

## Discussion I: Vatta and Interpersonal Relationships

### Concept of Vatta

According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the Buddha established the *Vatta* as a system to govern deviant behaviors or actions considered detrimental to the quest for liberation within the monastic order of monks. As per the Pali-Sinhala dictionary compiled by Madithiyawela Siri Sumangala Thero and Polwatte Buddhaddatta Thero, the term *Vatta* refers to a concept encompassing "the conditioning of existence: engaging the completion of tasks," "observance," and "Vrata (religious vows/ self-imposed tasks)" (*Vatta*, Online Pali-Sinhala Dictionary). The *Vatta*, as explained in the *Vattakkandhaka*, deals with a vast array of duties/tasks, observances relating to primary needs, purity, social conduct, and communication with the monastic community. Some *Vatta* are particularly responsible for the maintenance of residences, robe care, decent behavior upon receiving alms, and participation in confession rites (Sangharakshita, 2003). The *Vattakkhandhaka* regulates the tasks for monks in 13 clear cases, which are: 1. *Āganthuka Vatta* - on duties of visitors, 2. *Āvasika Vatta* - on duties of residents, 3. *Gamika Vatta* - on traveller's duties, 4. *Bhaktāgra Vatta* - on duties of refectory work, 5. *Pindacharika Vatta* - on duties for those going on almsround, 6. *Āranyaka Vatta* - on duties of forest-dwellers, 7. *Senasun Vatta* - on duties regarding lodgings, 8. *Janthagāra Vatta* - on duties in the sauna, 9. *Wasikili Vatta* - on duties in the toilet, 10. *Upadhaya Vatta* - on duty towards the preceptor, 11. *Saddhiviharika Vatta* - on duties to the student who lives with preceptor in one cell, 12. *Aduru Vatta* - on duty towards the teacher, and 13. *Athavasi Vatta* - on duty towards the pupil.

### Vatta and Moral/Ethical Principles

The concept of *Vatta*, as elaborated in the *Vattakkhandhaka*, emphasizes the important role of individual ethics or moral principles. The following examples from the *Vattakkhandhaka* provide a comprehensive insight into the ethical or moral principles that govern the daily lives of the monks.

1. A visiting monk, contemplating, 'I am about to enter a monastery,' should first remove his sandals, place the sandals down and dust them off, lower his sunshade (umbrella), uncover his head (removing the robe that is used to cover the head), and wear his robe over his shoulder. He ought to proceed into the monastery with caution and without haste (*Āganthuka Vatta*, 337).
2. When resident monks dwell at any location, be it an assembly hall, a hut, or beneath a tree, the visiting monk is required to go and meet the resident monks. After that, the visiting monk should first place his bowl to one side and his robe (additional robes) to another. Afterward, he is to select an appropriate seat and take the place (*Āganthuka Vatta*, 337).
3. When a resident monk attains a higher seniority than a visiting monk, it is customary for the visiting monk to demonstrate respect by bowing his head in greeting. On the other hand, if the resident monk has recently been ordained (junior to the visiting monk), he is anticipated to return the greeting by bowing his head to the visiting monk (*Āganthuka Vatta* 337).

4. When a resident monk encounters a senior monk arriving for a visit, he is expected to make appropriate preparations. This includes arranging a seat, providing water for foot washing, and bringing a footstool or footstand. The resident monk should go forward to the visiting monk to receive the bowl and robe (additional robes than the wearing robe) of the visiting monk. Additionally, he should offer drinking water to the visiting monk, and if possible, assist by wiping the visiting monk's sandals (*Āvasika Vatta*, 343).
5. When a newly ordained monk visits, he should respectfully greet the resident monk who is senior to him. (*Āvasika Vatta*, 343).
6. When a junior monk shares a living space (a cell within a monastery) with a senior monk, it is essential for the junior to seek permission from the senior before reciting *Uddeśa* (recitation). The junior is also prohibited from reading commentaries (*Atuwa*) without prior approval from the senior monk. Furthermore, the junior should abstain from activities such as chanting, studying, delivering teachings, lighting or extinguishing lamps, and opening or closing windows without the senior's consent (*Senasun Vatta*, 369).
7. A junior monk should refrain from hastily positioning himself among the senior monks. If possible, any necessary treatment for elder monks should be conducted in the bathroom. When exiting the bathroom, taking the chair used in the bathroom, and ensuring proper coverage of both the front and back doors, one should then leave the bathroom (*Janthagāra Vatta*, 373).

Ethics typically involves the organized examination of what defines appropriate and inappropriate conduct, while morality relates to individual convictions regarding right and wrong (Rachels and Richels, 2019). The *Vatta* concept in the *Vattakkhandhaka* demonstrates quite clearly how the ethical or moral attributes work towards building and sustaining human relationships. Ethics or morality is a benchmark for regulating the physical actions and vocal utterances of an individual. In this context, the guidelines of *Vatta*, which is primarily involved in regulating body actions and speech, play a major role in shaping the behavior of a monk. Overall, it can be understood that the concept of *Vatta* conveys the idea of *Sīla* as it relates to the cultivation of personal characteristics within the context of monastic life as well as human relationships.

### **Vatta and Information Role**

The role of information and its transmission is very significant in building interpersonal relations. The bidirectional role of the informational practices among the monks, as depicted in the *Vattakkhandhak*, is clearly exemplified in both the *Āganthuka Vatta* and the *Āvasika Vatta*. Below are several examples from the *Āganthuka Vatta* that illustrate the information inquiries by the visiting monks.

1. The visiting monk ought to inquire about the drinking water and the washing water, specifically asking to clarify which water is labelled for drinking and which is intended for washing (*Āganthuka Vatta*, 337).
2. The monk who is visiting ought to inquire about accommodations by asking, "Which lodging is assigned to me?" Visiting monks should seek clarification on whether the lodging room is currently occupied or vacant. Additionally, visiting monks should inquire about locations suitable for almsgiving, as well as those that are not appropriate for such activities. Furthermore, visiting monks should ask about families

*that, despite their financial struggles, demonstrate greater loyalty (Sekasammatha kula). Lastly, visiting monks should gather information regarding the locations of toilets, drinking water, and washing water (Āganthuka Vatta, 337).*

These excerpts imply that a visiting monk ought to seek pertinent information regarding the monastic management and interactions as an essential initial step in fostering an interpersonal relationship with the resident monks. The process by which the visiting monk acquires essential information from the resident monks has been clearly illustrated through the introduction of various Vattas in fostering interpersonal relationships. The Āvasika Vatta outlines the duties of the resident monk to provide essential information when assisting in the socialization of a visiting monk into the monastery, as detailed in the subsequent quotation.

*A visiting monk should be welcomed by the resident monk, who must state, "This lodging is designated for you." The resident monk is responsible for clarifying whether the accommodation is currently occupied by other monks or is not occupied. Additionally, the resident monk should provide information about the places where alms can be received, as well as areas where almsgiving is not permitted. It is important to inform families that are particularly loyal yet financially poor (Sekasammatha kula). The resident monk should also inform the visiting monk about places to get drinking water and washing water. In accordance with the monastic code, the resident monk should convey, "This is the appropriate time to enter the village for almsgiving; this is the time to leave it" (Āvasika Vatta, 343)*

The significance of interpersonal communication in fostering interpersonal relationships is a crucial topic. Communication encompasses the exchange of words, messages, intentions, ideas, and emotions (Alshenqeeti, 2016; Lamichhane, 2016). Individuals employ both verbal and nonverbal communication skills to express their thoughts and emotions (Ansari, 2021). Interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of information between individuals who rely on each other, illustrating the impact that one person's actions can have on another's behavior (DeVito, 2016) or a process involves the exchange of information between a minimum of two individuals, thus facilitating the development of a clear comprehension (Opatha, 2015). Interpersonal communication, as the Vatta of the Vinaya Piṭaka prescribes, fosters proper two-way communication, which ultimately results in the creation of stronger mutual relationships between the two parties. A detailed analysis of the principle of imparting and accepting information in the Vattakkandhakaka reveals that both the resident and visiting monk are governed by the Vatta while communicating information. The guidelines of the Vatta, as it was established by the Buddha, is the moral rules and practice that govern body actions and speech, with stress on the importance of ethical behavior. In this manner, it is evident that the interactions between monks within the monastery are enabled by the Sīla.

### **Vatta and Different Behaviors of Monks**

The Vinaya Piṭaka, specifically in the Vattakkhandhaka section, outlines various ethical or moral structures for monastic behavior, encapsulated in the concepts of Vatta. One can identify several significant behavioral patterns, including donning robes, exhibiting

modesty in walking, accepting and consuming alms food, and executing daily responsibilities (with maintaining the surrounding) with diligence.

**Vatta for Donning Robes:** In the monastic tradition during the time of the Buddha, the *Sakyaputriya* sect (Buddhist *Sangha* Community) notably emphasized the practice of wearing suitable robes, in contrast to the *Nigantha*, *Paribrajaka*, and *Achelaka*, who refrained from wearing them. Additionally, while the *Ajivaka* and *Jatila* ascetic groups did adopt robes, the *Sakyaputriya* tradition remained unique in its commitment to wearing the robes compared to other ascetic groups (Gunasekara, 2011). The *Vinaya Piṭaka* offers a clearer specification regarding the order in which a monk is to wear his robes. In the *Bhaktāgra Vatta* of the *Vattakkhandhaka*, the order for donning robes is articulated as follows: *"At the designated time for making almsgiving offerings, a monk should ensure that their inner robe is worn correctly, fasten it with a belt, and don the outer robe appropriately. Following this, they should take their alms bowl and proceed calmly to the village"* (*Bhaktāgra Vatta*, 351). Clothing not only fosters a sense of self-discipline regarding bodily control but also shapes how individuals engage with their external world (Hesselbein, 2021). The dressing manner of an individual, in turn, can elicit emotional responses within individuals, simultaneously impacting their interpersonal relationships (Begum and Azam, 2022). It is thus evident that clothing or attire is a very important factor in a system of interpersonal relationships. Wearing robes correctly involves managing body movement in order to foster good behavior, or *Sīla*, among monastic community members. Wearing robes, the *Vattakkhandhaka* asserts, creates the internal control and cleanliness of the monks and may be understood as a means of gaining the approval of outsiders.

**Vatta and Modesty in Walking:** An additional significant behavioral characteristic within interpersonal relationship practices is the manner in which an individual walks (movements). The *Vattakkadhakhaka* outlines the guidelines for the modesty walking practices of monks, which are reflected in the *Bhaktāgra Vatta*, the *Pindacharika Vata*, and the *Aranyaka Vatta*. An illustration of the *Vatta* applied to the ascetic journeys of monks is provided in the *Vattakkhandhaka* as follows.

*It is essential to walk with a sense of readiness. Eyes should be directed towards the ground. It is advisable to avoid raising one's robe. A broad smile should be refrained from during the walk. Walking should be done quietly, without any body shaking. Movements of the hands should be kept to zero. It is inappropriate to place hands on the hips or to cover the head while walking. Additionally, one should not rush* (*Bhaktāgra Vatta*, 351).

The *Vatta* leading to the practice of the *Sīla* associated with the ascetic walk described in the *Vattakkhandhaka* clearly encourages not only the interpersonal relationships among monks within the monastic community but also shapes the positive perceptions that individuals outside the monastic community have. Engaging in walking as a form of physical exercise contributes to the enhancement of bodily control through the improvement of coordination and motor skills (Gao, Zhang and Chen, 2020). This indicates that the manner of walking is grounded in the principle of *Sīla* across various contexts. Furthermore, it acts as a platform for cultivating interpersonal relationships, as collective

walking experiences can reinforce social connections and facilitate better communication (Mann & Johnson, 2018).

**Vatta and Almsgiving:** Another significant behavioral pattern rooted in the Vatta within interpersonal relationships is illustrated in the *Bhaktāgra Vatta*. The *Bhaktāgra Vatta* provides several guidelines concerning the appropriate acceptance and consumption of alms food by monks, which can be enumerated as follows.

1. One should not look at another's bowl with contemptuous feelings when taking alms foods.
2. One should avoid creating excessively large portions (large balls) of the boiled rice when eating.
3. One should not open the mouth until the boiled rice is close to the mouth.
4. One should not insert all fingers into the mouth when eating.
5. One should not engage in chat while having boiled rice in the mouth.
6. It is inappropriate to consume boiled rice by tossing it directly into the mouth.
7. One should avoid holding boiled rice in the jaw of the mouth like a monkey's eating when eating boiled rice.
8. One should avoid waving one's hands while eating boiled rice.
10. It is inappropriate to disperse boiled rice while consuming it.
11. One should refrain from producing the sound of 'chapu chapu' during meals.
12. It is advisable to avoid making the 'suru suru' sound while eating.
13. It is inappropriate to lick one's hand while consuming food.
14. It is considered improper to lick the bowl during a meal.
15. Food should not be eaten with unclean hands (*Bhaktāgra Vatta*, 353)

The aforementioned points illustrate how a monk, in the presence of others, has effectively showcased the Vatta associated with dining etiquette. Practicing mindful eating strategies promotes self-regulation and increases awareness of bodily conduct (*Sila*), thereby aiding in the cultivation of healthier eating habits (Mason et al., 2016). Studies indicate that meals promote relationships and strengthen social ties (Wansink & Van Ittersum, 2012). An examination of *Bhaktāgra Vatta* further reveals how proper eating practices can foster the development of interpersonal relationships.

**Vatta and Daily executing Responsibilities:** Appropriate upkeep of supportive factors enlisted to maintain the relationship is required not only at the beginning but also in the continued development of any interpersonal relationship. Upkeep of supportive factors, a vital but overlooked topic in contemporary literature on interpersonal relationships, is accurately illustrated in *Vattakkhandaka*. The following excerpts demonstrate how the *Vattakkhandhaka* applies the Vatta to maintain the supportive factors within the interpersonal relationships among monks.

1. A monk who arrives first at the monastery after collecting almsfoods from the village is responsible for setting up the dining hall. This includes placing the water for washing feet and the footstool nearby. Additionally, the bowl containing leftover food should be cleaned and located in its designated place. Arrangements for drinking water should also be made (*Pindacharik Vatta*, 359).



2. A forest-dwelling monk ought to prepare drinking water, arrange water for washing, kindle a fire, gather kindling wood for fire, and provide a walking staff (*Āaranyaka Vatta*, 363).
3. Regardless of the location where a monk resides, if that location is unclean, he should, if possible, take the initiative to clean it. During the cleaning process, he should first remove the bowl and robes, setting them aside (*Senasun Vatta*, 365-367).
4. If the toilet is dirty, it is essential to clean it. When the container for wood scraps becomes full, the wood pieces need to be discarded. Furthermore, if the doorsill, the area surrounding the toilet, or the porch is dirty, these locations and things should be swept or cleaned as well. In the absence of water in the rinsing vessel, it is important to pour water into it (*Wasikili Vatta*, 375).

The successful commitment to daily practices in accordance with the *Vatta* significantly influences the development of interpersonal relationships in diverse settings. This demonstrates that the upkeep of daily activities and the environment within the monastic grounds is effectively encapsulated by the principle of *Vatta*, which is regularly adhered to, leading to *Sīla* and fostering the cultivation of constructive interpersonal relationships.

### **Vatta and Senior-Junior Relationship**

The relationships between senior and junior monks represent a significant practice within the monastic interpersonal relationships. The *Vatta*, as discussed in the *Vattakkhandaka*—particularly through the *Saddhiviharika Vatta*, *Upadhyaya Vatta*, *Aduru Vatta*, and *Athavasi Vatta*—presents a significant role of the system managing religious interpersonal relationships.

The *Upadhyaya Vatta* prescribes the *Vatta* (guidelines) of the *Saddhiviharika* (the student residing with the preceptor in a shared cell) towards the *Upadhyaya* (the preceptor), while the *Saddhiviharika Vatta* prescribes the *Vatta* (guidelines) of the *Upadhyaya* towards the *Saddhiviharika*. Similarly, the *Athavashi Vatta* details the *Vatta* (guidelines) that the teacher (*Aduraā*) must undertake on behalf of his student (*Athavāssaā*), and the *Aduru Vatta* lists the *Vatta* (guidelines) that the student (*Athavāssaā*) owes to the teacher (*Aduraā*). The four *Vattas* of the *Vattakkhandaka* exemplify the positive relationship practices between senior and junior members, highlighting the interactions of seniors towards juniors and vice versa.

An important feature of interpersonal relationships within a monastic setting is that when the *Saddhiviharika* (the student residing with the preceptor in a shared cell) falls ill, the activities that are the responsibilities of the *Saddhiviharika* towards the *Upadhyaya* (the preceptor) are to be done by the *Upadhyaya* for the *Saddhiviharika* (*Saddhiviharika Vatta*, 389). Conversely, if the student (*Athavāssaā*) is unwell, the activities that are to be done by the student to the teacher (*Aduraā*) must be fulfilled by the teacher for the student (*Athavasi Vatta*, 407). An additional aspect of the senior-junior relationship within the *Vattakkhandaka* is that if the *Upadhyaya* (the preceptor) shows disinterest in the priestly role and exhibits signs of repentance or heretical beliefs, the *Saddhiviharika* (the student residing with the preceptor in a shared cell) is required to employ the suitable *Vatta* to pacify him (*Upadhyaya Vatta*). In another way, the relationship between a teacher (*Aduraā*) and a student (*Athavāssaā*) should entail that if the teacher exhibits disinterest in the

priestly role and exhibits signs of repentance or heretical beliefs, the student is required to take suitable actions to rectify the situation (Aduru Vatta, 401). The relationships between senior and junior monks within the monastery clearly delineate the standards for suitable physical conduct and verbal communication, thereby embodying the practice of *Sīla* and promoting respect along with ethical relationship.

The aforementioned different reviews concerning the *Vatta* and interpersonal relationships uncovers two significant insights. Firstly, it identifies the *Vatta* as a Buddhist religious teaching that primarily outlines a system of interpersonal relationships within a religious context. Secondly, it highlights that these interpersonal relationships are cultivated through the adherence to *Sīla* and the principles of the *Vatta*. Consequently, an analysis of the *Vatta* as presented in the *Vattakkandhaka* allows for a deeper understanding of how both the *Vatta* and *Sīla* concepts contribute to the formation of interpersonal relationships.

## **Discussion II: Does the Concept of *Vatta* articulate the Concept of *Sīla* in Interpersonal Relationships?**

### ***Vatta*: Controlling Bodily Actions and Verbal Expression**

It is important to closely examine how the concept of *Sīla* is articulated within the concept of *Vatta* as outlined in the *Vattakkandhaka*. As per the Pali-Sinhala Dictionary, the term *Vatta* refers to a concept encompassing “the conditioning of existence: engaging the completion of tasks,” “observance,” and “*Vrata* (religious vows/self-imposed task)”. In the *Vattakkandhaka*, the term *Vatta* denotes the prescribed duties or observances (Ñāṇananda, 1963). The relationship between the concept of *Vatta* and the concept of *Sīla* is elucidated in the teachings found in the *Vattakkandhaka* of *Chullavaggapāli*. *Chullavaggapāli* states, “One who neglects the *Vatta* fails to achieve the *Sīla*. An unwise individual with impure *Sīla* lacks the ability to attain mental concentration” (*Vatthan aparipurentho na sīlan paripūrti asuddhasīlo duppancōo chitthēekaggan na vindathi*) (*Cullavaggapāli, Vattakkandhaka-Uddāhanaya*, 1983). This concept is supported by Wimalarathana Thero (1984), who asserts that the commitment to fulfilling *Vatta* is a core element of *Sīla*. Uparathana Thero (2021) points out that this particular form of *Sīla* focuses on its ritualistic nature, which is essential to fulfill the basic requirements of the Buddhist monastic community and safeguard its ideal. Pramasiri (2020) points out that in Buddhism, the term *Sīla* is associated with another term, *Vatta*, which together symbolize certain forms of self-imposed practices followed by the contemporaries of the Buddha, who laid special stress on certain ritualistic traditions. Equally, Sinhala *Vishuddhimarga* explains the *Sīla* to possess “*Chethana* (the intentions), *Chaithasika* (mental), *Samvara* (control), and *Auyathikrama* (authenticity) qualities of beings who refrain from killing or engage in the *Vatta* practices” (Sri Dharmawansa Thero, 1959). Any precept the Buddha has given, e.g., ‘*This should be done*’ and ‘*This should not be done*,’ must be adhered to according to such rules, which constitute the customary *Sīla* (Sri Dharmawansa Thero, 1959). This in-depth analysis indicates that the concept of *Sīla* is explained in terms of the concept of *Vatta* of the *Vattakkandhaka*, emphasizing the significance of *Sīla* in the establishment of the foundation of monastic existence and interhuman relationships.

The English interpretation of the term *Vatta* fundamentally encompasses two concepts: duty and observance. As noted by Horowitz, the *Vattakkandhaka* is focused on various

duties of the monks (Horowitz, 2007). Duties are the tasks one is obligated to fulfill due to their responsibilities (Duty, Online Collins Dictionary). Duty is categorized into two general types: moral duty and legal duty. Moral duty entails the obligation that individuals have towards acting in manners that are considered right, just, and ethical in the context of society (Moseley, 2017). Duty has been defined in law as "*a legal obligation to do or not to do a certain thing*" (Dixit, n.d.). In the idea of the *Vatta*, the word "duty" gains a meaning wider than its conventional meaning in English, as it is particularly evocative of a moral obligation. The *Vatta* shows how different duties are connected with the spiritual growth of monks both individually and collectively (Bodhi, 2000; Gethin, 1998). The *Vatta*, as a personal obligation, marks the ethical conducts (*Sīla*) to be adhered to by individual monks, laying down the requirement of self-control and purity. The *Vatta* upholds the ethic of non-maleficence by encouraging non-harmful behavior that avoids causing harm to others. It models justice and fairness through equitable making of decisions and firm commitment to ethical rules. Moreover, the *Vatta* calls for keeping promises and thereby promoting social harmony and integrity (Bodhi, 2000). Keeping promises creates a sense of responsibility and accountability among people, which are essential virtues in most philosophical and ethical systems (Gethin, 1998). Overall, it can be seen that the English translation of the term *Vatta* fails to express the extensive meaning of duty. In the context of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Vatta* specifically denotes moral duties as opposed to legal duties.

The second element of the *Vatta* concept is observances, or customary practices, rites, or ceremonies. Observances are religious, cultural, or historical, and they usually take the form of specific activities, gatherings, or ceremonies that reaffirm communal ties and communal values (Johnson, 2018; Smith, 2015). The observances that are portrayed in the *Vattakkandhaka* narrative include several facets of monastic life, such as robe upkeep, bowl and lodging upkeep, and display of respect to senior members. The *Vatta* narrative, or observances, is intended to encourage interrelations within the monastic community and provide discipline. Horner (2014) states that the concept of observance describes a custom, duty, or habit.

An examination of the *Vatta* concept as outlined in the *Vattakkandhaka* explains that *Vatta* is a set of responsibilities to be followed by monks. According to Gethin, the *Vatta* is a pattern for virtuous action and individual responsibility (accountability), where intention and action are highlighted as being critical for harmony and for enabling spiritual development (Gethin, 1998). The responsibility can fundamentally be separated into two different types: moral responsibility and legal responsibility. Moral responsibility consists of the obligation of individuals to behave in a way that conforms to ethical standards and to assume responsibility for their actions, as determined by society or personal convictions (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008). Different from moral responsibility, legal obligations signify responsibilities necessitated by law for which individuals are made accountable concerning behavior categorized under allowable or proscribed behavior pursuant to codes in the law (Prosser & Keeton, 1984). The *Vatta* outlines recommendations for the maintenance and care of monasteries; however, these recommendations are not mandated by any external legal authority. Instead, they are grounded as acts from compassions (*metta*) and individual moral responsibility for the welfare of the monastic community, an individual moral responsibility for the smooth functioning of the community. Focus is on intention and the cultivation of virtuous traits and not on obeying

rules mindlessly. In *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Vatta* actually mentions moral responsibility and not legal responsibility.

The concept of *Vatta* in *Vattakkhandhaka*, in the context of applicable English terminology, is evidently associated with moral duty, observances, or moral responsibility. The analysis from a Buddhist viewpoint, along with the English terminology related to the concept of *Vatta*, leads to the conclusion that the concept of *Vatta* expresses the concept of *Sīla*. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the impact of *Vatta* on monk behavior in order to achieve a more profound understanding of the concept. As Thanissaro Bhikkhu (2007) the concept of the *Vatta*, both major and minor precepts (*Sīla*), is formulated to instruct monks on how to live mindfully and suppress their desires. Harvey (2013) concludes by following the *Vatta*, monks cultivate an internal restraint on their actions, speech, and thoughts that is significant for advancement on the path to enlightenment. Through repetitive observance of these regulations, major and minor, monks acquire a sense of discipline. This routine practice instills obedience, mindfulness, and self-control and hence forms a basis for more intricate ethical conduct (*Sīla*) (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2012). The *Vatta* practices in a monastery, like the regulation of routines and conduct, establish a framework that supports mindfulness and self-restraint—key elements for the development of morality. Such graduated development of conduct through systematic practice is key to cultivating *Sīla*, or moral virtue, a foundation of Buddhist thought (Bodhi, 2000). The repeated practice of *Vatta* is thus a fundamental basis for ethical conduct, or *Sīla*.

### ***Sīla***

The *Sīla*, within Buddhism, specifically addresses the practice of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood (Harvey, 2013). The *Sīla* is more than the literal adherence to rules and is rather the development of inner virtues like compassion, honesty, and non-violence. By practicing *Sīla*, one seeks to cleanse one's mind and activities and thereby develop positive relationships and advance toward enlightenment (Gombrich, 2009).

***Relationship between Vatta, Sīla and Discipline:*** In the *Vattakkandhaka*, the concept of *Vatta* underscores the significance of ethical behavior and mental discipline, promoting self-regulation among monks. This concept indicates that systematic practices, including ethical conduct and mindfulness, nurture a disciplined mindset. When monks commit to the guidelines of the *Vatta*, they develop a sense of responsibility and control, which enhances self-regulation (Kumar, 2021; Singh, 2019). The *Vatta* is essential for achieving elevated levels of mindfulness and ethical conduct, ultimately contributing to personal development and societal cohesion (Bodhi, 2000). Furthermore, *Vatta* fosters a sense of responsibility, encouraging individuals to contemplate their actions and maintain concentration, which is consistent with the tenets of self-discipline (Gethin, 1998). Thus, it is evident that the *Vatta* concept is fundamentally aimed at instilling discipline among monastic monks in their daily lives.

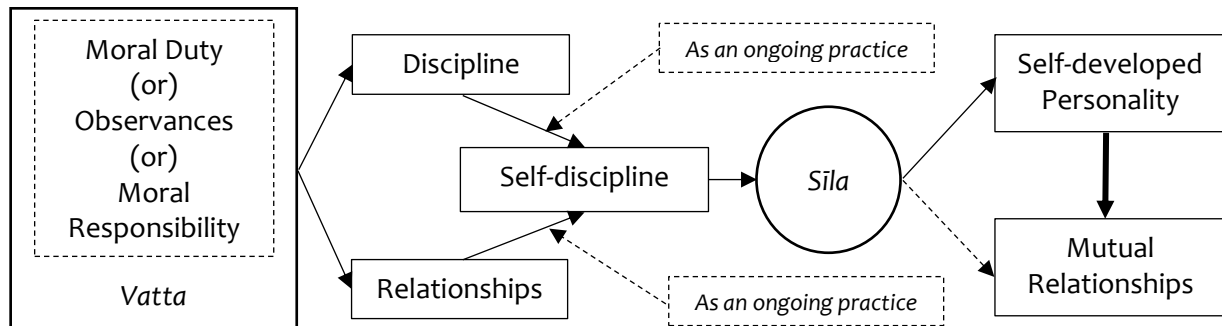
Unlike the *Vatta*, while the *Sīla* and self-discipline exhibit certain comparable characteristics, the *Sīla*, particularly within the Buddhist teachings, surpasses the concept of mere self-imposed discipline. The *Sīla* is ethical behavior derived from compassion and intersubjective awareness. It is the contrary of self-discipline that is typically characterized

by willpower and restraint, with an eye on personal agendas. The *Sīla*, on the other hand, focuses on avoiding harm to oneself and others and fostering social harmony as well as allowing for spiritual development (Harvey, 2013). While discipline is needed for the *Sīla*, *Sīla* focuses on ethical guidelines based on wisdom and distinguishes itself from simple self-control.

The above descriptions of the *Vatta*, discipline, and the *Sīla* form a better understanding of the connection between the three concepts. The *Vattas* are the general guidelines that govern the physical actions and words of the monks. Discipline here also means the restraint of a person's physical actions and words. The *Sīla* concept flows together with both the *Vatta* and the concept of discipline. Both the concept of *Vatta* and discipline denote the regulation of physical conduct and speech based on contextual norms. The *Vatta* is particularly emphasized within monastic milieus, while the concept of discipline is founded on specific social contexts. The concept of *Sīla*, which also regulates physical conduct and speech, transcends both the *Vatta* and the general concept of discipline. *Sīla* not only promotes the control of oneself but also the control of the mind, transcendental to physical and verbal control. It has ethical teachings that govern conduct, inviting harmony and compassion (Harvey, 2013). *Sīla* also supports change from within and consciousness, laying the groundwork for profounder spiritual practice (Bodhi, 2000). Finally, the *Sīla* plays a significant role in the attainment of higher stages of meditation and wisdom (Gethin, 1998). Lastly, the relationship between *Vatta*, discipline, self-discipline, and *Sīla* reveals that *Vatta* and discipline are pieces of architecture in the cultivation of physical actions and verbal expressions regarding social norms. Through the steady cultivation of *Vatta* and discipline, a monk or person can cultivate self-discipline as part of his/her personality. With this self-discipline coupled with concentration of the mind, the monk becomes *Sīla*. Lastly, *Sīla* is the most superior form of human conduct, and in Buddhist teachings, it is one of the three components—*Sīla*, *Samadhi*, and *Pūchcha*—of the Eightfold Path to liberation.

***Vatta/Sīla leads to Self-developed Personality as well as Mutual Relationships:*** According to the aforementioned disclosures concerning the concept of *Sīla* developed through continuous practices of the *Vatta*, it facilitates the growth of two dimensions within monks. The first dimension pertains to the enhancement of a monk's inner character (self-developed personality). The second dimension involves the influence of the *Vatta/Sīla* on establishing and nurturing the interpersonal relationships among monks within the monastery (mutual relationships).

The prior reviews sought to investigate the concept of *Vatta* and its connection to the Buddhist tenet of *Sīla* within a monastic context. Additionally, the analysis highlighted the consequences of monks engaging in the practices of both *Vatta* and *Sīla* in this environment. In summary, the examination of the principles of *Vatta* and *Sīla*, along with their practical applications, was used for the formulation of a conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. The relationship and functions of the *Vatta/Sīla* in human development**

As depicted in Figure 1, the *Vatta*, as presented in *Vattakkandhaka*, plays a crucial role in shaping monastic life by providing guidelines for both daily conduct (discipline) and daily social interactions. Through the consistent practice of daily moral duties (or observances or moral responsibilities), the practices of the *Vatta* evolve into a form of self-discipline. Self-discipline is necessary for the monks during the practice of the *Sīla*, which is a part of their personality. Through obedience to the *Vatta* commandments and practice of ethical codes, the monks develop inner self-discipline and moral personality. The practice of the *Sīla* helps to develop virtues of kindness, honesty, and compassion, which are necessary for spiritual development and enlightenment. *Sīla* permits the monks to lead a balanced and moral existence, thus enabling them to unfold themselves and form friendly relations among the monastic group.

### Discussion III: Fundamental Human Behavioral Principles of *Vatta/Sīla*

#### ***Vatta/Sīla*: Wholesome and Unwholesome Traits**

In Buddhism, defilements (*kilesas*) encompass both wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) traits that have indeed driven the conduct of any individuals, either monks or laymen. The traits of *Aloba* (non-greed), *Adosa* (non-hatred), and *Amoha* (non-delusion) are foundational in guiding the actions, speech, and mental activities of monks. These virtues, which override *Loba* (greed), *Dosa* (hatred), and *Moha* (delusion) negative tendencies, maintain moral conduct and mental clarity for Buddhist practice (Gethin, 1998; Harvey, 2013). These defilements, as indications of an individual's intrinsic nature, are the root conditions that form an individual's words, actions, and thoughts. The ultimate goal is to reduce unwholesome ones while developing wholesome ones so as to gain liberation. Besides, moral duties, observances, or moral responsibilities, which are encompassed in the *Vatta/Sīla* principles, are also influenced by the Buddhist doctrines on the defilements. Consequently, it can be concluded that the *Vatta/Sīla* is an initial vehicle for the transformation of *Loba*, *Dosa*, and *Moha* (unskillful/unwholesome action) into *Aloba*, *Adosa*, and *Amoha* (skillful/wholesome action).

The *Vatta*, as exemplified in the *Vattakkandhaka*, is a paradigm of the gradual cultivation of wholesome behavior acquired through self-analysis and vigorous practice. The *Vatta*, motivated at first by the necessity to curtail unwholesome action, through intentional

enforcement later comes to realize the underlying causes of the monks' affliction. This insight allows monks to cultivate qualities such as patience, compassion, and equanimity, ultimately resulting in a stable pattern of wholesome behavior, thereby depicting the path of moral advancement in Buddhist practice. Deliberately following the various rules laid down by the *Vattas*, monks habituate their minds to include qualities such as compassion, honesty, non-harming, truthfulness, and integrity. This daily habit progressively reshapes deep-rooted negative patterns, developing self-awareness, self-respect, self-discipline, self-governance, and ultimately, realization of inner peace and well-being, resulting in healthy behavior.

The conclusion suggests that the *Vatta* foster wholesome behavior through continuous adherence to a set of guidelines. Similarly, Sangharakshita (1993) asserts that wholesome behaviors are in harmony with the principles of *Sīla*. Participating in wholesome deeds, including generosity, compassion, and kindness, enhances the *Sīla* (Bodhi, 2016). Consequently, the *Sīla*, which cleanses and grounds the mind in goodness (Harvey, 2013), actively represents wholesome behavior as a superior expression of human conduct.

### **Minimizing Distance or Fostering Proximity between Two Parties in Interactions through *Vatta/Sīla***

Often interpreted as virtue or ethical conduct, the concept of *Sīla* represents a fundamental aspect of the Buddhist practice, fostering self-development in both monks and laypeople. In this context, it is crucial to explore how the concept of *Sīla* fosters the development of mutual relationships between two or more monks or individuals (In Figure 1, a dark arrow is depicted extending from the 'self-developed personality' box to the 'mutual relationships' box).

When two or more monks are performing the practice of wholesome conduct (*Vatta/Sīla*) in their character, monks express qualities of compassion, honesty, non-harming, truthfulness, and integrity towards one another. Monastic monks' bonds are inherently matured in nature when qualities such as compassion, honesty, non-harming, truthfulness, and integrity are developed through *Vatta/Sīla*. Thus, it can be seen that the interpersonal relationships of monks are shaped by the self-developed personality of each monk based on the development of wholesome tendencies. The 'behavioral traits' have a significant impact on the shaping of interpersonal relationships across various situations. Self-developed personality encompasses the entire range of behavioral tendencies. In Buddhism, behavioral traits are cultivated by both wholesome acts and unwholesome acts. From the self-development point of view, Buddhist philosophy promotes the cultivation of wholesome traits and the elimination of unwholesome traits. Therefore, the Buddhist theory of self-developed personality can be described as the cultivation of a 'self-wholesome personality.' Finally, it is essential to the development of interpersonal relationships in the context of self-developed personality (self-wholesome personality) between two or more monks, using the principles of *Vatta/Sīla*.

The preceding section illustrates that practicing in *Aloba*, *Adosa*, and *Amoha* (wholesome actions) clearly fosters the development of a self-wholesome personality and improves positive social interactions within the larger community. In contrast, it is essential to examine the consequences that may emerge when either a monk or a layperson partakes

in *Loba*, *Dosha*, and *Moha* (unwholesome actions) regarding their personal growth. The taking of unethical action, either on the part of a monk or a layperson, can lead to loss of confidence (Berkowitz, 2010), legal sanctions (Berkowitz, 2010), feelings of guilt and remorse (Smith & Jones, 2020), adverse effects on mental well-being and general welfare (Smith & Jones, 2020), and breakdown of interpersonal relationships (Berkowitz, 2010). Such actions are in direct opposition to the core values of compassion (Singer, 2011), honesty, truthfulness, integrity (Gert, 2005), and non-harming (Harvey, 2013), which are fundamental to ethical behavior, or *Sīla*. The monk's actions against the *Vatta*, as described in *Vattakkandhaka*, exemplify unwholesome deeds, and the persistent engagement in such actions culminates in the *Dussīla* (immorality). Consequently, it is evident that the monk's involvement in activities contrary to the *Vatta* or *Dussīla* fosters the development of a 'self-unwholesome personality' within his character.

This review identifies a critical aspect of interpersonal relationships in terms of the behavioral traits. Performing wholesome actions consistent with the *Vatta* and *Sīla* cultivates a self-wholesome personality and strengthens positive interpersonal relationships. Performing unwholesome actions inconsistent with the *Vatta* and engaging the *Dussīla* leads to a self-unwholesome personality and erodes positive interpersonal relationships. It is therefore evident that *Sīla* and *Dussīla* concepts are essential in constructing interpersonal relationships.

Often interpreted as virtue or moral conduct, *Sīla* is a significant component of Buddhist practice that encompasses the three primary elements of the Eightfold Path: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood.

**Right Speech (*Sammā Vācā*):** The Right Speech in the practices of *Sīla* includes not lying, speech that is divisive, harsh speech, and idle chatter (Harvey, 2013). It is the practice of truthful speech that is wholesome and brings people together in harmony (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1994). According to Harvey (2013), truthful and clear communication reduces distraction and cognitive burden, enabling the receiver to concentrate on the essential message. Bodhi (2016) further argues that honesty enhances credibility and fuses the recipient's trust in the ideas conveyed. Truthful communication is the best monastic practice, as stipulated by the provisions found in the *Āganthuka* and *Āvasika Vattas* of the *Vattakkandhaka*. By conveying the truth, monks cultivate awareness and communication, and this practice suppresses harmful karma and fosters peaceful relationships. Ultimately, honest, kind, and meaningful speech signifies and solidifies a wholesome state of mind (Gethin, 1998). Monastic monks' practice of self-wholesome behavior has noticeable effects such as honesty, kindness, respect for each other, confidence, sympathy, and clear comprehension (Batchelor, 2015). Development of self-wholesome traits in monks' personalities creates a harmonious, cooperative, and peaceful atmosphere where deeper relationships develop. Basically, these self-wholesome behaviors inherent in the monks' behavior assist in reducing the distance in their interactions. By identifying these wholesome behaviors through the *Vatta/Sīla*, relationships between individuals are bonded to be more open and compassionate, reducing emotional and social distances and promoting proximity among monks within the monastic setting.



The *Dussīla* characteristics exhibited by monks can divert and mislead others through deceit, slander, and abrasive language (Bodhi, 2016). Such communication rooted in the *Dussīla* undermines harmony, mutual understanding, trust, respect, empathy, and comprehension among monks in their interactions. It is evident that the *Dussīla*, or unwholesome conduct, fosters distance among monks in their relationships. This analysis indicates that the *Sīla* encourages proximity, whereas the *Dussīla* fosters distance between individuals in their relationships.

**Right Action (*Sammā Kammanta*):** The concept of Right Action in the *Sīla* involves not engaging in acts such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct (Gombrich, 2009; Harvey, 2013). Broadly, it involves acting on ethical standards, doing well-being, and keeping society at peace (Gombrich, 2009). As argued by Gombrich (2009), the Right Action is crucial in evoking the well-being and harmony of society by encouraging justice, equity, and good social relations. Right Action is thus not limited to the avoidance of badness but entails the intentional choice of the action that is not only good for oneself but also for society. For this purpose, Harvey (2013) aptly notes that Right Action provides a sense of duty that is more than just personal action, demanding right behavior with effect upon others. Although the *Vatta* in the *Vattakkandhaka* does not categorically enumerate acts of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct, it emphasizes avoiding overall misdeeds through various narratives and instructions present in all the *Vattas*. The cultivation of *Sīla*, which is gained through regular usage of the *Vatta*, fosters self-wholesome traits like respect, honesty, kindness, listening, harmony, equity, justice, responsibility, understanding, and compassion among the monastic monks in human interactions. These self-wholesome traits inherently make proximity between the parties who also possess self-wholesome traits. Finally, the practice of *Sīla* creates an amicable atmosphere where monks are appreciated and acknowledged, hence minimizing interpersonal distance and promoting proximity among them.

In the practices of *Dussīla*, when a monk partakes in wrong actions or engages in unwholesome conduct, it results in a deterioration of respect, integrity, kindness, harmony, fairness, justice, accountability, and compassion among the monastic community in their interactions. Such unwholesome behaviors not only impact the individuals involved but also bring harm to other individuals, and hence there is a disruption in relationships and conflicts emerge (Khandro, 2018). It is apparent that *Sīla* tends to create proximity among human relationships by wholesome traits, whereas the *Dussīla* encourages distance among individuals by unwholesome traits.

**Right Livelihood (*Sammā Ājīva*):** The Right Livelihood principle does not allow for engagement in activities that harm others, such as the sale of weapons, living organisms, or mind-altering substances (Bodhi, 2000). The Right Livelihood principle encourages practices to result in happiness, compassion, and righteous behavior, thereby resulting in peace and harmony in society. By paying extreme concern to honest work, equitable trade, and conscious consumption, Right Livelihood significantly increases social welfare, economic justice, and ecological sustainability. Preserving the right livelihood in *Sīla*, the practice of self-wholesome conduct, fosters just dealings in human relations, trust, and understanding. Involvement of monks in open and equitable transactions erases barriers associated with distance, thereby developing a sense of belonging. Such observance of

virtue supports respect for and openness towards each other and leads to richer and deeper human relationships. Ultimately, Right Livelihood, which embodies a self-wholesome personality, harmonizes the activities of monks with shared social ethics and morality, thereby enhancing interpersonal relationships and diminishing social distance.

Contrary to the *Sīla*, the action of *Dussīla* by a monk disrupts the daily harmony of the members of the community by inflicting harm on other people, eroding trust and understanding, lessening open communication, and violating norms against harm. Consequently, the bonds among monks within the monastery are weakened, leading to a sense of distance. It is apparent that *Sīla* instills proximity in interpersonal relationships through wholesome traits, while the *Dussīla* provokes distance between human beings through unwholesome traits.

The connotation of *Sīla*, according to Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood outlined by the Eightfold Path, shows how establishing proximity or decreasing distance impacts the interpersonal relationships of monks. The *Dussīla*, which is explained in terms of improper speech, action, and means of livelihood, produces an experience of distance among interpersonal relationships. This analysis ultimately highlights that the core nature of any relationship is primarily determined by how close or distant individuals are to one another.

### **Nature of Proximity or Distance in Interpersonal Relationships**

In any relationship involving monks or individuals, it is important to consider the nature of the proximity or distance between them.

The various narratives and the guidelines of *Vattas* within the *Vattakkhandhaka* exemplify methods to promote various forms of proximity or to mitigate the distance among monks in monastic interactions. For instance, it is stated that *when a resident monk is situated in a garden, shed, beneath a tree, or any other location, the visiting monk is expected to go near to the resident monk, placing his bowl to one side, and the visiting monk should also put the (additional) robes aside and choose an appropriate seat to sit down...* (Āganthuka Vatta, 337). This practice exemplifies the appropriate *Vatta/Sīla* prescribed by the Buddha to foster physical proximity within the monastic context. A method to determine the proximity or distance between two individuals or groups is through physical distance, which refers to the tangible space that separates them (Malmros & Beica, 2021). The *Vattakkandhaka* presents multiple examples of both proximity and distance. For instance, when a resident monk fails to convey essential details about resources such as drinking water, washing water, and appropriate lodging to a visiting monk, it results in a lack of communication between them. This lack of communication could lead to a physical disconnect, presented by a reluctance to engage with one another, feelings of resentment, and overall dissatisfaction between the visiting and resident monks. Employing the follower-leader relationship theory, Antonakis and Atwater (2002) demonstrate that the physical distance between the two parties is determined by their degree of proximity/contiguity. Studies conducted by Bass in 1990, Napier and Ferris in 1993, and Liden et al. in 1997 indicate that increased physical distance diminishes the chances for direct influence and may adversely affect the quality of the professional relationship between a follower and a leader (Malmros & Beica, 2021). Certain guidelines

provided by various *Vattas* facilitate the mitigation of detrimental practices arising from either face-to-face interactions or the constraints of spatial and temporal distances, as discussed in the *Vattakkandhaka*. A few key components of physical distance or proximity include spatial distance (Hall, 1966), face-to-face interaction (Lange, Voirol and Henningsen, 2020), and temporal distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010). The implementation of the *Vatta/Sīla* concept serves to reduce the physical distance between the different monks within their monastic interpersonal relationships. A notable finding emphasized in the various narratives and the *Vattas* within the *Vattakkadaka* is that the natures of relationships among monks in the monastery are shaped by their physical proximity and distance.

In the *Vatta*, it is customary for a visiting monk to bow to a resident monk if the resident monk is senior. In the event that the resident monk is junior, then it must be the junior monk who bows to the visiting monk. The practice indicates that the monastic community wishes to reduce social distance between members. Bogardus, who first introduced the fundamental concept of social distance in 1959, emphasized that social distance is a term that was utilized to explain the degree of understanding for one another that individuals possess, between individuals and groups, and between groups (Mather, James & Moats, 2017). A range of guidelines has been formulated across the various *Vattas* to maintain proximity in monastic relationships, which includes emotional feelings and attitudes (affective dimension), intimacy and tolerance (normative dimension), communication styles, social hierarchies, and cultural norms (interactive dimension), and social norms and perceived roles within the social context (role-based interaction). The concept of social distance is constructed upon various dimensions, including affective (Bogardus, 1925; Karakayali, 2009), normative (Karakayali, 2009; Triandis, 1994), interactive (Karakayali, 2009), interactive distance (Miller & Steinberg, 1975), role-based interactions (Williams, 2007) and cultural elements (Karakayali, 2009). Conversely, the monastic management illustrated in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* appears to cultivate a distinct cultural framework. This monastic culture, as established by the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, has developed a behavioral system for monks and nuns that aligns with the pursuit of liberation. The *Vattakkhandhaka* specifically outlines the *Vatta/Sīla* practices that are necessary to reduce the social distance needed for interpersonal relationships among monks.

The following quotation extracted from the *Senasun Vatta* in *Vattakkandhaka* illustrates an alternative meaning of proximity or distance, distinct from the previously explained concept of physical and social proximity or distance.

*When a junior monk shares a living space with a senior monk, it is essential for the junior to seek permission from the senior before reciting Uddeśa. The junior is also prohibited from reading commentaries (Atuwa) without prior approval from the senior monk. Furthermore, the junior should abstain from activities such as chanting, studying, delivering teachings, lighting or extinguishing lamps, and opening or closing windows without the senior's consent (Senasun Vatta, 369).*

The above example demonstrates the psychological aspect of interpersonal relationships, highlighting the different levels of proximity or distance between the individuals involved. In the context of social interactions, psychological proximity and distance refer to the

sense of ambiguity that emerges among individuals who possess varying social statuses, values, and cultural backgrounds (Chen & Li, 2018). Psychological distance refers to the psychological disconnection that exists between two parties. In other terms, psychological distance is the lack of a psychological bond between two parties. This proximity or distance encompasses various mental attributes, including love (Cassepp-Borges et al, 2023), intimacy (Tianqi and Jinhao, 2024), trust (Hegwood, 2024; Tianqi and Jinhao, 2024), respect (Hegwood, 2024), shared values (Hegwood, 2024), and acceptance (Rossman, Lerner, and Córdova, 2022), which are essential for fostering a relationship. In the context of interpersonal relationships, psychological distance among individuals serves as a barrier to effective relational practices. In conclusion, the narratives and guidelines presented in the *Vattas* within the *Vattakkandhaka* suggest that the foundation of mutual interpersonal relationships is fundamentally rooted in psychological proximity.

The concepts of *Sīla* and *Vatta* assert that the nature of interpersonal relationships is primarily determined by the concepts of proximity and distance. The review has similarly suggested that these aspects of interpersonal relationships can be explored through three separate approaches: physical proximity or distance, social proximity or distance, and psychological proximity or distance.

### **Behavioral Traits: Wholesome and Unwholesome deeds**

In broader contexts, the nature of interpersonal relationships can be determined by the levels of proximity or distance, along with the behavioral traits exhibited by individuals. The study findings based on the reviews of the *Vattakkandhaka* suggest that the main mechanism of these interpersonal relationships is the behavioral traits of the individuals engaged in the relationship. The behavioral traits are delineated in the study based on adherence to either the *Vatta* and the *Sīla* or the impure *Sīla*. The concepts of *Sīla* and impure *Sīla* can be classified into three categories, reflecting the behavioral tendencies of individuals in their relationships.

1. Wholesome + Wholesome Behavior: Wholesome behavior is characterized by both individuals exhibiting pure *Sīla* or self-wholesome personalities [W+W].
2. Unwholesome + Unwholesome behavior: Unwholesome behavior is defined by both individuals demonstrating completely impure *Sīla* (self-unwholesome personalities) [UW+UW].
3. Mix of Wholesome + Unwholesome behavior: Wholesome and unwholesome behavior reflects a combination where certain traits of individuals are aligned with *Sīla*, while others are influenced by impure *Sīla*. There exist three distinct categories.
  - i. Individuals exhibit a higher occurrence of wholesome behaviors in comparison to unwholesome ones [W+uw].
  - ii. Individuals demonstrate a balanced mix of both wholesome and unwholesome behaviors; they demonstrate an equal presence of wholesome and unwholesome actions [w+uw].
  - iii. Individuals exhibit a higher occurrence of unwholesome behaviors in comparison to wholesome ones [w+UW].

#### **Discussion IV: Different Objectives: Socially Friendly and Antisocial Interpersonal Relationships**

Most humans in the world live in non-interpersonal relations with other individuals in the world. This does not imply complete social isolation but, rather, human beings form various relations with a few chosen individuals rather than with the entire human beings. The concept of interpersonal relationship defines precisely the type of relations that are formed between people who consciously choose with whom they interact, hence distinguishing the same from relations with society in general.

In modern management literature, relationships between people usually tend to be separated into positive or negative ones. Thus, this necessitates an examination of the standards upon which positive and negative relationships are distinguished. From a modern viewpoint, positive interpersonal relationships are characterized by interactions that promote support (Gottman & Gottman, 2008; Reis & Shaver, 1988), empathy (Gottman & Gottman, 2008), constructive dialogue (Gottman & Gottman, 2008), strengthened connections (Gottman, 1994), trust (Gottman, 1994; Shaver, 1988), emotional intimacy (Shaver, 1988), and overall satisfaction (Shaver, 1988). Conversely, negative interpersonal relationships are obvious by interactions that include criticism (Gottman, 1994; Levine, 2007), defensiveness (Gottman, 1994; Levine, 2007), contempt (Gottman, 1994), and conflict (Levine, 2007), which undermine trust (Levine, 2007) and contribute to emotional distress (Levine, 2007). Greater emphasis should be placed on understanding the definitions of negative interpersonal relationships to uncover the underlying implications of the term negative. As Gottman (1994) states, in the context of societal interactions, negative interpersonal relationships may present as conflict, disrespect, lack of support, manipulation, or abuse. In another way, Finkel et al. (2014) define negative relationships as these detrimental interactions that undermine trust, induce emotional turmoil, and can ultimately jeopardize the relationship, potentially leading to its termination. According to Rook (1984), such negativity fosters misunderstandings, diminishes trust, and causes emotional distress among individuals. Furthermore, Cohen and Wills (1985) state that negative interactions obstruct the development of relationships and may contribute to social isolation and heightened stress levels.

In examining the concepts associated with negative interpersonal relationships, terms such as criticism, defensiveness, distrust, contempt, conflict, unemotional support, manipulation, and abuse are articulated with regard to their potential positive impacts within any relationship. For instance, criticism is a reaction used by an individual to challenge broadly established goals or prevailing actions. Defensiveness, on the contrary, is a reaction employed for the defense of one's reputation or self-worth in the context of their usual environment. It is apparent that contemporary literature employs the term negative to describe deviant behaviors exhibited by individuals in their interpersonal relationships, particularly in relation to socially accepted norms and expectations. Consequently, it can be concluded that the concepts of positive and negative are integral to understanding interpersonal relationships within positive aspects of societal frameworks. Numerous theories within modern management are centered around exploring this conventional dichotomy of interpersonal relationships.

Society should not be thought of as isolated; it is always composed of individuals whose interdependence and interactions provide significance to it. Society's norms and expectations are sometimes contrary to the norms and expectations of its members in some instances. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* in the *Tripiṭaka* affirms that among the reasons why the *Vinaya* for monks was codified is that there were individuals who entered monastic life for personal aspiration rather than liberation or the ultimate objective of monastery (Metthananda Thero, 2013). This is an implication that during the period when the thirteen *Vattas* were codified and introduced to the monastic community, there were monks who had own aspirations other than striving for liberation. This is evident when looking at *Bhaktāgra Vatta*, *Senasun Vatta*, and *Janthagāra Vatta* in the *Vattakkandhaka*, such as in the case of the behavior of the group-of-six *bhikkhus*, known as the *Chabbaggiya Monks* or *Ṣadvārga Bhikkhus*. The analysis conducted in the previous section on interpersonal relationships primarily reflected the observations of social viewpoints. It also analyzed the interpersonal relationships consistent with the positively defined social goal. This does not imply that interpersonal relationships are totally determined by social norms and expectations. It only means that an effective understanding of interpersonal relationships would demand, in addition, the consideration of personal objectives and expectations. Not all people around the globe adhere to socially sanctioned norms and positive objectives. While it is true that large parts of the population wish to abide by such social norms, there exists a significant subgroup that actually chooses to diverge from them. Such a particular subgroup has a propensity to engage in interpersonal relationships counter to accepted social norms and expectations, rather preferring to form interrelationships on the foundation of socially disparaged principles. From this perspective, members of society are bound to exhibit both socially accepted and socially rejected behavior, thus establishing two different types of interpersonal relationship dynamics.

Upon examining the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, these dynamics can be classified into 'socially friendly interpersonal relationships' and 'antisocial interpersonal relationships.' This comprehensive categorization of interpersonal relationships indicates that such relationships are influenced by the distinct goals of individuals and their behavioral traits.

### Findings and Reviews

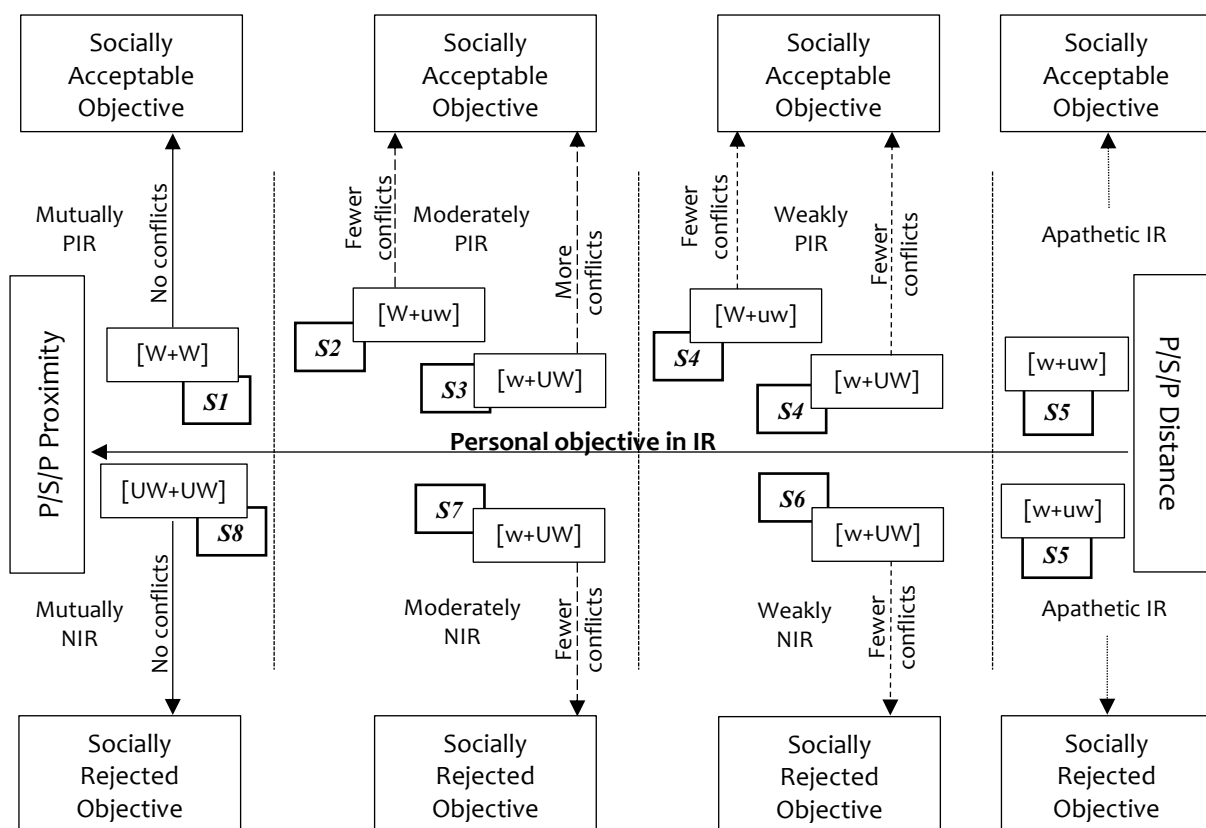
The above discussion has elaborately discussed the significant impacts of the concepts of *Vatta* and *Sīla* with respect to interpersonal relationships. Drawing on the concepts of *Vatta* and *Sīla* in interpersonal relationships, three significant conclusions of this review could be drawn.

1. Interpersonal relationships should be analyzed in terms of the extent of physical, social, and psychological proximity or distance between the people involved in the relationship.
2. How close or distant an interpersonal relationship is depends on the behavioral traits of both partners in a relationship. According to the Buddhist perspective, behavioral traits are categorized as wholesome and unwholesome traits. However, this classification is not entirely dichotomous. There is a spectrum of combinations of purely wholesome and purely unwholesome traits.
3. Interpersonal relationships need to be understood within the framework of shared goals between the involved individuals as well as social expectations and norms

driving these interactions. Such analysis brings forth two distinct types of relationships: socially friendly interpersonal relationships and antisocial interpersonal relationships.

The concepts of proximity and distance, which have arisen through review of the *Vatta* and the *Sīla*, will be used for an in-depth analysis of interpersonal relations, particularly regarding socially friendly and antisocial interactions. Based on behavioral traits, proximity or distance, and the objectives of individuals within relationships, a conceptual framework can be framed as indicated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Conceptual framework for interpersonal relationships based on socially friendly and antisocial perspectives**



Here:

P/S/P: Physical, Social, Psychological

IR: Interpersonal Relationships

PIR: Positive Interpersonal Relationships

NIR: Negative Interpersonal Relationships

[W+W]: Wholesome (more frequency) and Wholesome deeds (more frequency)

[W+uw]: Wholesome deeds (more frequency) and unwholesome deeds (less frequency)

[w+UW]: wholesome deeds (less frequency) and Unwholesome deeds (more frequency)

[w+uw]: wholesome deeds (less frequency) and unwholesome deeds (less frequency)

[UW+UW]: Unwholesome deeds (more frequency) and Unwholesome deeds (More frequency)

As illustrated in Figure 2, there exist eight types of interpersonal relationships within the broader context.

- A. Matching socially acknowledged objectives with individual objectives in their interpersonal relationships (Socially friendly interpersonal relationships)
  - 1. Mutually positive interpersonal relationships [S1]
  - 2. Moderately positive interpersonal relationships
    - i. Moderately positive interpersonal relationships with fewer conflicts (In contemporary discourse, such relationships are referred to as 'positive interpersonal relationships.') [S2]
    - ii. Moderately positive interpersonal relationship with more conflicts (In contemporary discourse, such relationships are referred to as 'negative interpersonal relationships.') [S3]
  - 3. Weakly positive interpersonal relationships [S4]
- B. Matching socially rejected objectives with individual objectives in their interpersonal relationships (Antisocial interpersonal relationships)
  - 4. Mutually negative interpersonal relationships [S8]
  - 5. Moderately negative interpersonal relationships [S7]
  - 6. Weakly negative interpersonal relationships [S6]
- C. Indifferent situation
  - 7. Apathetic interpersonal relationships [S5]

By examining both social and personal contexts, a more comprehensive understanding of each type of interpersonal relationship can be achieved, as detailed below.

### **Socially Friendly Interpersonal Relationships**

**Mutually Positive Interpersonal Relationships:** As illustrated in Figure 2, referred to as scenario S1, this interpersonal relationship generally harmonizes individual objectives with widely acknowledged societal objectives. Consequently, the personal objectives within these relationships inherently bolster social functions, while these social functions simultaneously facilitate the attainment of personal relationship goals. This relationship leads to all individuals demonstrating a self-wholesome personality [W+W], cultivated through the ongoing development of the *Vatta* and the *Sīla*, thereby effectively minimizing any potential conflict between them to negligible levels. The practice of cultivating a self-wholesome personality by both individuals ensures that their relationship maintains complete proximity across physical, social, and psychological dimensions. Interpersonal relationships determined by mutual positivity represent the pinnacle of social connections, yielding entirely beneficial results for society as a whole. An exemplary demonstration of this kind of mutually positive relationship can be observed in the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

*“I hope, Anuruddha, that you are all living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”*

*“Surely, venerable sir, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”*

*“But, Anuruddha, how do you live thus?”*

*“Venerable sir, as to that, I think thus: ‘It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me, that I am living with such companions in the holy life.’ I maintain bodily acts of loving-kindness towards those venerable ones both openly and privately; I maintain verbal acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately; I maintain mental acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately. I consider: ‘Why should I*



*not set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do?' Then I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body, venerable sir, but one in mind."*

*The venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila each spoke likewise, adding: "That is how, venerable sir, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes."*  
(Cūḷagosiṅgasutta, MN, Bhikkhu Bodhi)

The dialogue between the Buddha and the three Arahants illustrates how cultivating a self-wholesome personality fosters the growth of mutually positive interpersonal relationships while also highlighting the alignment of the Arahants' personal goals with the broader aims of the monastic community.

**Moderately Positive Interpersonal Relationships:** The scenarios of S2 and S3 illustrated in Figure 2, in which individual aspirations within interpersonal relationships align with societal norms and expectations, highlight two separate types of relationships.

The first type of relationship, as indicated by S2, designates that individuals' personalities are more inclined towards wholesome behaviors and less towards unwholesome ones [W+uw]. Consequently, this behavior leads to a reduction in physical, social, and psychological conflicts because of greater proximity and less distance in their interactions. The closer proximity and reduced distance among individuals, coupled with the presence of more wholesome traits than unwholesome ones, contribute to a lower level of conflict in their relationship. This reduction in conflict primarily stems from the importance of wholesome traits, which facilitate the achievement of personal relationship objectives rather than undermining them through the unwholesome traits exhibited by individuals. The following example from the *Vattakkandhaka* demonstrates a situation where a small number of monks engage in inappropriate actions, while a greater number have adhered to virtuous practices consistent with the monastic community.

*The monks with minimal desires expressed their complaints and criticisms, questioning, 'How is it that the visiting monks can enter the monastery adorned in sandals, opening sunshades, with their heads covered by robe, their robes draped over their heads, washing their feet with drinking water, failing to show respect to the senior resident monks, and neglecting to inquire about their accommodations?' The monks reported these concerns to the Buddha (Āganthuka Vatta, 355).*

Prior to implementing appropriate guidelines (*Vatta*) for conduct within the monastic community, visiting monks may engage in certain behaviors that adversely affect the daily maintenance of monastic life. This observation does not suggest that a monk possesses completely unwholesome traits. As it is, this scenario illustrates a combination of both unwholesome and wholesome conduct, yet with a stronger inclination toward the wholesome conduct. In contemporary management, this form of interpersonal relationship is referred to as a positive interpersonal relationship because it tends to exhibit many qualities naturally, including support, empathy, positive dialogue, trust, emotional closeness, and mutual support.

In the second aspect of the second scenario, as illustrated by S3, while similar to individual objectives compared to general societal expectations, individuals' personalities are drawn towards unwholesome instead of wholesome conduct [w+UW]. In this sense, the pursuit of relational goals is increasingly conflict-ridden because unwholesome personalities create tension with the constructive goals of the society and group. In modern management, this type of interpersonal relationship is referred to as a negative interpersonal relationship in which various attributes such as distrust, miscommunication, and absence of mutual support are dominant. The episode concerning the expression of gratitude (*Anumodana*) in the *Gamika Vatta* is a best example of such an interpersonal relationship.

*Individuals expressed dissatisfaction regarding the monks' failure to give thanks to those who provided them with alms following their meals in the dining hall. In response to this situation, the Buddha instructed one of the monks in the dining hall to extend thanks to the benefactors after dining.*

*After installing this guideline, a group of individuals had extended an invitation for almsfood to Arahant Śāriputra, who graciously accepted it along with his fellow monks. However, after partaking in the almsfood, the other monks departed without expressing gratitude to the donors, thus overlooking this vital act of thankfulness. In this context, Arahant Śāriputra stood solitary and expressed gratitude to the benefactors on behalf of the entire monastic community (*Gamika Vatta*, 347).*

Despite the guidelines established by the Buddha, most monks either intentionally or unintentionally failed to follow them. While the monks engaged in the communal practice of receiving almsfood as part of monastic tradition, this behavior indicates that many monks exhibited unwholesome conduct in a common purpose compared to Arahath Sariputta.

**Weakly Positive Interpersonal Relationship:** As indicated by S4, in the third scenario of the objectives of the personal relationships aligned with the social objective, the individuals' distance surpasses the proximity within their relationship [W+uw or w+UW]. Consequently, the dedication to fulfilling personal goals in the context of interpersonal relationships and social aims diminishes, leading to a decrease in conflicts associated with goal attainment, because the influence of personality types, whether wholesome or unwholesome, becomes less significant.

**Indifferent/Apathetic Interpersonal Relationship:** Apathetic interpersonal relationships, as observed through S5, have a combination of both positive and negative traits such that the individuals involved neither like nor dislike each other [w+uw]. While some of these interactions are enjoyable, others become points of frustration or apathy such that one becomes emotionally distanced in general (Kelley, 1979). These dynamics often illustrate the intricate nature of human relationships, indicating that neutrality can exist alongside both appreciation and dissatisfaction (Weiss, 2017). An individual's typical interaction with the general populace is often restricted to minimal verbal communication or subtle physical gestures. In this context, the proximity in a relationship between individuals can vary, ranging from simple proximity to a simple distance, reflecting an imbalance in their interactions.

It is impractical for individuals to sustain close, emotionally charged relationships with every person they meet (Dunbar, 2018). Such relationships often reflect a deficiency in emotional commitment, which may arise from various influences such as social context, personality characteristics, and personal experiences (Davis, 2016). Generally, individuals endeavor to conform to social norms and established laws within this relational dynamic. Conversely, there exists a tendency for individuals to breach these social norms and regulations in this context. The social norms that are common among the general population and the *Vatta* in the *Vattakkandhaka* for monks play a vital role in promoting the positive aspects of the relationship within this context.

### **Antisocial Interpersonal Relationships**

**Weakly Negative Interpersonal Relationship:** Figure 2 depicts three main scenarios in which individual objectives within interpersonal relationships correspond with socially rejected expectations and norms. Consequently, the personal objectives within these relationships inherently bolster socially rejected functions, while these socially rejected functions simultaneously facilitate the attainment of personal relationship goals. In the context of a weakly negative interpersonal relationship, the distance between individuals surpasses the inherent proximity of their connection. As a result, the commitment to achieving personal objectives within the context of interpersonal relationships and social aspirations wanes, which in turn reduces the frequency of conflicts related to goal achievement, as the impact of unwholesome personality traits becomes less pronounced, as indicated by S6 [w+UW].

In a weakly negative relationship, there exists a singular type of connection characterized by an increase in unwholesome traits and a decrease in wholesome ones. The primary rationale is that an individual endowed with a greater array of wholesome traits tends to disfavor the pursuit and realization of objectives that conform to socially disapproved norms.

**Moderately Negative Interpersonal Relationship:** The interpersonal relationship characterized as moderately negative represents a situation where individual aspirations within the relationship do not align with socially recognized goals, as indicated by S7 [w+UW]. Generally, this relationship can be categorized into two types; however, one type is more prevalent while the other is deemed impractical. The prevalent type of relationship suggests that the personalities of the individuals involved tend to gravitate towards unwholesome behaviors rather than wholesome ones. As a result, this tendency contributes to a decrease in physical, social, and psychological conflicts, facilitated by closer interactions and reduced distance between the individuals. The moderately negative interpersonal relationships are evident in several incidents related to the group-of-six *bhikkhus* (*Chabbaggiya* Monks or *Ṣadvārga Bhikkhus*), as illustrated in the *Vattakkandaka* and other parts of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

In a relationship marked by moderate negativity, akin to a weakly negative interpersonal relationship, there is a singular type of relationship defined by a rise in unwholesome characteristics and a decline in wholesome ones. The primary rationale is that an individual

endowed with a greater array of wholesome traits tends to disfavor the pursuit and realization of objectives that conform to socially disapproved norms.

**Mutually Negative Interpersonal Relationships:** A mutually negative interpersonal relationship is one that is entirely disapproved by society at large, as the goals of the individuals involved are not accepted by the broader community. The interpersonal relationship suggests that both individuals engage in unwholesome behaviors while maintaining no distance, thus achieving full proximity. The tendency of both individuals to develop a self-unwholesome personality guarantees that their relationship is purely proximity in physical, social, and psychological aspects. The development of a self-unwholesome personality by individuals guarantees that their relationship is closely linked throughout physical, social, and psychological aspects. Human relationships characterized by mutual negativeness are the nadir of the social low of social relations, producing outcomes that are purely bad for society at large. A great example of the mutually negative interpersonal relationship seen in Buddhist literature is that of *Devadatta Thero* and his disciples. He persistently engaged himself in things that went against the fundamental teachings of monastic release, disregarding the rules stipulated by the Buddha.

### Conclusion

Over the past one hundred and forty years, ongoing contributions from various scholars in the domain of human relations have led to the development of numerous ideas, concepts, and theories aimed at enhancing the understanding of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, modern management literature reflects a variety of theoretical foundations for establishing interpersonal relationships. For instance, Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) holds that adult interpersonal processes are predicted by experiences with early caregivers, while Thibaut and Kelley's Social Exchange Theory (1959) holds that the sustainability of a relationship is based on the rewards-to-cost ratio perceived. Additionally, Adam's Equity Theory (1965) attends to the need for fair contribution and reward among people in relationships, whereas Baxter and Montgomery's Rational Dialectics Theory (1996) explains the fundamental contradictions and tensions people experience in relational life. By contrast, Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration Theory (1973) proposes that people become intimate in relationships by gradually sharing self-relevant information interpersonally over a period of time and ultimately build intimacy.

The above-mentioned summaries concerning interpersonal relationship theories suggested that various scholars have contributed to this field over the past seventy years, highlighting the importance of diverse factors in determining human relations. Nevertheless, this study, rooted in the principles of *Vatta* and *Sila* and utilizing an inductive thematic analysis of the *Vattakkandhaka*, reveals that, contrary to contemporary theories on interpersonal relationships, the key determinant of such relationships is the concept of proximity or distance.

The primary elements influencing the strengths or weaknesses of interpersonal relationships in modern management include understanding and communication (Collins and Miller, 1994; Rogers and Farson, 1987), openness and trust (Brown, 2012; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995), conflict resolution (Gottman, 1994), emotional reasoning

(Goleman, 1995), value congruence (Hendrik and Hendrik, 2006; Sahlstein, 2006), mutual support (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), and the degree of time spent (Duck, 1993). In contrast to the primary factors that significantly influence the strengths and weaknesses of interpersonal relationships from a modern management perspective, this study highlights the critical importance of proximity and distance in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the relationships, which include physical, social, and psychological elements. Furthermore, proximity and distance can be regarded as novel concepts within the theoretical framework of interpersonal relationships.

Besides the conceptions of proximity and distance intrinsic within interpersonal relationships, the study stipulates behavioral traits as the fundamental process for creating the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between individuals. In this context, contemporary theories and literature indicate a number of behavioral traits that determine human relationships. Social Exchange theory posits that the traits of trustworthiness, kindness, and sociability enhance perceived rewards (Homans, 1958). Attachment theory, on the contrary, emphasizes open communication and emotional availability as the most important traits, while empathy, active listening, and responsiveness are paramount according to Interpersonal Process theory (Reis & Shaver, 1988).

In Buddhist teachings, actions are classified as either wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), which arise from intentional volition (*cetanā*). The examination of the concepts of *Vatta* and *Sīla* reveals the identification of an individual's wholesome and unwholesome personality traits, which in turn shape their behavioral traits and influence interpersonal dynamics. This study introduces a unique way for analyzing interpersonal relationships through the perspective of these behavioral traits, particularly focusing on the spectrum of wholesome and unwholesome traits, a perspective that is notably scarce in contemporary Buddhist literature.

This study offers a distinctive viewpoint on the analysis of interpersonal relationships, diverging from modern theories by highlighting the objectives of interpersonal relationships that individuals seek to achieve within socially acknowledged contexts. The objectives of the individuals' relationships are mainly classified into two major categories, which match the objectives of relationships with the wider socially endorsed goals: socially friendly interpersonal relationships and antisocial interpersonal relationship.

In conclusion, the study proposed eight types of interpersonal relationships, which are grounded in a continuum of diverse interactions, taking into account three primary factors: the concepts of proximity and distance, behavioral traits (both wholesome and unwholesome traits), and the objectives of the relationships of individuals within the framework of social acceptability. This study proposes various theoretical insights derived from the analysis and synthesis of the concept of *Vatta* in the *Vattakkandhaka*, as well as the concept of *Sīla*, which can enhance the current understanding of interpersonal relationships.

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