Discipline and Ethical Formation in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the concept of vinaya, or discipline, in the Vinayapiṭaka, or Canon of Disciplinary Texts, of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda monastic order. Discipline is a process of self-transformation toward salvific ends and a means of organizing the monastic community, illuminating personal and communal aspects of Buddhist monasticism. Although recent scholarship advances the field’s understanding of classical South Asian monasticism, the Vinayapiṭaka of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda receives little attention. This study is first to consider the entire Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka and read its component texts against one another, arguing that the Mahāvastu, or Great Chapter, is not only nominally but functionally a vinaya text. This study demonstrates that narratives—mythical stories of the distant past, and biographical stories of the Buddha Śākyamuni and his Great Disciples—function in the Vinayapiṭaka to inculcate personal discipline and communal ethics, examining the disciplinary themes of sexual desire, time, and caste. In this way, it shows the importance of taking narrative seriously as a component of vinaya, and suggests a way to understand how narratives teach discipline.
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INTRODUCTION

Monasticism is central to Buddhism as an organized religion. According to the canonical texts from classical South Asia, which are the subject of this study, one of the first acts of the Buddha Śākyamuni after his awakening was the ordination of the Great Disciples (mahāśrāvaka-s) and the founding of a monastic order (saṅgha).¹ The Buddha’s teachings, laying out a path to salvation, were directed toward his monastic community, and monastic practice formed the basis for the attainment of nirvāṇa, or final liberation. Although it was possible for a layperson to attain sanctified states and even nirvāṇa (the traditions of classical South Asia debated the details of this), the ideal practitioner remained an ordained monastic.²

The basis of monasticism is vinaya, or discipline. John Holt articulates the importance of discipline at the outset of his book on the canonical disciplinary texts of the Theravāda monastic order:

Discipline is the ethos of Buddhist monasticism: the trail head of the path of purity leading to nibbāna and the fiber of the community’s soul, a means to salvation and the nucleus of communal identity.³


As Holt indicates, discipline operates on both personal and communal levels, a personal practice of self-transformation toward salvific ends and a means of organizing a monastic community. These two goals interrelate, as this study demonstrates. Given the importance of discipline to the monastic community, disciplinary training remained an abiding concern. This study answers the question of how discipline was inculcated in the monastic community in classical South Asia, through examination of canonical, disciplinary texts that address and govern monastic training.

How should monastic training be understood as a general concept? Mary Carruthers argues that monastic training is best understood as the cultivation of a craft of life:

> Any craft develops an orthopraxis, a craft “knowledge” which is learned, and indeed can only be learned, by the painstaking practical imitation and complete familiarization of exemplary masters’ techniques and experiences. Most of this knowledge cannot even be set down in words; it must be learned by practicing, over and over again. Monastic education is best understood, I think, on this apprenticeship model, more like masonry or carpentry than anything in the modern academy. It is an apprenticeship to a craft which is also a way of life.

A comparison to apprenticeship emphasizes that monastic training requires diligent practice in an immersive environment. It is not a matter of simply learning a set of doctrines, even if those doctrines are vital to philosophical knowledge. Learning the craft of monasticism requires the imitation of exemplary models through bodily practice, and an understanding of techniques necessary to do the “work” of monasticism. For the Buddhist monastic, this takes place on

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4 The terms “South Asia” and “South Asian” are often used in this study, rather than consistently “India” and “Indian,” because Buddhist monasticism was widely present in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh during the classical and medieval periods. The term “India” designates a geographical area more narrowly limited to the subcontinent.

personal and communal levels. On a personal level, monastics engage in practices of self-transformation that require constant attention to details of embodied experience, such as the control of sexual desire and a disciplined awareness of time (discussed in Chapters Four and Five, respectively). On a communal level, monastics strive to live well with others within the monastic community, ensuring communal harmony and comfort. They cultivate good relations with the larger lay society, inculcating a relationship of *prasāda*, or trust (Chapters Three and Six.) These are the broad outlines of the craft of Buddhist monastic life.

Carruthers points out that monastic training, like apprenticeships, often “cannot even be set down in words.” Carruthers refers to the fact that apprenticeship training is often done through doing, not the study of books. A blacksmith learns to make a horseshoe by watching an accomplished master and imitating the technique, not by reading an instruction manual. This poses a challenge to the study of Buddhist monasticism—how does a scholar enter the world of monastic training?

Contemporarily, the answer is anthropological and ethnographic studies. Scholars can access monasteries and monastics directly, and conduct interviews and observations. A forthcoming study of Buddhist education in southwest China from Thomas Borchert, entitled *Educating Monks*, is an example of a study that takes on this issue directly, expanding the field’s knowledge of contemporary practices of monastic training in Xishuangbanna (Sipsongpannā), Yunnan.6 George Dreyfus’ 2003 book *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping* presents an extensive

6 Thomas Borchert, *Educating Monks: Minority Buddhism on China’s Southwest Border* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017). This book was due for release after the present dissertation had been completed.
study of the practices of monastic education within a contemporary Tibetan monastic community, in which Dreyfus was an ordained member. Dreyfus demonstrates that training is embedded in communal and bodily practices, such as the clapping of two hands in communal debates to signify execution of a decisive debating point. Robert Buswell’s 1992 book *The Zen Monastic Experience* and Janwillem Van de Wetering’s 1973 memoir *The Empty Mirror* similarly describe experiences of monastic training in Zen monasteries in Korea and Japan, respectively.

Recent studies of Buddhist monasticism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, where forms of Theravāda Buddhism prevail, have also expanded the field’s understanding of the craft of monastic life. Ananda Abeysekara and Nirmala Salgado published studies of Sri Lankan monasticism based on field research that challenge traditional understanding of Theravāda Buddhism through attention to the ways in which Buddhist monasticism is embedded in the lived experience of individuals and communities. Jeffrey Samuels expands the field’s awareness of how affect and the “aesthetics of emotion” play a role in relationships between monastics and laypeople in contemporary Sri Lanka.

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Lanka and Justin McDaniel’s study of colonial Laos and Thailand both use archival material to expand the field’s knowledge of pre-modern Buddhist monastic education in those locales.\(^\text{11}\)

For the study of Buddhist monasticism in classical India, the situation is more difficult, and scholars must rely much more heavily on partial and incomplete textual evidence. Buddhist monasticism largely disappeared from the Indian subcontinent by the 13\(^{th}\) century.\(^\text{12}\) The evidence left behind is scant due to the vagaries of time, climate, and hostile political regimes. Texts in translation—in Chinese, Tibetan, and Pāli—have traditionally been primary sources for scholars interested in reconstructing classical Indian Buddhist monasticism. This is especially true for Pāli translations of Sri Lanka, which were used by nearly all scholars of the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries to reconstruct early Buddhism. Although current scholarship is indebted to these pioneering studies, the field is left with a mixed legacy of overreliance on Pāli material.\(^\text{13}\) Texts in translation shed light on Buddhism in classical India, but they do so through a filter that can be distorting and opaque.\(^\text{14}\) They must be used carefully and deliberately, knowing when they do and do not work (the present study uses some of these sources when


\(^{13}\) For a critique of the narrow use of canonical material, see Charles Hallisey, “Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism,” in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 31–61. For a response to this critique, and a defense of canonical studies, see Oliver Freiberger, “The Buddhist Canon and the Canon of Buddhist Studies,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2005): 261–283.

appropriate.) During the past several decades, scholarship on Pāli texts of Sri Lanka has shown that their composition, organization, and codification were greatly influenced by Sri Lankan political and cultural contexts. Although there is no doubt that a large plurality, perhaps even majority, of canonical Pāli texts were transmitted from the Indian subcontinent, they do not represent a pristine transmission in their current state. These texts were received, used, and edited, not archived in a museum. This does not mean that they cannot say anything about classical Indian Buddhism, but they must be used with care. Chapter One discusses a major problem that arose in relation to the texts examined in this study, when Pāli texts were used as the unquestioned standard of comparison.

Gregory Schopen shows the field how to overcome some of these obstacles through dozens of far-reaching studies of classical Indian Buddhist monasticism based on close readings of Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya texts, challenging long-held ideas about Buddhist monasticism and its historical development. Schopen’s work single-handedly moved the field of classical Indian Buddhism into a new period of real advancement, bringing into view how


Buddhist monasticism engaged in and interacted with ritual practices, law codes (e.g., inheritance law), economics, and social hierarchies (e.g., ownership of slaves by monasteries).

Shayne Clarke’s 2014 book *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* extends one of these lines of inquiry, overturning an out-dated notion that Buddhist monastics were solitary renunciants with no contact with their (former) families.\(^{17}\)

At the beginning of his 2008 book on monastic administration in classical India, Jonathan Silk laments the current lack of scholarly knowledge on the craft of monasticism in classical India:

> It is a disappointing fact that we as yet know very little about the realities of Buddhism in classical India. While we are amply provided with studies on so-called dependent origination, or the complexities of the emptiness or Tathāgatagarbha doctrines, we are much less well informed about an average day’s events at an Indian Buddhist monastery or hermitage of virtually any time or place in the classical period, or the bureaucratic structure of such institutions; our relatively good information on multiple supramundane or abstract aspects of the Indian Buddhist world of thought is mirrored by our comparative ignorance about the mundane details of the day-to-day life of Indian Buddhist monasticism (not to mention the life of nonmonastic Buddhists).\(^{18}\)

Given this situation, it is a boon that a group of texts from classical India exists that can shed light on precisely that issue. These texts are the subject of this dissertation. They are known collectively as the *Vinayapiṭaka*, or Canon of Disciplinary Texts, and belong to a monastic order known as the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. This particular body of texts has not been the subject of any sustained scholarly study on the topic of discipline. They are written in a form of Sanskrit called Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, and can be generally placed in northern India during

\(^{17}\) Shayne Clarke, *Family Matters in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014).

the first millennium CE (more on this below and in Chapter One). They shed light on multiple aspects of monastic training, such as learning to control sexual desire, adhering to a daily routine, and living well with others in a diverse society. The supramundane is not absent from these texts. They dwell on exemplary, supramundane figures like the Buddha and his Great Disciples, and their attainments, but the supramundane is always expressed in and through the mundane, demonstrating their vital connection. This is part of the craft of Buddhist monasticism, as described in these texts—to realize that the mundane is the vehicle for the transformation of oneself and others toward supramundane goals of health and liberation.

Judging by their internal content, the vinaya, or disciplinary, texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda were written by monastics for monastic consumption. Their primary “author,” in the historical imagination of the texts, is the Buddha himself. His disciplinary teachings emerge in conversations with his monastic community. The vinaya texts (restricting that term now to those belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda) record teachings given by the Buddha to his monastic community during his four decades of leadership. During this time, he promulgated rules, gave training instructions, told stories, and recited normative poetry, all to communicate and instill the craft of monasticism in his diverse audiences. Although Carruthers is correct that learning a craft occurs primarily by doing, the Buddha, according to the picture of him that emerges from these vinaya texts, used his speech as a primary tool to direct, shape, and train his monastic disciples. Through the voices of characters and narrators, the vinaya texts extol the importance of harkening to the words of the Buddha. The first generation of monastics, especially the Great Disciples, are shown in the vinaya texts teaching others in and through the words of the Buddha. Once the Buddha passed away, the monastic community
collected his teachings and codified them into the *vinaya* texts that have come down to the present day, as that story is told in the beginning of one of the *vinaya* texts called the *Mahāvastu, or Great Chapter.*\(^{19}\) The *vinaya* texts not only purport to contain the instructions of the Buddha, they also espouse an implicit “theory” that those words have an incredibly important role to play in monastic training. The concept of discipline, as it emerges from the *vinaya* texts, is based on the idea that words and stories matter. They have the power to shape lives and recreate the monastic community that the Buddha personally brought into this world, extending it into the future.

The audience of *vinaya* texts, both in the world of the text and the implied audience of narration, is the monastic community. The *vinaya* texts neither address a lay audience nor consider the discipline appropriate for a layperson, though laypeople do appear in the texts as characters, and the Buddha does speak to them.\(^{20}\) The texts are not concerned with presenting an idealized vision of the monastery to the outside world. This is not to say that ideals are not taught or that depictions are not idealized in the sense of presenting a model of correct practice. Ideals are meant to inculcate proper norms, goals, and behavioral expectations in a monastic audience, and often deal with mundane matters.

\(^{19}\) This is not an argument that the *vinaya* texts did not historically change, develop, or expand after they were collected by that first generation of monks. The point is that the *vinaya* texts present themselves as a product of such a collection and codification.

\(^{20}\) Laypeople were not necessarily forbidden from reading or hearing a *vinaya* text, or imitating aspects of monastic life, but the point still stands that *vinaya* texts were primarily oriented toward a monastic audience.
The Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, or Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct, a text examined in this study, offers an example. This vinaya text presents what must have been a common situation for Buddhist monasteries in classical India. A group of young men are ordained into the monastic community, but do not subsequently receive any training. Consequently, they are unable to behave according to expected standards:

At that time the elders Nanda and Upananda, and the rest of the group of six, ordained some young men. After ordaining them, they did not teach them or instruct them. They were raised [like animals at a temple, like Indra’s cows and Śiva’s goats. They lacked proper behavior and comportment. They did not know [the following]:

How should we behave toward the preceptor?22
How should we behave toward the teacher?
How should we behave toward one who is older?
How should we behave in the midst of the community?
How should we behave in the village?
How should we behave in the forest?
How should we wear the inner robe?
How should we wear the outer robe?
How should we behave while wearing robes and carrying a bowl?

Monks reported this matter to the Blessed One [who subsequently gives instructions].23

The disciplinary issues listed here, which newly-ordained monks did not know, are basic expectations of behavior, both within the monastic community and among lay society. Within

21 These characters—Nandana, Upanandana and the group of six—are the stock “screw ups” of the monastic community, who are always doing things wrong and causing problems.

22 The preceptor (upādhyāya) and the teacher (ācārya) were formal, senior roles within the monastic community with responsibility for training new ordinands under their charge. The Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct specifies the duties of the new ordinands toward these superiors and the superiors’ obligations to their charges. Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 65–81.

the community, they did not know how to behave toward their seniors and during formal community gatherings. In the wider social world, they could not conform to the basic expectations of dress and comportment. Without training, this text argues that monks will be like animals kept within temple precincts, formally sacred but uncrafted and lacking the ability to meaningfully participate in communal and social life.\textsuperscript{24} The impetus for training is primarily mundane matters: behaving well and dressing correctly. Monastic training is directed toward learning how to be a monk in the basic sense of living up to the expected standards of that position, what the \textit{vinaya} texts call \textit{bhikṣubhāva}, or becoming a monk.

As seen in the above example, \textit{vinaya} texts often present situations of monastic training in a narrative mode. Sometimes these stories include exemplary monks, the “saints” of the Indian Buddhist tradition, and depict their actions as standards toward which all monastics should strive. At other points, stories are told of the distant past, when “Buddhism” and “Buddhist monasticism” did not exist, but actions of humans in those distant times still had direct effects on the present. Generally, the \textit{vinaya} texts follow a pattern of embedding training instructions and normative standards within a narrative, whether set during the time of the Buddha or the distant past. These narratives often depict a failure of discipline, as above. These failures lead the Buddha or other accomplished practitioners, such as the Great Disciples, to provide some type of disciplinary teaching or instruction. These situations are realistic in the sense that they depict mundane situations and normal human behaviors, though this does not

\textsuperscript{24} In this dissertation “community” will be used to refer to the monastic community and “society” to refer to surrounding groups, mostly lay, with which the monastic community interacts.
preclude the inclusion of supramundane aspects, such as the presence of gods or miracles.\textsuperscript{25} They are not historical in a robust, academic sense of a true description of past events from an objective viewpoint.\textsuperscript{26} However, for the monastic community, narratives in the \textit{vinaya} texts would have been received as historical in that they are depictions of the past that the monastic community has passed down as true, and that have an authoritative force for the present monastic community. More precisely, they are what Bruce Lincoln defines as “myth:” “that small class of stories that possess both credibility and authority.”\textsuperscript{27} Lincoln does not distinguish “myth” from “history” in the sense of myth as false history, but designates a separate class of discourse that is analytically useful for the study of religion. Myth, like history, has credibility, but also authority, so myth is authoritative history. Lincoln defines authority:

\begin{quote}
Having offered such a definition of Myth, it is necessary, of course, to define \textit{authority}, on which the definition of Myth hangs. In part I have in mind something similar to what Malinowski meant when he described myth as a form of social charter and what Clifford Geertz meant in his characterization of religion as being simultaneously a “model of” and “model for” reality. That is to say, a narrative possessed of authority is one for which successful claims are made not only to the status of truth, but what is more, to the status of \textit{paradigmatic} truth. In this sense the authority of myth is somewhat akin to that of charters, models, templates, and blueprints, but one can go beyond this formulation and recognize that it is also (and perhaps more important) akin to that of revolutionary slogans and ancestral invocations, in that through the recitation of myth one may effectively mobilize a social grouping. Thus, myth is not just a coding device in which important information is conveyed, on the basis of which actors can then construct society. It is also a discursive act through which actors evoke the sentiments out of which society is actively constructed.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{25} Strictly speaking, from the emic perspective, gods and magic are not supramundane, but in the general use of that term in the study of religion these things would fall into the category of supramundane.

\textsuperscript{26} The author brackets here critiques of objective history or its possibility.


\textsuperscript{28} Lincoln, \textit{Discourse and the Construction}, 24–25.
Authority is the ability to articulate paradigmatic truths that matter to a community. Mythical discourses provide the charters and blueprints that form the texture of social life and summon forth sentiments through which individuals are motivated to conform. As a form of discourse, myth accomplishes this goal because it is both credible and authoritative.

Narratives that frame and form the vinaya texts are myths in this definition of the term. They reveal paradigmatic truths that cut across time and place, even while representing a historical past that is itself important. The mythical narratives provide models and blueprints for how to become a monk and how to live well in a community with others. The vinaya texts not only convey important information—e.g. how to dress, eat, and eliminate sexual desire—they also summon forth sentiments from which the monastic community is constructed, such as a feeling of remorse (apatrāpya) for breaking the rules, the feeling of danger (bhaya) in relation to sexual desires, and the feeling of urgency in relation to time. Vinaya texts are not just a means to a disciplinary end, but are constitutive of the (re)production of a monastic subjectivity and monastic community in the present, whenever and wherever that happens to be.

This definition of myth brings to view the importance of narrative in the Vinayapiṭaka. To some extent, previous scholarship on vinaya texts has privileged the monastic rules, that is, the regulatory discourse that says, “do this” and “do not do that.” However, a large portion of the Vinayapiṭaka—not only that belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda, but those belonging to other monastic orders—is narrative. These narratives have not always been seen, especially in earlier scholarship, as properly vinaya because the latter has been defined narrowly as regulatory discourse. To the extent that they have been considered, the narratives
have been variously understood in relation to the entire *Vinayapiṭaka*. In a recent study, Gregory Schopen outlines existing theories of the development of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayapiṭaka*, which contains a vast amount of narrative material. He demonstrates that none of these theories provides an adequate explanation for the presence of narrative literature, even if they hypothesize on its historical development.²⁹ Shayne Clarke’s study of humor in the *Vinayapiṭaka* and Phyllis Granoff’s examination of the monastic character of narratives about miracles bring the field closer to explanatory theories by taking seriously the literary aesthetics and content of narratives.³⁰ The contribution of the present study is to demonstrate the role of narrative within the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *Vinayapiṭaka* in contributing to the reproduction of an orthopractic, monastic subjectivity and community. It argues that narrative material, as myth, provides models of disciplinary habits, and demonstrates how discipline functions on an intersubjective level, bringing the communal and societal other into the horizon of concern.

The inclusion of narrative material as a vital component of *vinaya* also helps make sense of the *Vinayapiṭaka* as a coherent body of texts that can be legitimately described as a canon. The idea of a canon of *vinaya* texts is not new, but this term has often been treated nominally, rather than functionally. In relation specifically to the *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Mahāsāṃghika


Lokottaravāda, the *Mahāvastu*, which is labeled as belonging (at least nominally) in the canon, has been seen as anomalous, like an ancient filing error. This study demonstrates that these texts, with their narrative content, hang together as a coherent collection. They are not just nominally or formally a canon, but also practically a canon.31

In Indian Buddhist monasticism, canons belong to specific monastic orders. The texts studied in this dissertation, whose details are discussed in Chapter One, belong to a monastic order called the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. The name of this monastic order is composed of two parts: Mahāsāṃghika and Lokottaravāda. To understand the significance of this name, one must understand why monastic orders formed in the first place. As Heinz Bechert states in his classic article, a monastic order, or nikāya, is formed by a formal schism (saṅghabheda) of a previously undivided monastic community.32 These schisms were solely based on disputes over monastic rules, collectively called the *Prātimokṣa*. As Jan Nattier and Charles Prebish show, formation of the Mahāsāṃghika nikāya resulted from expansion of the *Prātimokṣa* by a group of monastics who would later be known as the Sthavira Nikāya, or Monastic Order of Elders.33 This took place roughly one hundred years after the death of the Buddha. The remaining group of monastics, who did not agree to the expansion of the *Prātimokṣa*, was called the

Mahāsāṃghika, which means “the great assembly” or “the majority.” All surviving monastic orders derive from the Sthavira monastic order, so historically, this event had a major influence on the development of Buddhist monasticism. The Mahāsāṃghika monastic order flourished during the first millennium CE, but then died out during the first few centuries of the second millennium. An ordination lineage was never established in other countries, as happened with the surviving monastic orders (i.e., the Mūlasarvāstivāda in Tibet, Dharmaguptaka in China, Japan, and Korea, and Theravāda in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos).

Formation of a monastic order must be kept separate from formation of what Bechert calls a “dogmatic school,” which formed based on disputes over doctrine. The Lokottaravāda is one such dogmatic school, though it is difficult to say precisely what dispute over doctrine led to its formation. Lokottaravāda means “those who profess the supramundane.” The usual explanation given for this name is that this dogmatic school advanced the theory that “all buddhas are supramundane.” However, some texts ascribe this theory to the entire Mahāsāṃghika monastic order, not just the Lokottaravāda, or do not even know a dogmatic

34 The extant sources seem to be only guesses, such as Paramārtha (a Chinese monk of the 6th century), who claimed that the internal schism that produced the Lokottaravāda was over the authenticity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. See André Bareau, *The Buddhist Schools of the Small Vehicle*, trans. Sara Boin-Webb, ed. Andrew Skilton (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), 25. The history is all the more handicapped by the fact that some of the sources consulted by Bareau in his definitive study (the so-called “southern” sources) do not know the Lokottaravāda at all.

school called the Lokottaravāda at all, so the terms of the dispute remain mysterious. Clearly, this issue needs further research, a pursuit hampered by the fact that nearly no doctrinal texts belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika survive. Fortunately, this is not a concern in the present study because it is not about doctrinal disputes or sectarian differences among dogmatic schools. It is enough to say that the vinaya texts under consideration belong to the Mahāsāṃghika monastic order. Monastics belonging to different dogmatic schools within the Mahāsāṃghika monastic order would have kept substantially the same Vinayapiṭaka, and could coexist without disciplinary conflicts.

This affiliation is important because most other studies of vinaya texts consult only, or primarily, vinaya texts from monastic orders descended from offshoots of the Sthavira monastic order. This was caused partly by the fact that the Mahāsāṃghikas were one of the losers of history. Aside from the vinaya texts examined in this study, nearly no other evidence of their existence in India survives; they left no living traditions or advocates. This makes a

36 See Bareau, Buddhist Schools, 24–26, 55–59, and 84–86.

37 Comparison between the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapitaka and the Chinese translation of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayapitaka demonstrate that they are in close agreement. Akira Hirakawa, who translated the Chinese Mahāsāṃghika *Bhikṣuṇī Pratimokṣa Vibhanga into English, repeatedly states that the Chinese translation is in “close agreement” with the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda version of the same text extant in Sanskrit. Akira Hirakawa, trans., Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1982), 5, 14 and 44. This will allow the use of the Chinese Mahāsāṃghika vinaya texts where appropriate, which is necessary since some of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda vinaya texts are missing and presumed lost.

38 Evidence of this conclusion is provided by a relatively late text, the Sphuṭārthā Śrīganācārasamgraha-ṭikā, in which monastics are instructed, in the event of meeting an unknown monastic, to ask each other to which monastic order they belong. If the two monks belong to the Mahāsāṃghika monastic order, regardless of dogmatic school, then the text states that they are allowed to dwell together. If not, then the text instructs them to “avoid” (vivarjaitvam) one another. Sanghasena, ed., Sphuṭārthā Śrīganācārasamgrahatīkā (Patna, Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1968), 76.
study of their textual remains important, adding necessary diversity to knowledge of monasticism in classical India, and giving the Mahāsāṃghikas a voice in scholarly conversations.

Consequently, this study is not comparative. Although it is desirable to learn more about sectarian disparities between monastic orders and their Vinayapiṭaka-s, the Mahāsāṃghika has always been studied in comparison with other monastic orders as a junior partner; it is rarely allowed to speak for itself. This study reads the Mahāsāṃghika vinaya texts against one another on central themes of discipline, not against other vinaya texts. This creates a foundation for future comparative studies when the Mahāsāṃghika can stand as an equal partner.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One offers details on the content and history of the Vinayapiṭaka belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. This is followed by an initial argument for their functional coherence as a canon, especially important to the text known as the Mahāvastu, which has not traditionally been considered properly vinaya. The Mahāvastu plays a role in arguments in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two begins close analysis of these vinaya texts in light of their role as myth in Lincoln’s sense of the term. This chapter looks specifically at how the Mahāvastu provides a mythical background for monastic discipline. Narratives of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s many past lives, in the first part of the Mahāvastu, create an understanding of the complex interaction of temporal causality that carries throughout the vinaya texts. Following these stories of the distant past, the Mahāvastu then presents a teaching given by the Buddha Śākyamuni about the cosmogenesis of this world. The cosmogony reveals the paradigmatic
truths of the world, the facts of life to which monastic training responds in its vision of a transformative orthopraxis. The Mahāvastu shows that Buddhist discipline is directly suited to life in the present world, in which humans are doomed to live defiled lives of uncontrolled desire and suffering. Monastic training is shown to be a diagnosis and cure for the disease of life and the evils of the world. The Mahāvastu also provides a charter for the formation of the early community, in the story of the origins of ordination and the ordinations of the Great Disciples, who go on to play key roles in the development of the nascent monastic community. This early community was unique in its ability to maintain discipline without formal rules. The vinaya texts narrate the story of why the rules became necessary. The Vinayapiṭaka is therefore shown to unfold as a historical production.

Chapter Three examines the rhetoric of goals (artha) of monastic training, which are presented in the vinaya texts as a frame for understanding the project of monastic life. In the mythical narratives of the vinaya texts, the Buddha is depicted as considering a discrete set of goals whenever he prescribes a monastic rule or instruction. Just as the mythical background of the Mahāvastu reveals paradigmatic truths about the human condition that encompass discipline, the set of goals shows that the Buddha had an overarching vision in mind whenever he promulgated a specific rule. Even the most seemingly arbitrary rule, such as that monks cannot eat meals in groups larger than three, participates in paradigmatic truths that extend beyond the narrow scope of the rule itself. With this mythical background in place, Chapters Four, Five, and Six shift the discussion to specific ways in which vinaya texts inform monastic training in relation to three central themes—sexual desire, time, and caste. Chapter Four examines narratives that depict a disciplined mode of perception known as guarding the senses
(indriyasamvara) that functions to eliminate sexual desire, one of the most important goals of monastic training. The vinaya builds on the mythical charter discussed in Chapter Two, and uses stories of exemplary lives to communicate paradigmatic truths about perception and sexual desire. This intertextuality contributes to demonstrating how the vinaya texts interrelate as a functional canon.

Chapter Five examines training related to time. Time is another fact of life revealed by the mythical narrative discussed in Chapter Two. For training and discipline to be successful and efficacious, it must consider the fact that life is lived in time, specifically calendrical time, that sets the periodicity and routine of discipline. Time must also be cultivated as a sentiment of urgency, the recognition that human life is short and the chance for ordination is rare. Training in this respect is about developing a disciplined awareness of time that considers the communal and social other. Chapter Six examines training in relation to human difference, specifically caste. As with the previous two chapters, caste is a fact of life to which training must respond to be efficacious, and one that considers the overarching goals of monastic discipline. Monastic life is lived in relation to societal others who identify themselves as belonging to specific groups, such as brāhmaṇa and ksatriya. Even if the Buddha Śākyamuni’s teachings to the monastic community reject caste distinctions, the monastic community did not seek to completely overturn hierarchical social orders. A disciplined awareness and consideration of caste and hierarchy are a vital part of monastic orthopraxis, which both conforms to and seeks to transform it, particularly in relation to elimination of hatred (dveṣa or doṣa).
A Note on Translation

All translations are the author’s own unless otherwise indicated in footnotes. Translation of the *Mahāvastu* by Jones is used whenever possible to preserve the ability of the reader to easily find cited passages and read their surrounding context. Wherever Jones’ translation is inadequate, it is replaced by the author’s own translation. The current author benefited greatly from existing translations, and references to those texts, when not directly quoted, will also be given in the footnotes following a primary text citation. Vocabulary choices and syntax of existing translations might have been retained without explicit quotations. In the case of multiple volume editions and translations, the volume number is given followed by the page number separated by a period. For example, “Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 3.376” refers to volume 3, page 376.

Jonathan Silk strongly critiques Jones’ translation, but the present author finds that his translation is adequate in the majority of passages. Jonathan Silk, “Keeping Up With the Joneses: From William Jones to John James Jones.” 創価大学国際仏教学高等研究所年報 17 (2013): 427–441. A new English translation is a desideratum, but must wait until the Sanskrit manuscripts have been reedited and a new Sanskrit edition produced.
CHAPTER ONE: THE VINAYA TEXTS AND THEIR HISTORY

This chapter introduces and defines the concept of vinaya, its range of lexical use, and the texts under consideration in this study. It then examines the ways these texts can be nominally and functionally described as a canon. All of this serves as background information for subsequent chapters, which focus on specific texts and themes.

What Vinaya Means

The Sanskrit term vinaya can be translated generally as “training” or “discipline,” with the latter being much more common in academic publications. In his Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, Frank Edgerton simply gives “discipline” as the primary definition and “training” in a subsequent citation. The Pali Text Society’s Pali–English Dictionary has a much more expansive and detailed entry. Leaving aside entries number one and two for the moment, entry three lists “norm of conduct, ethics, morality, good behavior,” and entry four lists “code


of ethics, monastic discipline, rules of morality or of canon law.” Thus, entry three designates a general notion of good conduct, and four designates a body of codified rules on good conduct. For the substantive noun *vinaya*, these two meanings are the most frequently encountered in the texts under consideration in this study. Discipline signifies behavioral standards outlined in a textual code. For the average English speaker, the term discipline invokes a notion of corporal punishment, but since bodily harm, whether inflicted by another or by oneself, is never enjoined in *vinaya* texts, such a definition of discipline is inappropriate and does not apply to Buddhist monasticism.

*Vinaya* should be understood in relation to another important term: *dharma*. The two terms form a *dvandva* compound—*dharmavinaya*—that encompasses the entirety of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s teachings. *Dharma* is a complicated, polyvalent word with a long history in Buddhism and nearly all South Asian religions.\(^{43}\) When paired and contrasted with the term *vinaya*, *dharma* has the primary sense of “the truth” or “the really real.” *Dharma* is both the truth of what exists (i.e., ontology) and the manner in which all things exist (i.e., metaphysics), especially the idea that all existing things arise from a cause.\(^{44}\) Just as *vinaya* describes something about the world (e.g., good behavior) and a codified version of it (e.g., code of good behavior), *dharma* describes both the truth of the world and the codified speech of the Buddha,


\(^{44}\) The latter is expressed in the doxographical formula of *pratītyasamutpāda*, or dependent origination.
called *buddhavacana*, wherein those truths are revealed. The *dhammadvinaṇaya* designates the entirety of the Buddha’s teachings on the levels of truth and text.

Although *dharma* and *vinaya* are separate, the two relate intimately. The *vinaya* is based on the *dharma* in the sense that good behavior must be based on true knowledge of phenomenal existence and the way the world works. So, the *vinaya* texts depend on the *dharma* texts. Their boundaries should draw too tightly. In the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, there is a list of genres of *buddhavacana* that are considered to be *dharma*. They are *sutrānta*, *sūtra*, *geya*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*, *itivṛttaka*, *jātaka*, and *vaipulyādbhūtadharma*, a list of nine genres that forms the *navāṅga*, or nine limbs, of the *dharma* teachings. Among these, five are found in the *Mahāvastu*—*sūtra*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*, and *jātaka*—and discourses in the form of *gāthā* and *jātaka* (but without explicit titles) are found in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* and the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*. This shows that the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *vinaya* texts incorporate both *dharma* and *vinaya* forms of discourse, and this interrelation gives the *vinaya* texts their imperative force as authoritative.

Returning to other meanings of *vinaya* from the *Pali Text Society’s Pali–English Dictionary* that were set aside above, it is important to understand that *vinaya* is an ongoing process of self-transformation. In addition to the substantive noun *vinaya*, there are adjectives and verbal forms derived from the same verbal root that illuminate what *vinaya* is doing to the

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46 See Appendix One: Structure and Contents of the *Mahāvastu*. 

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subject “being disciplined” over time. The verbal root from which all of these words derive is √vinī, with the verbal prefix vi-. The basic meaning of this prefixed verbal root—√vinī—is “to remove,” “to draw out.”47 Discipline is the process of removing and drawing out something from the human subject.

What is being removed? Discipline removes the defilements (kleśa) that define the normal human state. These defilements perpetuate existential suffering (duḥkha) and lead to recurrent death and rebirth (saṃsāra), the two main “problems” of the human condition. The defilements are defined variously among texts. Edgerton provides a standard list of six defilements: sexual desire (rāga), aversion (pratigha), pride (māna), ignorance (avidyā), wrong views (kudrṣṭi), and doubt (vicikitsā).48 These defilements cause the normal (defiled) human to react to and interact with the world and other humans harmfully. This begins in the mind, with three states of intention that are defined as the roots of harm (akuśalamūla): greed (lobha), hatred (doṣa/dveṣa), and delusion (moha). They are called roots because they stand at the root of intentional action or karma. Any intentional action that is motivated by greed, hatred, or delusion will be harmful (akuśala) and evil (pāpaka), and will lead to a negative result in this life and/or in a future life. As an example, take the defilement of sexual desire (rāga). When a normal (defiled) human subject perceives a beautiful body, the defilement of sexual desire causes a state of mind to arise that is rooted in greed (i.e., physical attraction and a desire to


48 Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 2.198, s.v. “kleśa.”
possess that body sexually). This state of mind then causes that subject to act in intentional ways toward gaining that beautiful body and fulfilling sexual desires. Even if the resulting action of sex is successful and consensual, it is ultimately harmful to the subject and perpetuates suffering in this life and the next (to say nothing of frustrated desire or non-consensual sex). *Vinaya* is meant to remove the defilement of sexual desire, thus cutting off any greedy state of mind and any intentional action toward having sex. So, the “proper behavior” of celibacy is a commitment that all monastics must follow their entire lives. This commitment is enshrined in the first rule of the *Prātimokṣa*, or code of monastic rules. The standard and the rule are meant to inculcate a habit of removing sexual desire from the human subject and to affect a transformation that results in a state of being in which there is no longer any sexual desire (a state called *virāga*, or dispassion).

How does one remove the defilement of sexual desire? As Chapter Four discusses in detail, the primary means is through a transformation of perception called guarding the senses (*indriyasāmvara*). This internal practice of restraint is aided by the external restraint of *prātimokṣa* rules that is called restraint of the *Prātimokṣa* (*prātimokṣasāmvara*). Since these forms of restraint are not singular practices, but ongoing commitments, they are called *śīla*, or habits. One who has pure habits (*viśuddha-śīla*) is said to be disciplined (*vinīta*). In this way, a series of terms—*vinaya, saṃvara, śīla*—defines the set of practices a monastic undertakes to remove defilements and achieve the ultimate state of health (*anāsrava*).

This is an overview of the process of discipline, which could be greatly expanded with many technical details and complicated philosophies. However, the broad outlines would be known by every monastic. If they were not taught this by their teacher, then at the very least it
would be reinforced each fortnight during recitation of the Prātimokṣa Sūtra, or Liturgy of Rules for Monks/Nuns, at the Poṣadha Ceremony.\(^{49}\) The introductory verses of this liturgy, as written for the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda monastic order, reference nearly all of this information using the aforementioned keywords. What follows is a translation of the first half of these verses in the Liturgy of Rules for Monks:

1. This Prātimokṣa was set forth by the Buddha, to whom the lords of gods and men bow down, whose fame is widely proclaimed in the three worlds, who works for the welfare of the world, a protector.

2. Hearing this Prātimokṣa, which liberates from existence, spoken by the Sugata, the resolute, due to their restraint of the six sense organs,\(^{50}\) put an end to birth and death.

3. At long last we have obtained the triple gem, a Buddha has arisen, the desire of mankind; put away the faults of bad habits and become diligent in pure habits.

4. The Śramaṇa intent on good habits crosses over; the Brāhmaṇa\(^{51}\) intent on good habits crosses over.\(^{52}\) One who is intent upon good habits is worthy of worship by men and gods; accordingly, this Prātimokṣa is for one intent upon good habits.

5. I\(^{53}\) will proclaim the pure habits approved by many Buddhas, that they may exist as long as the earth remains, in the midst of the monastic community for the welfare of the world and its gods.

a. What good is the life of those whose hearts are covered with nets of akuśalamūla, like high clouds cover the sky? Life is good for those who quickly dissolve the nets ofakuśalamūla, like the sun destroys darkness.

b. What good is the Poṣadha Ceremony for those who act with blameworthy habits, who are stuck in the mud of old age and death, devoured by thoughts of immortality.

\(^{49}\) The Poṣadha Ceremony is the fortnightly ceremony during which the Prātimokṣa is recited and each monastic affirms their complete purity in regards to transgressions.

\(^{50}\) indriyasamvara, the aforementioned habit of “guarding the senses”.

\(^{51}\) Here śramaṇa and brāhmaṇa refer to a Buddhist monk.

\(^{52}\) “Crossing over” is a reference to nirvāṇa.

\(^{53}\) The “I” is the speaker of the liturgy.
The Posadha Ceremony has purpose for those who act with faultless habits, the resolute who put an end to old age and death and crush the power of Death.

c. What good is the Posadha Ceremony for those who are shameless, who have broken the vows of good habits, who are addicted to wrong livelihood and act as if deprived? The Posadha Ceremony has purpose for those who are modest, who do not break their vows of good habits, who are committed to proper livelihood and resolved toward pure habits.

d. What good is the Posadha Ceremony for those who commit evil from their bad habits? They are thrown aside from the declarations of the Teacher like a corpse from the ocean.

The Posadha Ceremony has a purpose for those who are unsullied by the triple world, their minds liberated like the clear sky or pure water.

e. What good is the Posadha Ceremony for those who do not constantly guard their six sense organs, who have fallen into the realms of Death and reject the company of good people?

The Posadha Ceremony has a purpose for those who constantly guard the six sense organs, who are committed to the Teacher’s words, the Conqueror’s words, who are devoted to the Dispensation.

54 The “Teacher” is the Buddha Śākyamuni.

55 There is a problem here with the original Sanskrit, which seems to omit the necessary negative particle. The sense of the phrase must be as translated, giving the contrast with the next stanza.

56 narendradevendrasuvanditena trilokavighūstaviśālākārtinā / buddhena lokārthacare tāyinā sudeśitaḥ prātimokṣaṃ vidūṇā // (1); tāṃ prātimokṣaṃ bhavadukhhamokṣaṃ śrutvāna dhīrāḥ sugatasya bhāṣitaḥ / śadindriyasamvarasamvyrtavat karonta jātimaranasya antam // (2); virasya labdhvā ratanāni trīṇi buddotpādam māṇuṣikāṇḍa śraddhāṃ / dāhuśilyavadyam parivarjyitvā viśuddhaśīlā bhavathāpramattāḥ // (3); śīlā yuṅko śramanotveti śīlā yuṅko brāhmaṇottvetyā / śīlā yuṅko naradevapūjyo śīlā yuṅkasya hi prātimokṣaṃ // (4); anekabuddhānunataṃ viśuddhāṃ śīlāṃ pratisthāḥ dharaṇīvā sānum / udāhariṣyāmyaham samghamadhye hitāy akṣaya sadevakasya // (5); kim jīvitaḥ teṣāṃ yesāmiḥākuśalamūlajālāni / prachādayanti ṣ̐dyayaṃ gaganamiva samunnatā meghāḥ // atijīvitaḥ ca teṣāṃ yesāmiḥākuśalamūlajālāni / viyāyaṃ vrajanti kṣipram divasakaraḥatāṃvākāramīva // (a); kim posadhena teṣām ye te sāvadāśīsilacārītṛaḥ / jarāmaranapāṇījaragataḥ amaravitarkehi khāḍyantī // kāryam ca posadhena teṣām ye te anavadāśīsilacārītṛaḥ / jarāmaranāntakarā māraṇalaparamāraddā dhīrāḥ // (b); kim posadhena teṣāmalajanām bhinnavṛttaśīlānām / mithyājivaratānāmasaranamiva carantānām // kāryam ca posadhena teṣām lajjināmabhinnavṛttaśīlānām / samyāgejivaratānāmadhyāsayaśuddhaśīlānām // (c); kim posadhena teṣām ye te duḥśilapāpkarmāntāḥ / kunapamīva samudrato samutsiptāḥ sāṣṭāṃ prāvacanāt // kāryam ca posadhena teṣām ye te traidhātuke anupaliptāḥ / ḍaṅka viṣa pāṇi suddhānām viṃuktacātānām // (d); kim posadhena teṣām śadindriyām yehi yehi surakṣitaṃ nityaṃ / patitānām māravasye svagoccarām varjyantānām // kāryam ca posadhena teṣāṃ śadindriyām yehi surakṣitaṃ nityaṃ / yuktānāṃ sāṣṭāvaccane jina-vaṃca sāsanaratānām // (e). Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtra, 3–4; cf. Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 42, 44.
In this versified introduction to the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*, the key terms and concepts discussed above are invoked repeatedly. In the beginning of the second set of verses (verse letter a), the concept of *akuśalamūla* is stated directly as defining what makes a life good or not. Those who are caught in “the net of *akuśalamūla*” are not able to live a worthwhile life, while those who can destroy this net do life a worthwhile life. The implication is that the disciplined life of a monastic is the only life worth living because it leads to “release from the pain of becoming” and an “end birth and death.”

The term śīla, or habit, is used extensively throughout in both a positive and negative sense. “Faultless” and “pure” śīla are enjoined and their opposites condemned (verses b and c). Those who commit themselves to pure śīla will obtain good things, such as the end of birth and death and the worship of gods and men (verse b and verse 4, respectively). The concept of “guarding the senses” is invoked twice, in verses five and b. Other forms of śīla are also mentioned or referred to obliquely, such as right livelihood (*samyagjīva*) and keeping good company (*svagocara* = *sugocara*). Invocation of “those who are shameless” connected to those “who transgress the śīla” is an oblique reference to the restraint of the *Prātimokṣa*, whose purpose is to produce shame or fear of transgression against the rules. This important function for the sentiments of shame and fear is discussed in detail in Chapter Three and Four.

This constellation of practices—guarding the senses, right livelihood, keeping good company, and feeling fear in relation to transgressing the rules—represents standard habits (śīla) of monastic discipline. They are present, for example, in the teaching given by the Buddha.
to Mahākāśyapa, one of the Great Disciples, in the latter part of the *Mahāvastu*. This is mentioned here to demonstrate that it is not just in the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* that these concepts are invoked. They are present throughout the *vinaya* texts and form the touchstones that bind the *vinaya* texts into a coherent collection of teachings.

An additional example demonstrates this point and adds another dimension that returns to Lincoln’s definition of myth discussed in the introduction. In the *Mahāvastu*, in the story of an ascetic named Sarabhaṅga, there is a series of verses spoken by Sarabhaṅga to a king in response to the latter’s question about what practices define the conduct of a wise man. The three *akuśalamūla* are each invoked, but not using the terms used above. This illustrates an important point: teachings of discipline are not always in consistent, technical language. The reader of *vinaya* texts—the model monastic reader—must be attentive to meanings that are expressed with a variety of words and phrases, sometimes figurative. The following is straightforward, but the three places where the *akuśalamūla* are invoked are underlined.

The wise man perceives the truth concerning the pleasures of the senses, that they are ill, impermanent and liable to change. Perceiving this he shuns desire as one of the things of terror, one of the things that is like to destroy him.

Thus freed from passion, all hatred quite removed, he will diligently promote the growth of love, and living thus with a loving heart, kindly and compassionate, he will pass on to the heavenly place.

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58 For a sustained discussion of the technical forms of *śīla* in the Theravāda tradition, see Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 115–124.

59 This second verse is a close parallel to Pāli *Suttanipāta* verse 507 (III, 5.21). See Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith, eds., *Sutta-nipāta* (London: Pali Text Society, 1990), 90.
Such were the verses recited by the good man by way of giving eloquent replies. Whoso will live in perfect accordance with these, will escape beyond the range of the King of Death.\(^60\)

The three \textit{akusalamūla} are stated in the order of delusion, greed, and hatred. Removal of these three states of mind results, as in the liturgy above, in freedom from death, expressed as going “beyond the range of the King of Death.” There are two steps to this attainment: the perception of the true nature of sensual desires and the practice of love. The term underlying the translation “perceive” is \textit{vipaśyanā} (in two verbal forms), an important form of meditation common to most Buddhist monastic traditions.\(^61\) The practice of \textit{vipaśyanā} reveals the true nature of the pleasures of the senses (\textit{kāmaguṇa}), that they are characterized by the three qualities of suffering (\textit{duḥkha}), impermanence (\textit{anitya}), and change (\textit{viparināma}). Knowing this to be true, the wise man sees them as “things of terror” (\textit{mahadbhaya}), resonating with the function of fear discussed just above (explained in more detail in Chapter Four). He realizes that desire (\textit{chanda}) results in one’s destruction, meaning recurrent death and rebirth. Having removed delusion, greed, and hatred—the term “quite removed” is the term \textit{vinaya} in the past passive participle form (\textit{suvinīta})—the practitioner cultivates a feeling of love (\textit{maitrābhāvanā}) as a secondary practice. This refers to another form of meditation that frequently accompanies


\(^61\) For a general overview on this form of meditation, see Robert Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, eds., \textit{The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 979, s.v. “\textit{vipaśyanā},” cf. 978, s.v. “\textit{vipassanā}.” The editors state that this form of “insight” meditation leads to “an understanding of reality” that “is required to destroy the various levels of afflictions (kleśa) and to proceed on a path to liberation.” Buswell and Lopez, \textit{Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism}, 979, s.v. “\textit{vipaśyanā}.”
the practice of *vipaśyanā*. Together, these two forms of mental discipline transform the self toward attainment of the deathless state. Both practices are taught in the aforementioned teaching given to Mahākāśyapa in the *Mahāvastu*, where Mahākāśyapa is taught how to remove his desire for pleasures of the senses and develop “exceeding great love and respect, modesty and scrupulousness.” This pattern of perceiving the truth and generating appropriate sentiments is a pattern that repeats throughout the *vinaya* texts, forming a core progression of disciplinary training.

Significant about this passage is not just that it presents a regular set of disciplinary practices that is invoked repeatedly in multiple passages across the *vinaya* texts, but that these “verses recited by the good man” were spoken in the distant past by a person named Sarabhaṅga who lived during a time when “Buddhism” did not exist. Sarabhaṅga was not a Buddhist in the nominal sense of the term, though he was the Buddha Śākyamuni in a past life. What this shows is the crucial point that mythical narratives reveal, as Lincoln states, paradigmatic truths, which means truths that cut across time and form a pattern. The Buddha taught this story—formally called the *Past Life Story of Sarabhaṅga*, or *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka*—to his monastic community not as an entertaining anecdote or to communicate objective history, but as a form of disciplinary teaching that is historical and didactic, credible and authoritative. It is credible because it was told by the Buddha (who has an infallible memory), and it is

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authoritative because the truth of the story transcends its time and place; it reveals a paradigmatic truth about elimination of the *akuśalamūla* that is as true in the present as it was in the distant past when Buddhism did not exist.

The Buddha is shown to be an intentional teacher, who never spoke to his monastic community without a reason grounded in *dhammavinaya*. This role is also captured in forms of the word *vinaya*. The verbal root √*vinī* has a causative verbal form and agentive adjective used to describe the Buddha as the “leader” (*vinetṛ*) of his disciples. In the first section of the *Mahāvastu*, for example, the following verses describe the quality of buddhas as leaders:

Altogether perfect in qualities, intent on all things that are salutary, leaders [*pranetāro*] and saviors [*vinetāro*] that they are, all the Buddhas are praised by wise men.

The heroes, bent on rendering service, instruct men, and with an insight into truth quell the strife of others.

The best of men, though born into the world, are not besmirched by it. The lords, profound in their attributes, are beyond description.

The valiant men, having traversed the wilderness and attained peace, in their wisdom proclaim, “Here is the place where no terror is.

“Here is found no recurrence of old age and death and disease. Here is experienced no event of tribulation or sorrow.”

Devas and men hearing his sweet words and paying due heed to them, attain to that well-being.

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64 The Mahāsāṃghikas seemed to hold a strong view on this issue. According to the doxographical texts, they considered every statement of the Buddha, even the most banal statement such as “it is raining” to be directly intended as a teaching of *dhammavinaya*. See Bareau, *The Buddhist Schools*, 59–60 & 86; Bart Dessein, “The First Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine: Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika Controversy,” in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 15–48.

65 The exact same phrase is found in the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*, in verse 4, and will be taken up in Chapter Four.

66 Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 1.139–140. *sarvākāraguṇopetā sarve sarvārthaniṣcitā / pranetāro vinetāro buddhā budhajanārācitā / ... śāsanti janatām vīrā upacāresu niścitāh / vivādaṃ parasatvānām mathanti tattvadarsīnah* //
In this verse, the qualities that make buddhas leaders are declared. A buddha is one who is able to affect a transformation in their disciples through their speech, grounded in wisdom. Those who hear and follow the speech of a buddha are able to reach that place of “well-being,” “where no terror is.” If the practice of vipaśyanā is meant to generate an aestheticized feeling of fear toward the dangers of the sensual world, then the Buddha and his teachings represent a place of safety, a refuge (śarāṇa) where there is no danger (nirbhaya). Although it might be possible for practitioners to reach the state of the deathless on their own, the teachings of a buddha make the path easier and more efficacious.

A short passage from another section of the Mahāvastu reiterates the syntax of the causative verbal forms of vinaya and its ability to take an accusative and locative object. “On the sixth day the Buddha converted [vineti] the king’s priest, and on the seventh day he led [vinaye]67 the townspeople to the ‘realisation of stream-winning’.”68 In this sentence, both the king’s priest and the townspeople are objects of the verbal activity of conversion or leading. They are led to the realization of stream-winning, a technical term denoting a sanctified state. This reiterates the point that the work of vinaya can be an intersubjective process of a teacher leading others toward transformative states. How this happens is speech—primarily the


67 This form is the third person optative ending in –e[t] used as a preterite. See Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 1.161.

speech of a buddha—which comes to be recorded in codified forms called dharma and vinaya. Since this speech is grounded in the correct perception of truth, it can affect transformation in others in the same way as vipaśyanā practice.

To summarize, the verbal root vvinī is used in two syntactical patterns. First, it designates a verbal process and set of practices that individuals apply to themselves to remove defilements that characterize normal human existence and perpetuate recurrent death. The norms, standards, and practices that signify such a process of removal are called vinaya, or discipline. Second, there is causative action of a teacher working on the bodies and minds of other people to lead them to the state of well-being. This is done primarily through verbal teaching, and these teachings are also known as vinaya. The collection of these teachings, codified after the Buddha Śākyamuni’s death by his disciples, is known as the Vinayapitaka, or Canon of Disciplinary Texts.

History of the Extant Vinayapiṭaka of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda

The vinaya texts that are the subject of this study have a complicated history, discussed only briefly here. Since this dissertation is not making a strictly historical argument, in the sense of demonstrating historical development from one period to another,69 this information

is not presented in comparison with other collections of vinaya texts belonging to other monastic orders. This examination is limited to the general historical period and geographical area to which these texts belong. Since the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda has not been the subject of sustained study, and previous scholarship has primarily treated the Theravāda texts as the standard for Indian Buddhism, by its nature, this study contributes to future comparative studies of the development of vinaya literature in classical India.

The vinaya texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda were not found together in a single manuscript or at a single monastery; they were found at monasteries separated by hundreds of miles and international borders, and none of these monasteries are affiliated with the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. The provenance of these manuscripts remains a mystery, though it is beginning to be solved. That they came from northern India is certain. They are all palm-leaf manuscripts written in scripts identifiable as belonging to the Maithili-Bengali region (including the Kathmandu Valley, which lies on the periphery of this region), dating to approximately the 12th and 13th centuries CE. This places them generally within the period of the late Pāla Empire. In the case of three of the texts—Vinaya for Nuns (Bhikṣunī Vinaya), Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct (Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ), and Liturgy of Rules for Monks (Prātimokṣa Sūtra)—there is only a single extant manuscript. They were found and photographed by Rāhula Sāṅkrityāyana in Tibet on his several journeys in 1930s to find “lost”


Sanskrit manuscripts. Sāṅkṛitiyāyana did not retrieve the physical manuscripts; he was allowed to take photographs of them, and the photo negatives were eventually housed in the Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute in Patna, Bihar. This research institute sponsored all editions published to date. Gustav Roth, editor of the Vinaya for Nuns, examined all three manuscripts at this institute and concluded that they were all copied in the area of Magadha in the 12th century. Vincent Tournier further suggests that they were taken from the great Buddhist monastery of Vikramaśīla in Eastern Bihar. This monastery is one of the last locations known to house Mahāsāṃghika monks, including the famous monk and teacher Atiśa (982-1054 ce). The fourth text, the Mahāvastu, or Great Chapter, has many extant manuscripts, but Tournier’s study shows that all of these manuscripts derive from a single palm-leaf exemplar written in Bhujimol script (an early form of Newari script), dating from the 12th century.

These historical data have a single significance to the present study: the extant vinaya texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda are native to northern India, and, if Tournier is


Buswell and Lopez, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 77, s.v. “Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna.”

correct about Vikramaśīla being their source, are plausibly connected to an ongoing ordination lineage. This is important to the goal of this study, which is to shed light on monastic training in classical India. Although little is known about the history of the Mahāsāṃghika ordination lineage (in terms of people and places), it is significant that the manuscripts of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayapiṭaka collected by the Chinese monk Faxian, and subsequently translated by him and Buddhabhadra in the early 5th century into Chinese, came from Pāṭaliputra (modern-day Patna), less than 200 miles west of Vikramaśīla. This suggests that the Mahāsāṃghika maintained a powerbase in the Magadha region for several centuries, even if it cannot be shown that a presence was continuous. This strengthens the argument that the vinaya texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda form a coherent set, even though they were subsequently scattered to disparate locations, some were apparently lost, and only recently the remaining texts were brought “back” to Patna and collected once again.

Overview of the Vinayapiṭaka of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda

The vinaya texts considered in this study are now introduced, primarily for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with vinaya texts and the overall structure of the Vinayapiṭaka. For readers familiar with vinaya texts, this section adds no new knowledge. For a comprehensive overview of all extant Vinayapiṭaka-s, see Prebish’s Survey of Vinaya Literature (now two

decades old, but current) and Shayne Clarke’s recent entry in Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism.78

The basic structure of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka can be reconstructed based on the Chinese translation of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayapiṭaka by Faxian and Buddhabhadra, completed between 416 and 418 CE.79 Based on a detailed examination of the texts, Tournier states, “The Lokottaravādins seem to have kept intimate ties with the Mahāsāṃghikas proper, and the comparison of the surviving scriptures of these two groups makes it clear that the overall structure of their Vinayapiṭaka remained very similar.”80 Given this close similarity, there is no methodological problem with using the Chinese translation for this purpose. Table 1 summarizes the structure of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayapiṭaka. The asterisk indicates text that is not extant among surviving Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda manuscripts. However, excepting the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtra, all non-extant texts are explicitly mentioned in surviving texts, and/or fragments of texts survive, so their prior existence is certain. As for the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa Sūtra, this is a text that had to be recited every fortnight by each monastic community of nuns, so its prior existence should also be assumed.

Table 1: Structure of the Vinayapiṭaka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit Title</th>
<th>English Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bhikṣu Vinaya</td>
<td>Vinaya for Monks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


80 Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 94.
Shown in this list, the *Vinayapiṭaka* is divided into two main parts by gender, one section for monks (*bhikṣu*) and one for nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). Under these two broad sections are two component texts common to each gender—the *Prātimokṣa Vibhaṅga* and *Prakīrṇaka*—and the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* for the monks. Placement of the *Mahāvastu* reflects the argument for that text detailed below. In short, it is the introduction to the *Bhikṣu Prakīrṇaka*. Since there is no Chinese translation of the *Mahāvastu*, whether it existed as part of the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinayapiṭaka* either before or after the 5th century is unclear. Tournier argues that it must have existed, and predicts it might be found among manuscript fragments of Gandhāra and Afghanistan, where the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda had a strong presence. Component parts, without dividing them by gender, are introduced and described. Published Sanskrit editions and principle translations (if they exist) are given in footnotes.

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81 As Shayne Clarke has shown at length, the structure of the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* cannot be compared to the structure of the other extant Vinayas, as Frauwallner and others have attempted to do. See Shayne Clarke, “*Vinaya Māṭrkā – Mother of the Monastic Codes, or Just Another Set of Lists? A Response to Frauwallner’s Handling of the Mahāsāṅgika Vinaya,*” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47, no. 2 (2004): 77–120. For Frauwallner’s pioneering study (still valuable in many respects), see Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Roma: Is. M. E. O., 1956).

82 Tournier, “*The Mahāvastu,*” 95.
The **Mahāvastu** or **Great Chapter**

The *Mahāvastu* is a long, narrative text that functions as introduction to the *Bhikṣu Prakīrṇakā* and a charter for the monastic community. The first part is an extended biography of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The second part is a history of the formation of the early monastic community, particularly the first ordinations of the Great Disciples by the Buddha personally. The *Mahāvastu* accomplishes two introductory purposes. It provides the mythical stories of the evolution of the Buddha and this defiled world, and establishes the ordination lineage of the early monastic community, the legal basis on which the monastic community exists (thus, a charter). The connection between the *Mahāvastu* and ordination is examined in detail below.

**Prātimokṣa Vibhaṅga or Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns**

The *Prātimokṣa Vibhaṅga*, or *Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns*, contains the *prātimokṣa* rules, divided by gender, and a commentary on these. There are 219 rules for monks and 279 rules for nuns, plus two additional rules called the *dharma* and *anudharma*. A comprehensive overview of the *prātimokṣa* rules for the different monastic orders, see W. Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa: On the Basis of Its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Pali Versions*, rev. & enl. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2007); Charles S. Prebish, “The Prātimokṣa Puzzle: Fact versus Fantasy,”
majority of these rules are common to both genders. Prātimokṣa rules are separated into categories that define the type of offense and appropriate punishment. The rules listed first are the most serious and entail the most severe punishment. The severity then decreases while moving through the categories. Table 2 provides category divisions and number of rules for each category. References are given to the locations of these rules in the corresponding Liturgy of Rules for Monks, or for nuns, the Commentary on the Rules for Nuns.

Table 2: Categories of Offense and Number of Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhikṣu (“monk”)</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Bhikṣuṇī (“nun”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>pārājikā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>samghātiṣeśā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aniyatā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>nissarigika-pācattikā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>pācattikā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>prātideśanikā dharmāḥ</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


86 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 6-8; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 50, 52.
87 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 111-137.
88 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 8-12; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62
89 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 128-172.
90 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 12-13; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 62, 64.
91 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 13-16; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74.
92 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 173-182.
93 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 16-29; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92.
94 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 183-251.
95 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 26-30; Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 94.
96 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 252.
In addition to the prātimokṣa rules themselves, the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns* includes an explanation of each rule. The structure of the commentary is consistent for each rule, shown in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Textual Unit</th>
<th>Sanskrit Term for Textual Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first occasion for the rule in mythical narrative</td>
<td>nidāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rule itself, spoken by the Buddha Śākyamuni</td>
<td>prajñapti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a word-for-word commentary on the rule</td>
<td>padabhājana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarifications and exceptions of applicability</td>
<td>arthotpatti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each rule, there is a narrative introduction that presents the first occasion (ādikarma) of its transgression. This is the first time in the history of the monastic community that anyone acted in such a manner to provoke the Buddha to promulgate a rule against this type of behavior (more on this in Chapter Two). Technically, the first occasion is not a transgression because the rule did not exist prior to the Buddha’s promulgation of it, though the behavioral expectation was understood. The rule as promulgated is worded negatively, as what defines a transgression. By implication, there is positive regulation, but that is not

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100 Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, 254.
specified in the rule itself. For example, the first pārājika rule defines the transgression of a monastic engaging in sexual intercourse, specifying the exact conditions under which there is a transgression. The corresponding positive expectation—to remain celibate as long as one lives—is not formally a part of the rule, even if it is implied. The rule only concerns the exact definition of when a monk or nun is guilty of transgressing the rule itself. After narration of the first occasion and the statement of the precise rule by the Buddha, there is a word-by-word commentary on the rule in the śāstric style. Then, optionally, there are further clarifications and exceptions of the applicability of the rule. These are again introduced with narrative occasions during the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni. As an example, there is commonly an exception for the application of a rule if a monastic is insane.

The most important rules are the first four pārājika, whose adherence is obligatory and for which a violation results in expulsion from the monastic community. Their observance defines what it means to be a disciplined monastic. Given their importance to discipline and subsequent discussions, they are introduced here in summary form. They are, in order:

1. refraining from sexual intercourse
2. refraining from serious theft
3. refraining from killing a human being
4. refraining from lying about advanced spiritual attainments

103 In practice there was a form of permanent probation that allowed a transgressive monastic to stay in the community. See Shayne Clarke, “Monks Who Have Sex: Pārājika Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms,” Journal of Indian Philosophy 37, no. 1 (2009): 1–43.

104 For a full translation of these rules, see Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 50, 52.

105 The theft in question must be of an item of a certain value or higher, similar to the modern distinction between misdemeanor and felony theft. The text expresses this by indicating a theft that "kings" would punish with "slay[ing], restrain[ing], and banish[ing]." Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 50.
As Chapter Two discusses in detail, these four rules address the four fundamental defilements of human existence: desire, material attachment, violence, and falsehood.

If a transgression of any kind is committed, it must be confessed to a fellow monastic, and punishment duly imposed. Confession was, at a minimum, a fortnightly practice done in preparation for the Poṣadha Ceremony. At the ceremony, held on the new and full moons, all monastics of each local community were required to gather and declare their complete purity from transgressions of each category of offense. This was done formally and ritually using the Liturgy of Rules for Monks/Nuns as the liturgical text. Concealment of a transgression was considered an additional offense because it entailed telling a deliberate falsehood. For this, there would be a further punishment in addition to punishment for the initial transgression. When one confessed a transgression, the period that lapsed between the offense and the transgression would be considered in the severity of the punishment. Besides verbal critique, the monastic community ultimately has only one sanctioning mechanism: the withdrawal of rights. Property rights would be withdrawn through confiscation of property, and membership rights through probation and expulsion.

Since the rules are worded negatively and the sanctioning mechanism weak (especially in comparison to a sovereign state, which had recourse to imprisonment and corporal punishment), there was an incentive to strengthen the persuasive rhetoric of the Vinayapiṭaka.

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This means an appeal to the positive aspects of discipline, broadening the perspective beyond a narrow preoccupation with transgressions. If the rules are comprised mostly of proverbial “sticks,” then the mythical discourse can be seen to provide the corresponding “carrots.”

Prakīrṇaka or Miscellaneous Rules

The Prakīrṇaka, or Miscellaneous Rules, contains regulations for communal issues and situations, such as ordination, lodging, medicine, and formal resolution of disputes. Only the Miscellaneous Rules for Nuns is extant at any length. The Miscellaneous Rules for Monks is extant only as a table of contents found in the former. Unfortunately, the Miscellaneous Rules for Nuns is radically abbreviated because the reader was expected to refer to the Miscellaneous Rules for Monks for any regulation that is held in common, which is the vast majority. Given its tentative status, and the inevitable need for extensive referencing to the Chinese translation to understand its contents, this text does not play a large role in this study. Its inclusion is a future desideratum.

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Divided into seven chapters, this text gives instructions for proper conduct for a range of communal and individual practices, such as dress and comportment, holding the Poṣadha Ceremony, and begging for alms in a village. These are activities that a monastic would frequently undertake, but for which there is limited instruction in the other vinaya texts. The central concern of the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* is how to act appropriately, signified by the term ăcāra (correct conduct) and the verb *pratipadyitavyaṃ* (it should be done like this). Similar to the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns*, individual instructions are introduced by a narrative, and all instructions are placed in the mouth of the Buddha Śākyamuni. An example was briefly quoted and discussed in the Introduction.

*Prātimokṣa Sūtra or Liturgy on Rules for Monks/Nuns*

Stated previously, the liturgical version of the *Prātimokṣa* is called the *Liturgy on Rules for Monks/Nuns*. Since it is a liturgical text, it most likely circulated separately from the

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Vinayapiṭaka. For this reason, some scholars consider it paracanonical.\textsuperscript{110} The text contains only the rules, not the commentary. It also contains a versified introduction, conclusion, and speaking roles for the reciter and audience. Part of the versified introduction was quoted and discussed in the Introduction.

The Vinayapiṭaka as a Canon

The fact that all of the texts above belong to a single canon is demonstrated by the Chinese translation and the insertion, in the beginning or end of each text, of a label to that effect. These labels do not appear to be colophons, if by that term is meant a statement inserted by a scribe relating the place and date of copying. Their consistency across manuscripts, which were found in widely separated places and copied by different hands, suggests that they are an integral part of the texts themselves. Furthermore, the fact that other Buddhist Sanskrit texts do not share the formulaic phrasing suggests that this labeling technique was particular to the Mahāsāṃghika monastic order. The following introductory and concluding labels are found in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda texts, in the order presented in the table above.

Mahāvastu (introduction):
Ārya-Mahāsāṃghikānām Lokottaravādināṃ madhyuddeśikānāṃ pāṭhena vinayapiṭaksya mahāvastuye ādi\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{111} Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.1, corrected per Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 95–96.
Three key terms appear in these phrases. The first is \textit{vinaya} or \textit{vinayapiṭaka}, found in the \textit{Mahāvastu}, \textit{Miscellaneous Rules for Monks}, and the \textit{Commentary on the Rules for Nuns}. In the \textit{Mahāvastu}, the label states that this text is part of the \textit{Vinayapiṭaka}, the most explicit label.\textsuperscript{117} In the other two, the word \textit{vinaya} is simply part of the title, and there is no \textit{vinayapiṭaka} in the genitive. It is ironic that the term \textit{vinayapiṭaka} is found only in the label of the \textit{Mahāvastu} since that text alone was questioned regarding whether it was properly \textit{vinaya}. In the case of the other texts, there is no explicit label of \textit{vinaya}. However, inclusion of these texts in the Chinese translation of the Mahāsāṃghika \textit{Vinaya}, and the fact that the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[112] Roth, \textit{Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya}, 333.
\item[113] Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāh}, 470.
\item[114] Roth, \textit{Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya}, 1.
\item[115] Roth, \textit{Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya}, 302.
\item[116] Tatia, \textit{Prātimokṣasūtraṃ}, 35.
\item[117] That the genitive should be interpreted as a partitive genitive is argued by Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 92.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
texts are in close agreement with their translated counterparts, provides sufficient evidence to conclude that the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka was composed of these texts in the order presented. The only text missing from the Chinese translation, the Mahāvastu, has an explicit label, placing it within the Vinayapiṭaka. The second term is the name of the monastic order, the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. This is stated clearly in each label, so there is no question of the affiliation of these texts. The third consistent term is madhyuddeśika combined with pāṭhena/pāṭhi. All extant manuscripts carry this descriptive label (the two items listed above that lack this term are part of the single manuscript that has the label listed under Commentary of Rules for Nuns). This phrase—madhyuddeśikānāṃ pāṭhena/pāṭhi—connects to the name of the monastic order in the genitive plural, giving the complete phrase “according to the recension (pāṭha) in the intermediate idiom (madhyuddeśika) of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda.” The term “intermediate idiom” refers to the language in which these texts are composed. In modern scholarship, this language goes by the generic name of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, a term coined by Frank Edgerton in his study of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit.\footnote{Edgerton, \textit{Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.} } To be precise, Edgerton only knew of and consulted the Mahāvastu since the other vinaya texts had not yet been edited and published. The characteristics of this hybrid or intermediate idiom have been discussed extensively by Karashima, von Hinüber, and Roth, principal editors of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda vinaya texts, whose conclusions are now examined.\footnote{For studies of the term "madhyuddeśika," see de Jong, "Madhyadeśika, Madhyoddeśika and Madhy’uddeśika," in \textit{Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hinayāna-Literatur (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, Ill.1)}, ed. Heinz Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985): 138–143; Roth, “The Readings Madhy-uddeśika,}
Although Edgerton gave Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit its name and proper grounding in his grammar and lexicon, he defined this language broadly, including a range of Buddhist texts from many sectarian groups and periods.\textsuperscript{120} He categorized texts written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit into three groups. Group I comprised texts written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit throughout, in both prose and verse passages. The \textit{Mahāvastu} and two minor texts were the only representatives of this group. Group II included the so-called \textit{gāthā} texts, which used classical Sanskrit in their prose sections, but contained verse (\textit{gāthā}) sections in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. Group III included texts written in classical Sanskrit, but which contained formulaic phrases and lexical items derived from or frozen in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Research since Edgerton’s work concludes that Group I texts should form their own category, and Groups II and III should not be included under the label Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, or alternatively, Group I should receive a distinct name. The Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda \textit{vinaya} texts particularly should form their own group with their own label. From his extensive study of the \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct}, Karashima (citing von Hinüber) concludes:

\begin{quote}
The language of Abhis[amācārikā Dharmāḥ] is to be classified as “Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit”, which is the same as that of the \textit{Bhikṣuṇi-Vinaya} and the \textit{Mahāvastu}. As von Hinüber has suggested, the term “Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit” should be restricted to the language of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin school.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{120} Edgerton, \textit{Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit}, 1.xxv.

\textsuperscript{121} Seishi Karashima, “The Language of the \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}—The Oldest Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Text,” \textit{Annual Report of the International Research Institute of Buddhology} 17 (2014): 80.
Based on extensive editing experience, Gustav Roth further indicates the historical and social context of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda language:

The Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda Vinaya texts in their present form of Prakrit-cum-Sanskrit seem to have settled during the era of Kaniska and Huviśka in about the 1st and 2nd cent. A.D. Both the Mahāvastu and Bhikṣuni-Vinaya texts and the Mathura inscriptions share specific features which indicate a common background of a kind of standard Prakrit in coexistence with Sanskrit. …

The Prakrit of the Prātimokṣa, as we find it in the Pāli and the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda documents, was based on a more supra-regional type of standard Prakrit which developed established conventions for the professional language of the disciplinary law at a rather early stage.¹²²

Based on similarities between regular forms in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda vinaya texts and inscriptions from the Mathura area, Roth concluded that the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda language was based on a dialect current in that region during the Kuśāna era, around the 1st to 2nd centuries CE. Through the activities of monastics expert in the vinaya, a professional language developed and became standardized. Oskar von Hinüber expanded on this point in a 1986 article (mentioned obliquely by Karashima above), in which he argues that the language of the karmavācaṇā and prātimokṣa influenced codification of a canonical language:

The centre piece of a Buddhist samgha and of Buddhist literature is the Vinaya-Pitaka, and within this text the Prātimokṣasūtra, as it is well known. Closely connected to this cornerstone of each Buddhist community are the formulas to be spoken on the occasion of the legal proceedings to be performed regularly by the samgha, that is the karmavācaṇā. As we learn from later legal literature of the Buddhists such as the Samantapādādikā, it is essential that at least the upasampadā karmavācaṇā is recited with utmost linguistic precision in wording as well as in phonetics. If this is not achieved, the ordination of a monk cannot be considered as valid. Therefore, the acceptance of one linguistic form or other of a karmavācaṇā almost necessarily leads to a split in the tradition of the ordination, or to the formation of a new Vinaya school in the extreme.

If the legal consequences that might arise from this choice of a certain linguistic form used in the legal proceedings is taken into account, the Prātimokṣasūtra may be considered fundamental in determining the language of a Vinaya school. From these considerations it may be deduced at

¹²² Roth, “Particular Features,” 92.
once that at a certain date and at a certain place the members of a saṃgha must have made up their minds, which language to adopt for their Prātimokṣasūtra and for their karmavācānā. This language then became the standard for the Vinaya and for the canonical texts as a whole. 123

Once a professional language had become codified in the prātimokṣa and karmavācānā, it was preserved and reproduced across the rest of the canonical literature (as in the parallel case of Pāli in the Theravāda canon of Sri Lanka). Therefore, the dating Roth provides—1st to 2nd centuries CE—is only a terminus post quem.

The continued composition, expansion, and redaction of canonical texts by members of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda through the centuries would have been done in this same language. This is confirmed by fragments of manuscripts belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda from Gandhāra and Afghanistan, where a different spoken vernacular would have prevailed. 124 All of these fragments are written in the same professional language known as Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, in the narrow sense of the term. Three of these fragments are from sections of the (lost) Commentary on the Rules for Monks, two are from the Prātimokṣa


Sūtra, and two are from karmavācanā collections. There is also a fragment of a sūtra text called the Caṅgī Sūtra, dated to the 4th century, which has tentatively been identified as belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. If this affiliation is correct, it demonstrates von Hinüber’s point.

Since the prātimokṣa and karmavācanā form the basis for the liturgical texts and rites of a monastic order, the professional language of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda would have been used for communal rituals, such as the Poṣadha Ceremony and ordination. All members of the monastic community would have become at least minimally conversant in this language as part of their monastic training. A section from Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct instructs novice monks to recite (svādhyāya) teachings, and this recitation presumably would be in the professional language of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda. In this sense, the professional language became an identifying marker of monastic affiliation, both internally and externally. The professional language gave coherence to the collected teachings because members of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda would have read them collectively as representing the teachings of the Buddha incumbent on them as authoritative since they were transmitted within their monastic order.


126 Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 64, 74.

The Place of the Mahāvastu in the Vinayapiṭaka

This study emphasizes the Mahāvastu as a functional part of the Vinayapiṭaka. Chapter Two argues that mythical narratives of the Mahāvastu provide a historical and paradigmatic background for vinaya as a whole. Since the Mahāvastu was not translated by Faxian and Buddhahadra (whether they knew of such a text is another question), the label that states that the Mahāvastu is part of the Vinayapiṭaka is insufficient to warrant extensive treatment in this study. Further evidence must be adduced to prove that the Mahāvastu was a vinaya text in more than just name. This is necessary since the Mahāvastu has been treated in earlier scholarship as not properly or functionally vinaya. James Jones, translator of the Mahāvastu into English and thus someone intimately familiar with its contents, summarizes this viewpoint succinctly, “Although it is styled a Vinaya it almost seems as if, in the course of the period of its compilation, all the elements characteristic of a Vinaya were deliberately omitted.”¹²⁸ Nalinaksha Dutt expresses a similar opinion, “Apart from a few rules relating to ordination, it has nothing to do with disciplinary matters.”¹²⁹ In a comprehensive study of the Mahāvastu, Rahula restates the point more softly, “A critic of the M[ahāvas]tu does not deviate from his critical viewpoint so far as he keeps in mind that one cannot find in the [Mahāvastu] as much disciplinary matters as one would rightly expect.”¹³⁰ Two points are crucial. First, the Mahāvastu does not contain material that is thought to be properly vinaya, particularly in

¹²⁸ Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.xiii.


references to the prātimokṣa rules. Second and as Jones states, the Mahāvastu might have changed over time from a proper vinaya text into something else entirely.

Regarding the second point, the argument goes back to Ernst Windisch, who through close analysis of the latter third of the Mahāvastu, demonstrated that many of the narratives of that portion of the text relate closely, not only in content but also in wording, to narratives found in the Theravāda Mahāvagga, an important portion of the Theravāda Vinayapiṭaka.¹³¹ These narratives concern the first ordinations of the early monastic community in years immediately following the Buddha’s awakening. That these narratives are properly vinaya has never been disputed because they are found in multiple Vinayapiṭaka-s, and form a historical background for the establishment of formal ordination and regulations that define ordination. The narratives function in the same manner as the historical narratives that introduce monastic rules in the Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns. According to Windisch, the Theravāda Vinayapiṭaka was the most reliable transmission of the Vinayapiṭaka, so if the Mahāvastu paralleled a section of it, then that portion must be properly vinaya.

To early scholars, the problem was that the other two-thirds of the Mahāvastu were not paralleled by the Theravāda Mahāvagga. It was this “development” that troubled scholars. Jones again summarizes the situation:

And if its [the Mahāvastu’s] claim to the title Vinaya is justified it can only be by the fact that the legends it records go back in their origin to the same biographical episodes which were used in the Mahāvagga of the [Theravāda] Pāli Vinaya to explain or illustrate the origin of the rules of the Order....

But this biographical part of the Vinaya has been enormously expanded after the fashion first set, perhaps, by the Nidānakathā, or introduction to the commentary on the Jātakas. And it is this mass of secondary or derived legends that forms the bulk of the Mahāvastu. 

Jones makes two decisive moves. First is to claim, as just discussed, that the only part of the Mahāvastu that can be properly vinaya is that portion that clearly parallels the Theravāda Vinayapiṭaka (notice that the Theravāda Vinayapiṭaka is never questioned similarly, it being assumed that it has somehow resisted editorial expansion.) The second is to relate the remaining portions, “the bulk of the Mahāvastu,” to another type of literature altogether, the commentarial narratives on the jātaka-s. This material is not only outside the bounds of the Vinayapiṭaka—the jātaka-s are placed in the Khuddakanikāya of the Theravāda Suttapiṭaka, not the Vinayapiṭaka—it also overlaps with commentary, not canon. So, the “bulk of the Mahāvastu” is not only removed from consideration as vinaya, it is considered “secondary and derived” along the lines of commentary. The Mahāvastu is thus doubly exiled, from both the Vinayapiṭaka and from any canon. To restate an important methodological point, this was all done based on comparison with the Theravāda canon, which is itself never questioned.

Discussed in the introduction, the field now considers the Theravāda canon to be a product, at the very least, of political considerations specific to Sri Lanka. It was probably further edited and redacted over subsequent centuries. It should be clear then that Jones’ argument, which has been the accepted argument until the last couple decades, is no longer valid methodologically.

132 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.xii.
The latter point, that the Theravāda canon should not be the sole point of comparison, has been recognized and taken seriously by some. However, this has not changed the basic evaluation of the Mahāvastu. When scholars looked elsewhere to find comparative literature to shed light on the composition of the Mahāvastu, they turned, like Jones, to secondary and derived material. Most significant have been the avadāna collections of the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda monastic order, particularly the Divyāvadāna. Again, Jones succinctly states the main point (continued use of Jones in this section is not meant to berate his conclusions, but is based on the fact that he considered existing theories and that his views carry significant weight since they appear in the introduction to the only English translation of the work). Jones argues:

The title Mahāvastu, ‘the great subject,’ no doubt corresponds to the title of the Mahāvagga, just as the Kṣudrakavastu of the Sarvāstivādins corresponds to the Cullavagga. But by the time the compilation was complete the emphasis had long been laid on the narrative parts of the subject. In almost all the colophons to the chapters the work is style Mahāvastu-Aavadāna. The compilers indeed came very near achieving a mere collection of avadānas much resembling the collection made by the Sarvāstivādins and known as the Divyāvadāna. The title Mahāvastu, ‘the great subject,’ no doubt corresponds to the title of the Mahāvagga, just as the Kṣudrakavastu of the Sarvāstivādins corresponds to the Cullavagga. But by the time the compilation was complete the emphasis had long been laid on the narrative parts of the subject. In almost all the colophons to the chapters the work is style Mahāvastu-Aavadāna. The compilers indeed came very near achieving a mere collection of avadānas much resembling the collection made by the Sarvāstivādins and known as the Divyāvadāna.

Comparison with the Divyāvadāna is significant for two reasons. First, it was thought that the Mahāvastu was a collection of avadāna-s. Second, the Divyāvadāna was derived from, but not part of, the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda Vinayapiṭaka. Here then was a plausible explanation for the final form of the Mahāvastu: although the core of that work might have originally been connected to the vinaya, the expansion of the text with “secondary and derived legends” transformed it into something else entirely, a collection of avadāna literature. So “whereas the narratives of the Mahāvagga explain the occasions of the institution of the rules of the Order, in the Mahāvastu they are introduced to illustrate the virtues of the Buddha in his various lives,  

133 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.xiii.
and only rarely to explain a point of doctrine."\textsuperscript{134} The \textit{Mahāvastu} had become something other than a \textit{vinaya} text not only in form, but also in purpose. It was a collection of \textit{avādaṇa}-s meant to illustrate the qualities of the Buddha, particularly what was taken to be the cardinal tenet of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda, that the Buddha was \textit{lokottara}, or supramundane. Just as the earlier comparison with the commentary on the \textit{jātaka}-s placed the \textit{Mahāvastu} outside the canon, so too does the comparison with the \textit{Divyāvadāna}, which is derived from the canon, but not part of it.

These two theories explained the form and status of the \textit{Mahāvastu}. The \textit{Mahāvagga}-theory explained the early core of the text and its nominal label as being part of the \textit{Vinayapiṭaka}. The \textit{Divyāvadāna}-theory explained the later expansion of the text and why it should no longer be considered \textit{vinaya}. In its present form, it is like the \textit{Divyāvadāna}, a narrative collection derived from the \textit{vinaya}, but now intended to function differently. These two theories are debunked in a recent article from Vincent Tournier. The latter theory is taken up first. As Tournier states, from careful examination of the oldest palm-leaf manuscript of the \textit{Mahāvastu}, “the expression \textit{Mahāvastu-Avadāna} is a ghost word,” by which he means that the term \textit{avādaṇa} and the title \textit{Mahāvastu-avādaṇa} are not present.\textsuperscript{135} “[F]rom a historico-critical perspective, this designation, widely adopted in the publications on the subject, is inappropriate.”\textsuperscript{136} Rather, the designation \textit{avādaṇa} must be limited to the reception history of

\textsuperscript{134} Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 1.xiv.

\textsuperscript{135} Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 93.

\textsuperscript{136} Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 93.
the Mahāvastu in 17th century Nepal “when it was transmitted independently from the Vinaya to which it initially belonged.” This reception history, rather than any robust analysis of the content of the Mahāvastu itself, led scholars astray; “narratologists tend to deal with the Mahāvastu in pretty much the same way as they do with the Divyāvadāna, two texts which are demonstrably of completely different origins and nature.” Additionally, avadāna was not a form of buddhavacana accepted by the Mahāsāṃghika monastic order among the “nine limbs of the teaching,” examined briefly in the Introduction.

Second, regarding the Mahāvagga-theory, Tournier builds on an important article by Shayne Clarke that demonstrates that any comparison between the Mahāsāṃghika vinaya texts and those of the other surviving monastic orders to determine compositional history or recover a pre-sectarian Vinayapitaka is inappropriate. Tournier argues:

> It has been demonstrated by Shayne Clarke (2004)\(^{139}\) that the structure of the Mahāsāṃghika-Vinaya is irreducible to that of the so-called “Old Skandhaka”\(^{140}\) inferred by Frauwallner. It would therefore be contradictory to understand the early history of the Mahāvastu in terms of derivation from a Skandhaka-type narrative [e.g. the Mahāvagga].\(^{141}\)

Clarke demonstrates that the structure of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayapitaka, unlike all other extant Vinayapitaka-s, is based on an expansion of a māṭrkā, which is a list of topics in

\(^{137}\) Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 94.

\(^{138}\) Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 92.


\(^{140}\) The Mahāvagga comprises the major portion of the skandhaka in the Theravāda Vinayapitaka. See Prebish, Survey of Vinaya Literature, 50–52.

\(^{141}\) Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 94.
summary form. This list of topics, whose structure has been usefully summarized in Sasaki, is structured differently from the way that the *Skandhaka* is organized, even if the same topics are discussed. As a part of the Mahāsāṃghika (Lokottaravāda) *Vinayapiṭaka*, the *Mahāvastu* would have corresponded to this *mātrkā* structure, not the structure of the *Skandhaka*. Therefore, comparison with the *Mahāvagga* based on structure is inappropriate. The two texts might cover some of the same topics (e.g., ordination), but not in the same way, and any deviancy of the *Mahāvastu* from the *Mahāvagga* is meaningless concerning compositional history.

Tournier offers a way to understand the *Mahāvastu* based on Clarke’s conclusions:

> The way I propose to understand this text is rather as a companion to the Mahāsāṃghika Bhikṣu-Prakīrnaka, with the initial raison d’être to offer a narrative background to some of the latter text’s categories, and in particular to the two first kinds of *upasampadā* [ordination] listed therein, namely auto-ordination (*svāmam upasampadā*), and the ordination by the formula “Come, monk!” (*ehibhikṣukāya upasampadā*). This explains the basic form of the *Mahāvastu* and its place within the *Vinayapiṭaka*. It is an expansion, like the rest of the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinayapiṭaka*, of the *mātrkā* that defines its structure. The narratives of the *Mahāvastu* correspond to expansion of the types of valid ordination listed in the *Miscellaneous Rules for Monks*, providing the origin story for ordination, specifically the two types of ordination called self-ordination and Come, Monk! ordination.

This theory is readily supported by the *Mahāvastu* itself. In the beginning of the text, there is a short section called the *nidānagāthā*, or *Subject Matter in Verse*. A *nidāṇa* is, as

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143 Tournier, “The Mahāvastu,” 94.
Edgerton defines it, a “subject matter” or “table of contents.”\(^{144}\) Like a table of contents in a modern book, the *nidāna* previews the basic contents of a text and prefigures the reader’s understanding of what is to come. The *Subject Matter in Verse* is unambiguous in stating that the subject matter of the *Mahāvastu* is ordination. It is identical in form to the *māṭrā* of the Mahāsāṃghika *Miscellaneous Rules for Monks*. This is how the *Mahāvastu* begins:

Here begins the *Mahāvastu* of the Vinayapiṭaka, according to the recitation in the intermediate idiom of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda.

There are four kinds of ordination. What four? Self-ordination, ordination by the formula, “Come, Monk!” (ehi bhikṣu), ordination by a chapter of ten [monks], and ordination by a chapter of five. Among those, self-ordination was the ordination of the Blessed One at the foot of the Tree of Awakening.\(^{145}\)

To compare with the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinayapiṭaka*, Clarke, in the article cited above, states the following regarding the subject matter of the first section of the *Miscellaneous Rules for Monks*:

Here it may be beneficial to give a brief overview of the structure of this section. The Mahāsāṃghika text starts by enumerating four kinds of ordination: self-ordination, ordination with the formula ‘come monk’ (ehi bhikṣu), ordination by an assembly of ten bhikṣus, and ordination by an assembly of five bhikṣus.\(^{146}\)

The two lists of the valid forms of ordination are identical. If Clarke is correct that the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinayapiṭaka* is an expansion of this *māṭrā*, then the *Mahāvastu* is the expansion of this list of ordinations, as Tournier suggests.

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\(^{144}\) Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, 2.295–296, s.v. “nidāna.”


\(^{146}\) Clarke, “Vinaya Māṭrā,” 93.
If this argument holds, and there is no reason to doubt this it does, why is the Mahāvastu so expansive in its narration of the history of the Buddha? More specifically, why does it spend so much space—two-thirds of the text—narrating what seems to be a biography of the Buddha and his past lives? The answer is that this narration is necessary to explain the first form of ordination, self-ordination. As the quote above from the Subject Matter in Verse states, the self-ordination of the Buddha was the Awakening. The purpose of the biography of the Buddha is to show how this self-ordination took place. This is fully supported by the rest of the Subject Matter in Verse, which continues as follows (abbreviated):

All those who live in the practice of the ten right ways of behavior thereby get nearer to enlightenment, but Śākyamuni in this respect won especial distinction. After living in the practice of those good deeds which fitted him to receive the Buddha’s teaching, he in due course came to Dīpaṃkara. And when he saw him, conspicuous for beauty among kōṭis of beings, altogether lovely and inspiring confidence, with his company of disciples around him, Śākyamuni conceived the thought of emulating him. “Well would it be,” said he, “if I, rising superior to this world, living for the good of the world, should be reborn for the sake of this world.” Dīpaṃkara, aware of the effort Śākyamuni had made to win enlightenment, and of the vow he had made, proclaimed that he would win an equality with himself.... During his career as a Bodhisattva, he lived through many lives, seeking the good and happiness of men, a Bodhisattva for the world’s sake and his own.... Time and again, when he saw a beggar the sight gladdened his heart. Repeatedly he gave up his eyes, his flesh, his son and his wife, his wealth and his grain, his self and his very life. In this manner he passed through a nayuta of hundred-thousand births...and thence entered on what was to be his last existence.... When he had duly bathed in the river Nairanjanā, fearless like a lion he settled in the city called Gayā. In the first watch of the night, the Exalted One thoroughly cleared his “deva eye” from all defect, and comprehended the different comings and goings of men.... In the last watch he woke in an instant and spontaneously to what is to be known by the Driver of tameable men, to the equanimity of a Self-becoming One. Here end the verses on the subject-matter of the Mahāvastu.147

147 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.3-5. daśa kuśalā karmapathā ye hi samādāya vartanti te bodhāya samāsannatarā bhovanti // tatrāpi ca so pratīviśiṣṭo // tenaivaṃ buddhavaineyatāyai va suktīṣv etāsu caritena dīpaṃkaram upāgamiya patipāṭijāyā prāṇakoṭiṣu dṛṣṭvā darśāṇyām samantaprasādikām prasādaniyām śrāvakasaṃghaparivarṭaṃ tasya spṛhācittam upṭādyeyā // sadhu syād yady aham lokam eva abhibhūya loke lokārthacaro lokasyāsya hitayā jāyeyam // jñātvā samudāgamaṃ sambodhau nītataṃ ca tasya praniḥhānaṃ ātmasamataye samāsataḥ svayambhūsamatāye vyākārīṣit // ...so bodhisatvacaryāṃ satvānāṃ hitasukhaṃ gāveṣantō samprārati bodhisatvo lokārthām ātmano ‘rthāṃ ca / ...dṛṣṭvāna ca yācanaṃ bhūyo ‘ṣya mano prasādītvā caksūṇi ca mãṃsāni ca putradārām dhanāṃ ca dhōnyaṃ ca ātma ca jūvāṃ ca bhūyobhūyo pariyaktā // etena upāyena bahūni jātīnayutasatasahasrāni samprārati...carimāṃ bhavam upāgami //...nadiṅkōlasamaye
The Subject Matter in Verse gives an outline of the entire biography of the Buddha as recounted in the *Mahāvastu*. To explain self-ordination, the composers of the *Mahāvastu* must have felt it necessary to start at the beginning, when the Bodhisattva began his long path toward buddhahood in the distant past. Everything included in the *Mahāvastu*, including frequent stories of past lives, can be explained as part of his path to self-ordination. The composers of the *Mahāvastu* may be faulted for their overzealousness in including a mass of material without artful integration (though one would have to ask, “artful to whom?”), but they cannot be faulted for misunderstanding the purpose of the text as part of the *Vinayapiṭaka*. It gives the long, historical background to ordination and does it in a way that constantly repeats and reveals paradigmatic truths about monastic discipline, transforming it into myth for a monastic audience being taught discipline.

Beyond the fact that the *Mahāvastu* expands on a topic that is properly *vinaya*, what is its importance to the *Vinayapiṭaka* as a whole? This study claims not only that the *Mahāvastu* is one *vinaya* text among many, but that it holds a special place as a sort of introduction to the concept of monastic discipline. How can this be justified? First, ordination is the most fundamental and important liturgical act of the *vinaya*. It determines membership of the monastic community, and it is membership above all else that determines applicability of *vinaya* rules and processes. The *prātimokṣa* rules are not a general statement of good behavior

\[
\text{nādiye nairāmjanāye snāyitvā agrapure gayasāhvaye niśide simha vā asamstrasto / purime yāme anaghaṃ divyaṃ caśkur yoniśo viśodhetvā satvānāṃ ágatigatiṃ vividhāṃ bhagavāṃ abhijñāsi // ...yāme ca paścimosmiṃ yam jīNEYāṃ puruṣadamyasārathinā sarvāntam ekakṣane svayambhūsamatāṃ samanubudhye iti // śrīmahāvastunidānagāthā samāptā // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.3-4.}
\]
or ethical standards. They are legally binding rules that are incumbent only on formally
ordained monks and nuns. Even if the *vinaya* as a general process of the removal of
defilements is something good for all sentient beings, the *vinaya*, as a legislative code, applies
only to ordained monks and nuns. So, the first and most fundamental question to application
of a *prātimokṣa* rule to a disciplinary subject is: is this person an ordained monk or nun? If the
answer is no, the rule does not apply and no further consideration is warranted. That this is a
core consideration is shown by the word-for-word commentary in the Theravāda *Commentary
on Rules for Monks*. When commenting on the first rule, that a monk may not engage in sexual
intercourse, the commentary spends a considerable amount of space defining the word *bhikṣu*,
or monk. The commentary lists valid types of ordination, among which is “a monk by the
formula ‘Come, Monk!’”. This shows the close connection between the application of the
rules and forms of ordination. Significantly, forms of ordination that are historically extinct,
such as ordination by the formula Come, Monk!, are included alongside the standard forms of
ordination by a chapter of monastics. In this way, ordination forms the bedrock of the
existence of the *vinaya* as such. Were there no formally ordained monks and nuns, there would
be no legal subject and thus no rules in the legislative sense assumed by the *Commentary of
Rules for Monks/Nuns*. This would vitiate the monastic community as an enduring, stable
institution. There could still be ascetics engaging in practices inspired by the Buddha, but there
could be no formal institution in the way it exists today (an analogy would be the difference

between a nation with citizens defined by laws and a collection of people living loosely associated with one another based on general ethical standards).

Second, the self-ordination of the Buddha establishes the basis on which the Buddha could claim leadership of a community and the role of lawgiver. As a coherent body of texts, the *Vinayapitaka* is based on the idea that the Buddha was the primary teacher and leader of the monastic community. In a study of the early monastic orders, Sukumar Dutt brings attention to this issue:

Just as the formal source of all civil law is its promulgation by the State, so the formal source of Buddhist monastic law was its theoretical promulgation by the Buddha himself. It must be clearly realized that in the one case as in the other, this formal source is only a theoretical notion. The rules of the *Vinayapitaka* were in point of fact derived from various material sources, but on each law the theory was superimposed that it had been promulgated by the Buddha himself on a certain occasion. A legend, true or invented, sets forth the occasion for the making of the law. To this theory all the canonical writers are piously committed: it rationalizes the setting in which all canonical rules and doctrines are cast in the Pali scripture.... This Buddha, the promulgator of the laws, is not any historical personage, but only the conceptual embodiment of the formal source of all Buddhist laws and doctrines.  

Dutt makes an argument for a discrepancy between how the *vinaya* texts present the monastic rules and their objective historical development. The idea that it was the Buddha himself who promulgated all the rules is only a theory, which hides the historical evolution of monastic rules. Although Dutt may mean *theory* in a slightly pejorative sense, it reveals something important about how the *Vinayapitaka* functions as a coherent body of texts. It was necessary for the Buddha to become an “embodiment of the formal source of all Buddhist laws and doctrines” for the *Vinayapitaka* to function as it does. It is here that self-ordination takes on importance. To be a sovereign lawgiver, it had to be demonstrated that the Buddha was both

qualified to claim the status of buddha, and that he was not the disciple of another ascetic leader. The biography of the Buddha in the *Mahāvastu* accomplishes these aims at length. The biographical stories of the Buddha’s past lives, summarized in the quote from the *Subject Matter in Verse* above, is proof of his training over a long period, gradually fulfilling the perfections and proceeding through the stages that qualified him to become a buddha. Throughout the *Mahāvastu*, this qualification is compared metaphorically to becoming a *cakravartin*, or sovereign emperor. In his final life, the Buddha is predicted to be capable of becoming either a *cakravartin* or a buddha, showing that he had reached the pinnacle of power and supremacy. Although the Buddha might have studied under other ascetic teachers before his awakening, he says of himself, unequivocally, that he is without a teacher (*anācārya*) and supreme among men (*puruṣottama*, *agrapuruṣa*, etc.). He states to the ascetic Upaka, for instance, immediately after his awakening:

> Without a teacher am I; none equal to me can be found. I alone in the world am a Perfect Buddha, having won the peerless enlightenment.\(^{150}\)

The Buddha makes a point to declare his perfect wisdom to his first converts before ordaining and teaching them. He does this, for example, as he accepts Mahākāśyapa as a student:

> Even so, O Kāśyapa, I am your Master; you are my disciple. If a man should accept a disciple in complete possession of his mind, and then, though he was not perfectly enlightened, should claim to be so; though no all-knowing, should claim to be so; though not all-seeing, should claim to be so; though he was limited in knowledge and insight, should claim to have absolute knowledge and insight, his head would split in seven. As for me, O Kāśyapa, I claim to be perfectly enlightened, because I am so; I claim to be all-knowing, because I am so; I claim to be all-seeing, because I am so; I claim to have absolute knowledge and insight, because I have them. Again, O Kāśyapa, I preach the dharma to my disciples out of my special knowledge, not out of ignorance. I preach to my disciples the dharma that is well-grounded, not the dharma that is

The Buddha then goes on to give Mahākāśyapa a series of instructions on training, mentioned above, on the forms of śīla, the ways to remove the defilements, and generating appropriate sentiments. Crucial here is the order of statements by the Buddha. He begins by declaring his fitness to be a leader and ordain disciples. He then proclaims that his teachings are based on true knowledge and insight. It is only then that he begins to train Mahākāśyapa in discipline. Similarly, the Mahāvastu itself is a long statement of the fitness of the Buddha to ordain disciples and a demonstration of his true knowledge and insight. It demonstrates his proper self-ordination.

The Mahāvastu presents the qualifications and status of the Buddha as a preface to his role in setting forth the law. It is the proof for the theory, as Dutt put it, of the Buddha as sovereign lawgiver, the demonstration of his “embodiment of the formal source of all Buddhist laws and doctrines.” In this way, the Mahāvastu serves as a historical introduction to the entire

151 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.50–51. evam eva kāśyapa aham kāśyapa śāstā tvam ca me śrāvako / yo hi kocit kāśyapa evam sarvacetasamanvāgataṁ śrāvakāṁ labhitvāsamyaksambuddho eva samāno samyaksambuddho ti pratijāneya asarvajño yeva samāno sarvajño ti pratijāneya asarvadarsāvī yeva samāno sarvadarsāvīti pariśesajñāṇadarsānto yeva samāno aparipariśesajñāṇadarsānto ti pratijāneya saptadhā vāśya mārdhā bhaveyyā // ahaṁ khalu punah kāśyapa samyaksambuddho iti yeva samāno samyaksambuddho ti pratijānāmi sarvajño yeva samāno sarvajño ti pratijānāmi sarvadarsāvī tieva samāno sarvadarsāvīti pratijānāmi aparipariśesajñāṇadarsānto yeva samāno aparipariśesajñāṇadarsānto ti pratijānāmi // abhijñāya aham kāśyapa śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayāni na anabhijñāya / sanidānaṁ aham kāśyapa śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayāni na anidānaṁ / saprātihiṃṣasya aham kāśyapa śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayāni na aprātihiṃṣasya / tasya me kāśyapa abhijñāya śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayato na anabhijñāya sanidānaṁ śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayato na anidānaṁ saprātihiṃṣasya śrāvakāṇām dharmam deśayato na aprātihiṃṣasya karaṇīya ovādo karaṇīya anuśāsani iti vademi // tasmād iha te kāśyapa śikṣitavyam // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.51.
Vinayapiṭaka. It also, as myth, reveals paradigmatic truths that have the power to shape the sentiments of a disciplinary subject toward a willingness to submit to monastic law and instruction, a subjectivity called “ready to be disciplined” (vaineyya), as the ordination of Mahākāśyapa demonstrates.

In the next chapter, the mythical content of the Mahāvastu is examined in more detail. It is shown how narratives of the Mahāvastu, especially the narrative of the genesis of this terrestrial planet and its human occupants, prefigure the work of discipline and form a basis on which it is well-grounded, reasoned, and based on the special knowledge of the Buddha, to take the criteria from the quote above.
CHAPTER TWO: STRUCTURES OF TIME AND THE ORIGINS OF VINAYA

Vinaya texts present and participate in narratives about the past. The Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns and the Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct both present monastic rules and training instructions embedded within narratives. These narratives, set during the time of the Buddha Śākyamuni, depict how the rule in question came about as a result of a specific event. Narratives authorize the rules and provide a situational depiction of their functioning.

In addition to these rule-specific narratives, the Mahāvastu and Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns also present introductory narratives that frame discipline more broadly. These narratives provide an origin story for discipline itself, showing how it emerged historically in this world. In addition, the Mahāvastu tells the story of the evolution of the world and its human inhabitants, a story repeated in the Commentary on the Rules for Monks. This origin story provides the basis for understanding why discipline is necessary and how it conforms to the facts of life in this world. The story of cosmogenesis introduces three conceptual nodes around which discipline is organized and to which it responds: the defilements of human existence, calendrical time, and human difference. These three aspects of terrestrial existence are not eternal constants of the universe, but specific results of the evolution of this world. Discipline, as both a process and formal code, is shown to be a specific response to these features of this world. Each is taken up in turn in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, respectively. In this chapter, the mythical narrative of cosmogenesis and the origins of the vinaya are examined in the Mahāvastu and Commentary on the Rules for Monks. However, it is first necessary to
examine the causal structure of time as presented in the Mahāvastu. For these narratives to reveal paradigmatic truths—as myth and not just history—it is necessary to understand the causal effect of the past on the present.

The Mahāvastu and Causal Structures of Time

Linear Causality

Discussed in the previous chapter, the Mahāvastu can be divided into two parts, a first part on the self-ordination of the Buddha and a second part on the first ordinations by the formula Come, Monk! These two forms of ordination relate chronologically and linearly. The self-ordination of the Buddha happened first and had to happen first. Before that moment, ordination did not exist in this world, even if there were similar forms of initiation rituals that superficially resembled it. As an event, self-ordination created the conditions for ordination to arise as a distinct Buddhist phenomenon. Since all forms of ordination must be performed by previously ordained members, self-ordination of the Buddha is the first-cause for all future ordinations. In the case of the ordinations performed by the formula Come, Monk!, the Buddha performed these ordinations personally. In time, he delegated the authority to ordain to his early monastic community. The story of this delegation is not found in the Mahāvastu, which only deals with the first two forms of ordination. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Mahāvastu states the other two forms of ordination in the Subject Matter in Verse; they are ordination by a chapter of ten monastics and a chapter of five monastics. The latter is a form of ordination that is allowed for so-called peripheral regions, where gathering a sufficient quorum of ten monastics might be difficult. This became necessary once the
monastic community had grown and spread to those peripheral areas. Finally, the introductory narrative of the *Commentary on the Rules for Nuns* continues the origin story of ordination with respect to nuns, which depends on the existence of ordination for monks because all ordinations of nuns must be approved by a quorum of ordained monks. In this way, the types of valid ordination in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *vinaya* texts present a linear conception of time in which past events cause and authorize future events. This form of simple, linear causality is displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Linear Causal Effect**

All ordinations down to the present can be traced linearly to the early monastic community, and ultimately the Buddha himself. One could construct a family tree that would, theoretically, contain all ordained monastics in this world, going back to the single ancestor of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

**Delayed Causal Effect**

The *Mahāvastu* presents another understanding of causality in which there is a delayed effect of a past event on a future event. The past cause skips over time to influence a subsequent event, without having an effect during the intermediary time frame (Figure 2).
Figure 2: Delayed Causal Effect

A clear example of this type of effect is the specific name of the Buddha Śākyamuni, which means Sage of the Śākya Clan. The Śākya clan was the royal lineage into which the Buddha was born in this world. After the Awakening, when he was recognized as a sage, this became his name. The fact that the Buddha has this name might seem to be an accident of history. However, this is true if one considers only a limited temporal perspective. From a limited perspective of time, the cause of the Buddha being so named was an incidental result of the fact that he was born into a certain family; it was not based on any essential property of the Buddha. However, from the long-term perspective of one with supramundane powers of perception and memory (such as a buddha), the fact that this was his name was not incidental or accidental. It was caused by an event in the distant past that had a delayed effect. This event is told in the beginning of the Mahāvastu, in a series of homages that prefaces the text (giving homage is a standard way to open a text). There, the narrator states:

Homage to the Śākyamuni of long ago, a Tathāgata, an Arhan, a perfect Buddha, in whose presence this very Śākyamuni, the Exalted One, when he lived in the “resolving” stage of his career as head of a guild of merchants, first vowed to acquire roots of goodness, saying, “May I in some future time become a Buddha, a Tathāgata, an Arhan, a perfect Buddha, like this exalted Śākyamuni; and may I, too, be called Śākyamuni” and so on to the words “and may Kapilavastu be my city too.”

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152 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.1. namo 'tītāya śākyamunaye tathāgatāyārhatate samyaksambuddhāya / yasyāntike 'nenaiva bhagavatā śākyamuninā prathhamāṃ kusalamūlapraniḍhāṇoṃ kṛtam vanikśreṣṭhibhūtenādu praniḍhānacaryāyāṃ pravartamānenāho punar aham anāgate ‘dhvani buddho bhaveyāṃ tathāgato ‘raṃ
In the distant past when he was just starting the path to buddhahood, the Bodhisattva met a buddha named Śākyamuni, and in his presence, vowed to become a buddha just like him. All attributes of this past Buddha Śākyamuni—his name, the name of his natal city, and other attributes that the narrator abbreviated (presumably because they would be well-known to the implied audience)—were specifically part of the vow. This is the real cause of the Buddha in this world having the name Śākyamuni, and having a natal city named Kapilavastu. This cause remained dormant, pregnant in a sense, until this world evolved and the Buddha Śākyamuni (our Buddha Śākyamuni) was born into it. When the time was right, the cause from the distant past produced an effect.

Proximate and Distal Causes

The distant cause from the past was not alone in causing the Buddha to have the name Śākyamuni. There was another cause for this fact, which is also narrated in the Mahāvastu.

This cause did in fact arise in this world, and for that reason can be called the proximate cause, while the previous cause, since it arose in the distant past, can be called the distal cause. The proximate cause for the fact that the Buddha was named Śākyamuni and had a natal city called Kapilavastu is told in the section of the Mahāvastu called the Rājavamsa, or Lineage of Kings.

The story narrates the history of the Buddha’s royal lineage up to his birth parents.

According to the Lineage of Kings, the Buddha’s immediate ancestors were from Kośala, a region in the Gangetic Basin along the left bank of the Ghaghara River, roughly between the

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samyaksambuddho yathāyam bhagavāṇ cchākyamunir mamāpi śākyamunir iti nāmadheyaṃ vistareṇa yāvat mamāpi kapilavastunagaraṃ bhaved iti // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.1.

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cities of Ayodhyā and Śrāvastī. At the time, the capital city was Śāketa (another name for Ayodhyā), and a king named Sujāta ruled the kingdom. Sujāta had many sons by many wives. Five of his sons were in direct line for the throne, but were forced into exile due to the machinations of one of the king’s minor wives, who wanted her son to sit on the throne. The five sons, being good and dutiful, voluntarily left the kingdom. They attempted to take refuge with another king of Kośala and the king of Kāśi, but each grew jealous of the five sons’ talent and brilliance, and feared that they would usurp their throne. So, the five sons were driven out again and had to move east into the jungle, where they lived a rough life. Eventually, they found their way to the hermitage of a seer named Kapila, who welcomed them and allowed them to make a home there. The sons had left Śāketa before becoming married, and since there were no royal maidens anywhere in the area, resolved to marry their cross-cousins, who had come with them in exile, to prevent any corruption of their bloodline. Word of this reached King Sujāta back in Śāketa, and he gathered his ministers to ask if this amounted to incest. The learned ministers replied that it was allowed and did not constitute incest. The king’s reaction explains the origin of the name Śākyans:

> When he had heard the learned brāhmans, the king, gladdened, delighted and enraptured, exclaimed, “Cunning [śakya], sirs, are these princes.” And from the “cunning” of these princes arose their name, appellation and designation of Śākyans.


The five sons gained their clan name of Śākya from the Sanskrit verbal root √śak meaning to be able. In time, they started families and decided to build a new city in the jungle. The seer Kapila, at whose hermitage they were staying, happily gave them his land as the foundation of this new city. In gratitude for this gift and to memorialize his generosity, the sons name the city Kapila-vastu. “The name Kapilavastu arose from the land having been given by Kapila the seer.”

The city of Kapilavastu duly grew to become the capital of a prosperous kingdom. Eventually, a king would come to the throne named Śuddhodana, the Buddha’s father. He would marry a maiden of the Koliya noble clan named Māyā, who was to be the Buddha’s mother. Thus the Buddha was born into the Śākya clan in the city of Kapilavastu. This is the proximate cause of his gaining the name Śākyamuni and being born in a city named Kapilavastu.

So, there were two sets of causes: a distal cause, with a delayed effect, and a proximate cause. The coordination of the distal and proximate causes combined to create the result (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Distal and Proximate Causal Effect**

![Diagram of causal effect]

This form of causality, and mode of narrating past events, is invoked repeatedly throughout the *Mahāvastu* in relation to the Buddha Śākyamuni and other major characters. In Chapter Four, for example, an event is discussed from the *Mahāvastu* that involves the monks Śāriputra and

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Maudgalyāyana. The coordination of proximate and distal causes explains the manner of their conversion to Buddhism. Chapter Four discusses an event from the Commentary on the Rules for Monks regarding the first transgression of the rule against sexual intercourse. This event had both proximate and distal causes. The same is true for an event in the Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct, discussed in Chapter Six, again related to the monk Śāriputra. So, this form of causality is reproduced in narratives across the Vinayapiṭaka.

**Habitual Causal Effect**

Another form of causality is one in which past causes pile up to have a cumulative effect on one future event (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Habitual Causal Effect**

This form of causality illuminates practice itself, the śīla or habits that result in a future state of becoming. Repeated instances of the same action result in a single effect. This form of causality is presented most forcefully in the long narrative of the Buddha’s practice that led to his awakening in the first part of the Mahāvastu. The reader is introduced to two schemes to understand the scope of the path that led to the Buddha’s awakening: the Four Careers of a
Bodhisattva and the Ten Stages of a Bodhisattva. These schemes are concerned with providing a logical order to practice and attainment, within which examples of discrete, individual lives are given only sporadically as examples.

The two schemes outline repeated practices that the Buddha Śākyamuni cultivated that would eventually qualify him to attain awakening and achieve the single result of self-ordination. As the Mahāvastu states, this process took countless eons, a nearly infinite amount of time that is beyond the range of normal human comprehension. At this scale of historiography, emphasis is not on showing a linear chronology, but showing how the accumulation of past events led to the single event. Piling up of successive examples of the same event allows discernment of paradigmatic patterns. These paradigmatic patterns define the aforementioned Four Careers and Ten Stages.

The Second Career of a bodhisattva, for example, is called the Resolving Career (pranidhāna-carya). The term resolving refers to the vows (pranidhāna) taken by the Bodhisattva in the presence of a buddha, such as the vow examined above that was taken in the presence of the (past) Buddha Śākyamuni. Each instance or event of vow-taking is essentially the same; the significance of each instance is only their conformation to the pattern.

Take, for example, this statement from the Mahāvastu:

Thirty koṭis of Conquerors named Śākyamuni appeared in the world, and eight-hundred-thousand named Dipamkara. Sixty-thousand named Pradyota.... Then three koṭis of lion-voiced Buddhas named Puspa. Eighteen thousand Sugatas of the name Māradhvaja appeared in the world while he [Śākyamuni] lived the holy life

Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.34–63 and 1.63–193, respectively; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.29–52 and 1.52–151.
in his desire to attain omniscience.\textsuperscript{157}

This verse passage goes on to name many more buddhas in whose presence the Buddha Śākyamuni accomplished his bodhisattva practice. The purpose of this enumeration of buddhas of the past is not to narrate a chronological series of events. This is clear from the inclusion of eight-hundred thousand buddhas named Dīpaṃkara. The Buddha Dīpaṃkara is a well-known figure in the chronological biography of the Buddha. The story of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, and the life of the Bodhisattva during that time, is narrated at length in the \textit{Mahāvastu}.\textsuperscript{158} This event represents a significant and unique milestone in the (linear) path toward awakening, when the Bodhisattva first received a prediction that he would reach his goal of becoming a buddha. This unique event is not referred to in the quote above. Rather, the quote is highlighting the repeated pattern, the piling up of instances, of all those buddhas named Dīpaṃkara in whose presence Buddha Śākyamuni resolved to become a buddha. The unique event of the prediction to awakening by “the” Buddha Dīpaṃkara is lost in the eight-hundred thousand other instances. The point is to show that the Buddha Śākyamuni took a vow on thousands of occasions over an inconceivable amount of linear time. This is why the past buddhas are grouped by name, not by linear order. The grouping brings to light the paradigmatic pattern that allows for articulation of a specific “career” (\textit{carya}) of making repeated vows, and the fact that all those vows resulted in a single event.

\textsuperscript{157} Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 1.51 (ellipses and brackets in original). \textit{śākyamunināmakānām upasthitās triṃśa koṭiya jinānā m / aṣṭaśatasahasrāni dīpaṃkaranāmadheyānām / ṣaṣṭim ca sahasrāni pradyotanāmadheyānām / . . . / tatha puṣpanāmakānām trayo koṭiya vādisimhānām / aṣṭādaśa sahasrāni māradhvajānāmakānām sugatānām / yatra care brahmaṃcaryam sarvajñatām abhilāśaya /} Senart, \textit{Le Mahāvastu}, 1.61.

Under stages eight and nine in the Ten Stages section, a similar presentation is deployed that pushes this to the extreme.\textsuperscript{159} The eighth and ninth stages are comprised solely of a long list of names of buddhas, just the names, all in a row, without any qualifications or commentary. Here all sense of chronology is lost in a sea of names, which has little or no discernible order, except for the clumping of names with similar sounding phonemes. Here is a short section of this list:

\begin{quote}
Aparibhinna, Puṇḍarikanetra, Sarvasaha, Brahmagupta, Subrahma, Amaradeva, Arimardana, Chandrapadma, Candrābha, Candratejas, Susoma, Samudrabuddhi, Ratanaśringa, Sucandradṛṣṭi.\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

The only pattern discernible is the resonance of some of the names, such as Chandrapadma, Candrābha, Candratejas. The importance is in the sheer repetition, and the fact that under all these buddhas, “the Exalted One of the Śākyan royal family acquired roots of virtue.”\textsuperscript{161} The term \textit{roots of virtue} (kuśalamūla) has already been introduced as a concept in the process of discipline. Just as monastic practitioners must repeatedly commit themselves to maintaining kuśalamūla as part of their training to become monastics (in the ideal sense of the term), so too did the Buddha, in his long training, repeatedly cultivated kuśalamūla to become a buddha. The paradigmatic truth communicated by this is that all forms of accomplishment require


\textsuperscript{160} Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 1.109. \ldots aparibhinnah puṇḍarikanetraḥ sarvasahaḥ brahmaguptah subrahmaḥ amaradevaḥ arimardanaś candrapadmaḥ candrābhaḥ candratejaḥ susomaḥ samudrabuddhiḥ ratanaśringaḥ sucandradṛṣṭih\ldots / Senart, \textit{Le Mahāvastu}, 1.137.

sustained commitment and repeated practice, turning them into something discernible as habit.

Inherent Causality

A final form of temporal causality presented in the Mahāvastu can be called inherent causality. This is the notion that certain causes are inherent in existence as such, and an effect arises whenever a certain temporal point has been reached. The Sanskrit term used to describe this inherent causality is dharmatā. In its use here, describing an inherent form of causality, dharmatā can most often be translated as “the nature of things.” It is commonly used, for example, in the rhetorical expression dharmatā khalu: “as we know, it is the nature of things that....” For example, in the story of cosmogenesis discussed below, the emergence of the first class of sentient beings is described like this:

As we know, O monks, it is the nature of things that those beings are self-luminous, move through space, are made of mind, feed on joy, abide in a state of bliss, and go wherever they wish.\(^2\)

The invocation of dharmatā signifies that each time a world evolves, the first class of sentient beings to emerge is always like this. The emergence of sentient beings does not have a past cause. It happens whenever the universe reaches a certain point of temporal development.

Like the previous form of causality, dharmatā is revealed through the piling up of repeated instances of the same event. Unlike the previous case, however, the repeated instances of the same event do not accumulate onto a single effect. Each instance has its own

\(^2\) dharmatā khalu punar bhikṣavo yaṃ teṣāṃ satvānāṃ svayamprabhānāṃ antarikṣacarānāṃ manomayānāṃ pritiḥbhāṣānāṃ sukhaḥṣyinoṃ yenakāmamgatānāṃ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.338–339.
causal scope and does not impinge on the next repetition. Take, for example, the dharmatā of a buddha arising in the world. Although every buddha is a unique individual (and only one buddha can arise in a terrestrial world-system at one time), they all arise with the same bundle of qualities.\textsuperscript{163} For example, the parents of a buddha always come from the brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya class:

\begin{quote}
Bodhisattvas are born in one of two classes of families, either a noble [kṣatriya] or brāhman family. When the nobles dominate the earth, the Bodhisattvas are born in a noble family. When the brāhmans dominate the earth, they are born in a brāhman family. And, monks, whatever family a Bodhisattva is born in is endowed with sixty qualities. What sixty? That family is distinguished.\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

The text goes on to list all sixty qualities. These qualities apply to the families of each buddha, regardless of time or place; they are qualities inherent in the event itself. This is borne out in the narratives of past buddhas in the Mahāvastu. The inherent patterning is revealed, for example, by the fact that the same descriptions of events are used in the biographies of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara and the Buddha Śākyamuni. The descriptions are essentially copied from one section to another. Jones notes, “This account of the birth of the Buddha Gotama is practically identical, word by word, with the account in Vol. 1 (pp. 197ff.) of the birth of the son


\textsuperscript{164} Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.1. dvīhi kulehi bodhisatvā jāyanti / kṣatriyakule vā brāhmaṇakule vā / yodā kṣatriyākṛantā prthivī bhavati tadā kṣatriyakule jāyanti / yodā brāhmaṇākṛantā prthivī bhavati tadā brāhmaṇakule jāyanti // yasmin ca bhikṣavah kule bodhisatvā jāyanti tām kulaṃ śaṣṭhiḥ angehi samanvātum bhavati / katamehi śaṣṭhiḥ / abhijñātām ca bhavati / Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.1.
of King Arcimat, the Buddha Dīpaṃkara.”¹⁶⁵ Large parts of the story are repeated verbatim, with only the names of father and mother changed. However, the family of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara happens to be a brahmaṇa family, while the family of the Buddha Śākyamuni happens to be a kṣatriya family, as allowed by the rule stated above that buddhas are born in one of those two classes of family. The reason given in the rule, that a buddha is born in the type of family that “dominates the earth,” connects back to the argument of the last chapter that each buddha must be supreme to qualify as a sovereign lawgiver.

Another aspect of the regularity of a buddha’s birth is the fact that the buddha’s mother must die seven days after giving birth. The Mahāvastu states, “The mothers of all Bodhisattvas die on the last of the seven days following their delivery of the Supreme of Men.”¹⁶⁶ A reason is given that appeals to the ultimate purpose of a buddha in teaching humans discipline and leading them to liberation:

And why so? “Because,” says he [the Buddha], “It is not fitting that she who bears a Peerless One like me should afterwards indulge in love.” …

The Exalted One, indeed, at all times proclaims the depravity of sensual desires. Should then the mother of the Savior of the world indulge in pleasures of the sense?¹⁶⁷

Here is seen the complex interaction of paradigmatic truths within a mythical narrative. The Buddha is only born in a family that dominates the earth, thus ensuring his supremacy as the

¹⁶⁵ Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.1, fn. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.3. sarveśaṃ bodhisatvānāṃ janetvā puruṣottamaṃ / carame saptame divase mātā jahati jīvitam // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.3.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.3. kiṃ kāraṇaṃ ayuktaṃ hi asmadvidham anuttaram / dhāretvā uttare kāle maithunaṃ pratisevitum // ...bhagavāṃ ca nāma kāmānāṃ dosam satataṃ bhāṣati / atha ca lokanāthasya mātā kāmāṃ niṣevati // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.3.
Peerless One and Supreme of Men. His mother must die within seven days to uphold the Buddha’s cardinal teaching that sexual desires are defilements of human existence and must be removed. The removal of the buddha’s mother, through her death, is in effect the removal of the defilements from the Buddha’s own family. This process of removal continues with the eventual ordination of the Buddha’s son, foster mother, and wife, thus destroying his family tree in a procreative sense. His “family” will continue only as a monastic family, and only through the procreation of ordination.

Thus, the Buddha Śākyamuni’s mother, Māyā, is playing a role that has been played countless times in the past. It is the nature of things (dharma) that the mother of a buddha dies seven days after birth. Māyā is from this perspective merely a vehicle for the birth of the Buddha, and a potent symbol of the overcoming of sexual desire that sits at the core of vinaya. That the birth is virginal further strengthens this latter point. In the narrative of the Buddha’s conception, it is told that Māyā, directly prior to the conception, took a set of ascetic vows and entered into retreat in a sort of quasi-renunciation. Māyā tells her husband, King Śuddhodana, at the end of her vows:

I will, O King, follow these eleven rules of moral conduct. All this night has this resolve been stirring in me.

168 The burden of sexuality is placed on the woman. Such misogyny is frequently found in Buddhist monastic literature, as Chapter Four discusses in more detail. For sustained, academic treatment of this topic, see Liz Wilson, Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Alan Sponberg, “Attitudes Towards Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism,” in Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 3–36.
Do not then, I pray you, O king, desire me with thoughts of sensual delights. See to it that you be guiltless of offense against me who would observe chastity.

Following the taking of these vows, Māyā retires to a secluded chamber within the palace accompanied by her female attendants. The resonance between this sequence of events—a set of moral vows accompanied by a firm resolve, a renunciation of normal domesticity in favor of chastity, and seclusion with those of the same gender—and monastic ordination would be clear to the monastic audience. All monastics would have done something similar. What comes to attention is the paradigmatic truth that religious accomplishment is attained through this same progression: taking a set of vows and transforming one’s form of life in the direction of the removal of defilements. During his long journey to awakening and self-ordination, the Buddha followed the same plan. It is a sequence of practice that works because it participates in the paradigmatic truths of reality. Each narrative, and each life of a monastic, is a unique instance, but each participates in the same overall paradigmatic sequence.

The fact that these narratives reveal paradigmatic truths should not overshadow their importance as historical documents. The history of this world is also important; it is not only a means of teaching discipline. The Buddha’s Śākya clan, for example, produced many of the most important characters in the textual world of the recorded teachings, such as Ānanda, the Buddha’s personal attendant and master of the sūtra teachings, and Devadatta, the chief villain and cause of the first schism in the monastic community. The Buddha’s foster mother,

Mahāprajāpatī, will become the first nun, and with the help of Ānanda, will be the one who convinces the Buddha Śākyamuni to ordain women.\textsuperscript{170} This story forms the introduction to the *Commentary on the Rules for Nuns*. Other figures from Kapilavastu are also important, such as the barber Upāli, who will become the first master of the *vinaya* after the Buddha’s death (Upāli’s ordination will be discussed in Chapter Six). So too are the inhabitants of the nearby region of Magadha, such as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, the Buddha’s two chief disciples (their ordinations will be discussed in Chapter Four). Śāriputra will play a role in many of the mythical narratives examined below, and in subsequent chapters. The histories of several local shrines, such as those surrounding Vaiśālī, are also narrated in some detail.\textsuperscript{171} Laudatory verses are directed at local landscapes, such as the Nairañjanā River and its forested environs near Uruvelā, the site of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s awakening.\textsuperscript{172} The local characters and landscape are not simply a setting to deliver a discourse or reveal a truth; they are part of the mythical fabric of the teachings themselves. They contribute to what defines a teaching as canonical, since these figures, such as Ānanda, Upāli, and Mahākāśyapa, codified the teachings at the First Council. They are the first narrators of these same texts. So even when the narratives reveal paradigmatic truths that transcend their specific time and place, those truths do not obviate the latter. The two levels of truth—historical and paradigmatic—must be understood together. The *vinaya* is both something particular to this world, with real connections to the historical

\textsuperscript{170} Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, 1–16.


Buddha Śākyamuni and his early community, and is the culmination of a much longer transhistorical process governed by a complex interaction of different forms of causality.

**The Origins of this World and the Defilements**

The *Mahāvastu* contains an important myth that narrates the evolution of this world and star system. It is given as the prelude to the story of the Buddha’s birth, as part of the *Lineage of Kings* narrative. The story of cosmogenesis begins at the beginning of this world, when there is (nearly) nothing. The *Mahāvastu*, with the Buddha as speaker, informs the reader that the evolution and devolution of a terrestrial star system is a natural occurrence that takes place without a creator or agent. It is the nature of things (*dharmatā*) that terrestrial star systems come into existence, evolve, devolve, and cease to exist, in a cycle that proceeds onward with no beginning or end. The current terrestrial star system is thus only the latest in an infinite sequence; it is not special or unique, except for the fact that it is our time and place.

According to the *Mahāvastu*, in the interstitium between the destruction and subsequent evolution of a new terrestrial star system, sentient beings are reborn in a specific heaven—the realm of the Ābhāsvara devas—that somehow exists independently. When the new star system comes into existence, sentient beings pass from that heaven and take rebirth


174 The details of this are not explored, and the philosophically minded reader will find many inconsistencies with a presupposed unified theory of karma.
in this world, but in a very special form of being. This is how the Buddha Śākyamuni explains it to his monastic audience in the *Mahāvastu*:

> Monks, there comes a time, there comes an occasion, when this universe after a long stretch of time begins to dissolve. And while it is in the course of dissolution beings are for the most part reborn in the world of the Ābhāsvara devas.

> There comes a time, monks, there comes an occasion, when this universe after a long stretch of time begins to re-evolve once more, and while it is re-evolving certain beings, in order to achieve the extinction of existence and karma, leave Ābhāsvara and are born in this world. These beings are self-luminous, move through space, are made of mind, feed on joy, abide in a state of bliss, and go wherever they wish.

> The moon and sun were not yet known in the world. Hence the forms of the stars were not known, nor the paths of the constellations, nor day and night, nor months and fortnights, nor seasons and years.\(^{175}\)

During the beginning stages of evolution, sentient beings exist in a unique state of bodiless bliss within an unformed ether. Nevertheless, they do exist in this world. The term used repeatedly throughout this passage is *loka*, the term that unambiguously designates this world. So, these bodiless beings are no longer in heaven; they are in this world at the beginning of time.

Significantly, the Buddha Śākyamuni emphasizes the fact that time itself has not started in the sense that it exists for human beings. There are no celestial bodies, and thus no days or weeks, no seasons or years. This reference to calendrical time is important because as Chapter Five

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discusses, discipline is indexed to calendrical time. This is one way in which discipline conforms to this world, since time itself is a product of its evolution.

Eventually, this seemingly idyllic existence evolves in gradual stages. The evolution of sentient beings is paralleled by an evolution of the terrestrial earth and celestial bodies. Each evolution of sentient beings toward becoming recognizably human is matched by an evolution of the world toward becoming recognizably this world. First, a rudimentary form of matter comes into existence, which is attractive and fragrant. This provokes the first desire, which becomes the basis on which all subsequent evolution takes place. The Buddha Śākyamuni explains, “Then, monks, some being who was wanton and of greedy disposition tasted this essence of earth with his finger.”176 The adjectives wanton and greedy designate these actions as non-virtuous, and signal the evolution of the defiled state that discipline is meant to address. The more food these beings eat, the more they evolve physical bodies, which then require even more food to sustain them. Bodies and earth co-evolve, each becoming denser and harder in an inter-objective relationship articulated as consumption. Bodies become more recognizably human—not only in shape, but in also in desires like hunger—and the earth evolves into a terrestrial planet with plant-like organisms serving as food. At this stage, a type of proto-rice grows naturally, and does not require cultivation. Sentient beings live independently without community or society.

Ingestion of food causes differentiation among sentient beings, an event that serves as the prelude for considerations of human difference within the scope of *vinaya*. Those who eat more of the primordial earth become ugly, whereas those who eat less become beautiful. Differences in appearance cause social division. The beautiful look down on the ugly, criticizing them for their appearance. These social divisions are examined in more detail in Chapter Six.

As if in response, the earth then evolves further to deny easy access to food. “When they thus became proud of their beauty, vain and conceited, the [easily available food] disappeared.”

The evolution of bodies also results in the differentiation of gender. Once different genders appear, sexual desires evolve. The Buddha states, “They looked on one another with inordinate passion in their hearts.” Passion is one of the defilements (*kleśa*) that define the defiled state of being. Significantly, the evolution of sexual desire does not lead to anything good or healthy, as other creation stories might state. It causes sentient beings to “violate one another,” suggesting non-consensual sex and violence. This is compared by the Buddha to forcible marriage and the stealing of brides, clearly indicating that it is non-virtuous and harmful. According to this narrative, there are no redeeming qualities of sexual desire, as befits a monastic disciplinary text.

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Eventually farming and physical labor become necessary to produce food, leading to development of notions of ownership and private property. Some beings begin to horde food, worried that they might not get enough to eat. Others, the future landowners, make exclusive claims to certain portions of the earth on which food grows. This causes some people to be left without a claim to food. They become the poor. Due to unequal distribution of food, theft comes into existence, because the poor attempt to take what belongs to the landowners. When the thieves are confronted about their alleged theft, they lie. The landowners, out of anger, punish them physically. During this stage, the Buddha remarks, “And so, monks, the three wrong [ākuśala] and sinful states of theft, falsehood, and violence made their first appearance in the world.”

The appearance of these three forms of evil marks the final evolution of the defiled human state. Now the Buddhist analysis of the human subject—as beset by greed, hatred, and delusion—is applicable, and a need for discipline enters the horizon of history. Recall that the most serious monastic transgressions, the pārājika rules, address precisely these aspects of the defiled human state: desire, theft, violence, and lying. Discipline makes sense in this kind of world. The story continues to play out in the direction of a disciplinary answer to the problems of defiled existence. Seeing that their individual efforts to impose law and order were ineffective, the landowners come together and decide to elect a king to protect their rights and punish transgressions:

\[180\] Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.292. evam ca punar bhikṣavah imeśāṃ trayāṇāṃ pāpakānāṃ ākuśalānāṃ dharmāṇāṃ prathama evam eva loke prādurbhāvo tadyathādinnādānasya mṛṣāvādasya daṇḍādānasya ca // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.347.
Then, monks, those beings hurriedly gathered together and took counsel. “Friends,” said they, “what if we were to select him who is most kind-hearted among us, and most authoritative, to reprove whoever among us deserves reproof, and to approve whoever deserves approval? And we will assign to him a portion of the rice in the fields of each of us.”

They duly follow this plan and elect the first king, named Mahāsammata, or The Great Elect.

Thus, the first kingdom comes into existence, which represents the first organized society and social contract. The state of society before this decision was one of anarchy, in the literal sense of without rule. Humans lived among one another, but there was no society in the crucial sense of group solidarity: the restraint of individual desires in favor of communal goals. As this story forcefully illustrates, for a society to function, human desire must be regulated by external coercion. A virtuous, kind-hearted individual should act as leader, reproving and approving.

This prefigures the Buddha Śākyamuni’s leadership of the monastic community. The latter’s connection to kingship has already been discussed. Here, the ideal mode of discipline enforcement is an acclaimed, sovereign leader with the power of a lawgiver and distributor of just punishments. This is the role the Buddha Śākyamuni takes on in the vinaya texts. He is the lord (bhagavat) and leader of his community of monastics; he reproves and approves thought and behavior, and lays down laws and punishments. Overall, the message to the monastic audience is clear: the curbing of desire through promulgated rules is the means for overcoming negative human traits and controlling negative communal outcomes. Recall from the story that

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those sentient beings who during the early evolution of earth limited their intake of food became beautiful, and to a certain extent, virtuous. So although external coercion is necessary, it is self-regulation above all that is most effective in transforming the self and society in the direction of virtue. The disciplined life is shown by this story to be a solution to the basic problem of human existence. It conforms to the way humans evolved into embodied creatures with natural desires. *Natural* here means both connected to the evolution of this terrestrial world and a repetition of inherent causal patterns.

The inherent causal patterning is revealed, as stated above, by the piling up of similar examples. Before narrating the evolution of this world, the Mahāvastu narrates many other times and places in the distant past. These worlds evolved similarly, even if they had their unique attributes and qualities. The time of the Buddha Samitāvin, for example, is narrated by the Buddha Śākyamuni using the same language as above:

> When the universe begins to re-evolve, and the world is being resettled, beings pass away from the world of the Ābhāsvara devas, because their span of years there is ended, and they come down to this world. The Bodhisattva also passed away from the realm of the Ābhāsvara devas, and, coming to the world, became again a universal king over the four continents, triumphant, and so on up to “he ruled over these four continents having won them by righteousness.”

> When the duration of men’s lives began to be limited, and old age, sickness and death became known, the exalted Samitāvin, the perfect Buddha, came to Jambudvīpa, and there taught men dharma. Then the universal king presented the perfect Buddha with all the requisites, robe, alms-bowl, bed, seat, and medicines for use in sickness. He built a palace of the seven precious substances like the one already described, and presented it to the exalted perfect Buddha. In this way the perfect Buddha Samitāvin and his community of disciples survived for one hundred thousand kalpas, and was always served by the Bodhisattva.183

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183 Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 1.44. *samvartakālasamaye manusyaṃ kālagatā ābhāsvare devanikāye upapadyanti rājāpi kālagato ābhāsvare devanikāye upapadyati bhagavān bhikṣusamghena sārdham ābhāsvaram devanikāyaṃ gacchati // vivartanīyakālasamaye samsthite lokasanniveśe satvā āyuḥkṣayāya ābhāsvaram devanikāyato cyavitvā icchatvā ṛgaḥ bhavati cakravartī cāturdvīpo vijītāvī yāva imāni catvāri mahādvīpānī dharmenaiva abhinirjinītvā adhyāvasati // yadā manusyaṃ parimitāyuṣkā bhavanti jārāvyādhiramanā ca prajñāyanti tadā bhagavān samitāvī saśrāvakasamgho jambudvīpam*
During the time of the Buddha Samitāvin, the same process of terrestrial evolution took place. The Buddha Samitāvin did not appear on earth until the conditions were right. It was only when “old age, sickness, and death” became known that the Buddha Samitāvin came to teach the dharma. Before this time, to judge by the abbreviated description, a type of utopia was realized in that world caused by the presence of a cakravartin, who was the Buddha Śākyamuni in a past life. This creation story is thus different regarding this detail. No utopic time of a cakravartin was mentioned in the prior story, and it certainly was not the case that the Buddha Śākyamuni lived for hundreds of thousands of kalpas. Nevertheless, the reason for the appearance of a buddha is consistent. It is only when human life reaches a certain point of evolution that the dharmavinaya makes sense. The trio of old-age, sickness, and death is shorthand for the problems of human existence. It is equivalent generally with the analysis of the problem of existence in the prior story that focused on the affliction of desire and the negative social outcomes of falsehood, theft, and violence.

The conformity of a buddha’s dharmavinaya to the facts of human existence is further demonstrated by the wording of the Bodhisattvā’s resolute vow in the distant past to become a

ägcchati // ägatvā satvānāṃ dharmāṃ deśayati // tathaiva rājā cakravartī samitāvisya samyaksambuddhasya sarveṇa pratypasthito cīvarapiṇḍapātraśayanāsaṇaglaṇaprayayabhaisajyapariśkařehi // saptaratnamayaṃ prāśadāṃ tādṛśāṃ eva kārāpayitvā bhagavataḥ samyaksambuddhasya niryātesi // etena upāyena kalpaśatasahasrāṃ samitāvī samyaksambuddho sthitā saśravakasamgho kalpaśatasahasram bodhisatvena upasthito / Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.52.

184 The Buddha Śākyamuni admits to Ānanda in the Mahāvastu that he could live for this long if he wanted, the reason being that since it was the case with former buddhas, so too it must be the case with him. This demonstrates the dharmatā of all buddhas. Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.225–226; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 220–221.

185 The metaphorical bridge between the two sets of concepts is death (māra). As a concept, Māra includes both the notion of end of life and the afflictions of human existence. The latter are called the māra-kleśas. See James Boyd, “Symbols of Evil in Buddhism,” The Journal of Asian Studies 31, no. 1 (1971): 63–75.
buddha in the future. He not only aspires to reach the spiritual state of a buddha, but also to act in specific ways that depict the buddha as the leader of a certain type of world. He says to the Buddha Samitāvin in verse:

May I become a guide of the world, a teacher of devas and men. May I expound the noble dharma....

May I plant the rudiments of wisdom in a world which is sunk in misery, is afflicted by birth and old age, is subject to death, and sees only with the eye of the body and (may I lead it) from states of woe....

May I release from the round of rebirth those whose karma has fully or partly matured in hell, those who are afflicted in the states of woe, those subject to death, and those of little happiness and much suffering....

May I live on doing good in the world, and teach dharma to devas and men. Thus may I convert [vineya] people as this Light of the world now does. 186

Just like the first king comes into a world beset by social problems, so too a buddha arises in a world beset by the defilements of human existence. Just as the first humans were unable to function ethically in a state of anarchy, so too human beings have little hope of escaping the afflictions of old-age and death without an awakened leader of the world. The Buddha Śākyamuni’s appearance in this world was the fulfillment of this vow, a vow that is repeated many times throughout the narrations of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s past lives. In effect, the Buddha Śākyamuni is shown to have been planning this all along, learning from previous buddhas about what all buddhas do, and then fulfilling those qualifications and attributes. This is explicitly stated in the Mahāvastu, when the Buddha, right before his awakening, surveys his

past lives and confirms that he has fulfilled all the basic deeds and attributes of those ready to attain the state of a buddha (buddha-vaineyatā). This requires a vision of the past and the different forms of causality that are beyond normal human perception and knowing. Only a buddha has this range of vision and knowledge, an attribute that qualifies him to be a leader.

**Non-Human Realms of Rebirth**

In addition to narrating the evolution of the human realm of existence, the *Mahāvastu* provides the reader with a tour of the non-human realms of rebirth: hell, animal, ghost, asura, and deva (making six with the human realm). These are also part of this world. Each realm is described in detail, with the tortures of hell receiving the most space and poetic effort.

Maudgalyāyana, one of the Buddha’s chief disciples, provides these vivid descriptions. He travelled to these various realms of rebirth and witnessed the suffering of beings there. Having so witnessed, he returns to the monastic community and shares what he has seen to give a cautionary tale, and urge the monastic community to redouble its efforts at discipline. At the end of each description, Maudgalyāyana tells his audience:

> Therefore, one must strive after knowledge, win it, be enlightened, be fully enlightened, do good, and live the holy life. And in this world no sinful act must be committed.

This exhortation is given imperative force by the graphic descriptions of the torture and suffering of sentient beings in the various hells and other states of woe. If practitioners wish to

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avoid such tortures, and their attendant pain and suffering, they should pursue monastic discipline with diligence. Discipline not only answers the problem of human existence, but the possibility of future states of rebirth in even worse circumstances. This applies even to rebirth in the heavenly realms of the devas. Although Maudgalyāyana, in his description of the heavens, admits that the devas live a life of ease and happiness, this life will inevitably come to a painful end when they die and are reborn in lower states, even in hell. Therefore, no realm of rebirth is an appropriate goal for a monastic, even if final liberation in this lifetime is not a feasible possibility either.

**Asceticism in the Terrestrial World**

The Buddha was not the first or only teacher to realize the suffering inherent in human existence, and attempt to teach people a way out. As the *Mahāvastu* depicts it, the Buddha was born into a world where organized asceticism was a well-developed human phenomenon, spanning a range of personal practices and modes of sociality. In the world of the text, asceticism is presented as an always-available mode of self-transformation. Stories of the hoary past, for example, depict times when Buddhism does not exist, yet there are still ascetics who practice alone and in groups. Some of these, such as Sarabhaṅga (discussed in the previous chapter), Ghaṭikāra, and Mahāgovinda (both discussed in subsequent chapters) attain superhuman powers (*abhijñā*) as a result of their asceticism, showing that asceticism works to a point, even when it is not specifically Buddhist.

Asceticism is a means to an end. For a means to be effective, it must be employed with real knowledge about reality and the human condition. The stories about the evolution of this world provide a framework for understanding why ascetic practice is necessary. The human
state is beset by personal and social problems—desire, theft, falsehood, and violence—and inevitable old age, sickness, and death. Asceticism is the means to counteract these problems and ultimately solve them. However, not all forms of asceticism have the right answer to these problems. As the vinaya texts put it, only the Buddha’s dharmavinaya has the potential to remove defilements and free humans from the recurrent cycle of birth and death.

It is well-known from the standard biographies of the Buddha that before his awakening, he joined other ascetic groups and practiced their forms of asceticism. The Mahāvastu narrates the stories of two ascetic teachers: Ārāḍa Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra. Each maintained a group of disciples and taught their disciples a dharma and a vinaya. These teachings were designed to produce a specific end. Udraka Rāmaputra, for example, claimed to teach the path to the realm of neither consciousness nor non-consciousness (naivasamjñānāsāmamjñāyatanasahavratāyai dharmām), a form of meditative attainment that ultimately resulted in a future rebirth in the heavenly realm with that same name. When the Buddha practiced Udraka Rāmaputra’s dharmavinaya, it worked as expected. The Buddha quickly attained the desired goal of the state of neither consciousness nor non-consciousness. However, he also realized that this was not the goal for which he was searching. It did not bring an end to recurrent death because, as Maudgalyāyana’s tour of the realms of rebirth also taught, any form of rebirth, even in the very highest realms of heaven, inevitably ends in death and rebirth. It is significant that the Buddha never claims that Udraka


190 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.116; Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.119.
Rāmaputra taught a false or heretical teaching. His was a valid and effective means of self-transformation for those who desired rebirth in the realm of neither consciousness nor non-consciousness. But the practices of Rāmaputra and Kālāma did not, as the Buddha Śākyamuni says to himself in the narrative, lead to the utter waning of ill (samyagduḥkhakṣaya).\(^{191}\) So, he moves on.

In the forests surrounding the city of Gayā in Magadha (modern-day Bihar), the Buddha finds a small group of five ascetics practicing severe physical austerities, and decides to join their group.\(^ {192}\) Their practice is different from those of the previous teachers. Although the latter groups strove to attain meditative states within an organized group with a dharmavinayā and recognized leader, this group focused on mortifications of the body, and did not have a formal code or leader. These mortifications were aimed at total self-denial, especially regarding intake of food, to affect the complete waning of karma.

The Buddha Śākyamuni takes up this practice and proceeds to starve himself in an increasingly severe manner until his food intake is cut off and his body is nearly wasted away. He becomes so emaciated that he is very near death, and rumors of his death spread to his family, starting a small panic. As before, the Buddha Śākyamuni is successful in his practice. He attains the radical self-control of complete food denial, and wins the admiration of the gods themselves. However, the Buddha Śākyamuni again realizes that this is not the path to the ultimate goal he is after. He reflects:

\[^{191}\text{Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.117; Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.120.}\]

\[^{192}\text{Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.120–130; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.117–125.}\]
Those worthy recluses and brahmans who undergo unpleasant, bitter, cruel, and severe feelings which assail their souls and their bodies do so to gain perfection, but in no wise do they attain it.\footnote{Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 2.125. `tasya me bhikṣavaḥ etad abhūsi // ye kecid bhavantaḥ śramaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā ātmopakramikāṃ śarīropatāpiṣṭāṃ duḥkhāṃ tīvṛāṃ kharāṃ kaṭukaṃ vedanā vedayanti ettāvat pāramite imāṃ pi na kenāpi saṃbhunātāti //` Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 2.130.}

Although severe fasting is supposed to lead to perfection, the Buddha Śākyamuni finds that it does not produce that result:

Neither I, also, with all this practice of austerities am aware of the state of ‘further men,’ which enables one to realise the distinct achievement of truly Āryan knowledge and insight. This is not the way to enlightenment.\footnote{Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 2.125. `na kho punar ahaṃ abhijānāmi imāye duṣkaraçārikāye kaṃcid uttarimanusyadharmanāt jñānadarśanām viśeṣādhigāmāṃ sāksātkarum nāyam mārgaṃ bodhāya //` Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 2.130.}

Here the term for the desired attainment is significant. The Buddha states that he is seeking the state of further men (*uttarimanusyadharma*), a term used positively in *vinaya* texts to designate the ultimate goal of monasticism. The use of this term is significant because it begins to draw a connection to a specific *pārājika* rule, the fourth rule about lying. It was already said above that falsehood is one of the evils to which discipline responds, and which the process of discipline is meant to remove. The fourth *pārājika* rule is specifically about lying in relation to spiritual attainments, and the term *the state of further men* is used specifically. In the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda recension, the rule states:

Whatever monk, unknowing and not understanding, should boast with regard to himself of having [the state of further men], sufficient insight and knowledge into Dharma, like the nobles, and a specific and particular spiritual realization, saying, “Thus do I know, thus do I see”…unless this was spoken because of pride, this monk is pārājika, expelled; he is not to obtain dwelling together with the monks.\footnote{Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 52, with the key term changed (in brackets) to match Jones’ translation. `yo puna bhikṣuranabhijānannaparijānannatmopanāyikamuttarimanusyadharmanālāmāryajñānadarśanām`}
Setting aside the caveats, this rule is about claiming to have reached a state of spiritual accomplishment when in fact one has not reached that state. As an aside, the language of this passage resonates with the statement given by the Buddha Śākyamuni to Mahākāśyapa prior to the latter’s teaching that was examined in the previous chapter. The Buddha Śākyamuni stated that he knows and does really know, demonstrating that there is conformity between his speech and his inner state of realization. The narrative of the Buddha’s extreme austerities is concerned directly with such lying, and this connection shows the double meaning of this narrative. It is not only about what the Buddha did in the past (i.e., history), but reveals its connection to paradigmatic truths as myth.

When the Buddha is near death because of his complete cessation of food intake, the gods offer to keep him alive with divine infusions of nourishment. The Buddha refuses, even though he knows that he will now have to stop his extreme austerities, thus breaking his vow, and take food to avoid death. Knowing that extreme austerities were not the way, and having remembered his childhood experience of meditation at the foot of an apple tree, he reflects on the way forward (again in a speech to his monastic audience):

And, monks, while I was thus indulging that memory, there came to me as a result the conviction that this was not the way to enlightenment. But this way could not be won when the body was emaciated, weak, distressed and fasting. So I said to myself, “Let me now, then take a hearty meal [of boiled rice and junket”].

viśeśādhigamaṃ prātiṣṭhānīya ita jānāmi ita paśyāmīti / so taddhātaśa samayena samanugrahiyaṃ no va asaṣmaṇugrahiyaṃ no va āpanno viśuddhipreko eva evam acetājañānavahamāyuṣmanto avacī jānāmi, apaśyaṃ paśyāmīti / iti tucchaṃ mrṣā vilāpaśamanyatraḥbhimāṇāt ayampi bhikṣuḥ pārājiko bhavatyasaṃväyo na labhate bhikṣuḥ sārdhasamvāsam / Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtraṃ, 7-8.
[At that time some devas were] on a visit to me [and they said] “You can live in full consciousness in spite of this hard striving, for we shall make you absorb divine strength through the pores of your hair.”

Then, monks, I said to myself, “Now I have at all times approved of complete abstention from food, and women and men in the herdsmen’s villages around take it that the recluse Gotama is an abstainer. And yet these devas, although themselves intent upon and devoted to austerity, would infuse divine strength in me through the pores of my hair. Thus I would be guilty of a deliberate falsehood. And as, monks, I abhor deliberate falsehood, I decided that I would avoid it, loathing it as I did, and that I would rebuff those devas, and take a hearty meal of what I liked.”

He then made his meal, and subsequently, when he had the strength to walk, went on a begging round in the nearby village of Senāpati, where he interacts with a woman named Sujātā. From the latter, he takes an offering of sweet milk-rice, a pivotal moment in the run-up to the Awakening. This meal gives him the strength to meet Māra, the God of Death, on the battlefield beneath the Tree of Awakening, and attain awakening that night.

The significance of this story from the perspective of discipline is self-reflection and speaking the truth. When the Buddha engaged in his various experiments in asceticism, he was constantly assessing his self-transformation and making adjustments accordingly. This self-awareness is a crucial part of discipline, whether it comes from oneself or another. Recalling the form of habitual causality that figures practice, the practitioner must ensure that repeated actions align with intended future goals. Although the Buddha had in mind the correct goal

196 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.125–126, brackets and lacuna in original. 

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196 Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.130–131.
while engaging in bodily mortification, and was committed resolutely to his vows, the practices themselves were not the correct means to the desired end. To reach the desired end without giving up this practice, by allowing the gods to infuse divine nutrition into his body, would have entailed a falsehood. This would not have resulted in attainment he sought.

Moreover, the Buddha considers his relationship with others, an essential factor in discipline that is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. He seeks to remain upright and true to his vows in the eyes of the local villagers, the laypeople who provide moral and material support, but not so far that he is forced into a lie and hypocrisy. His act of begging for food from the local villagers, as a necessary precondition for the Awakening, is a powerful reminder of the form of life taken up by every monastic in the audience (both the audience in the story and the audience outside of the text). Begging for food is not just a means to the end of nutrition, but also a vital connection to the wider society that matters beyond its instrumentality. This is shown in the elaborate interaction between the village girl Sujātā and the Buddha. When the latter comes begging, Sujātā falls in love and seeks to convince the Buddha to end his renunciation and marry her. The Buddha refuses, but he does not shun her. He engages with her on the level of dharmavinaya, bringing her into the fold of the community, not as a renunciant herself (at this time, ordination does not exist, so that would be impossible), but as an aspirant to awakening. In response to their interactions, the Buddha reveals that he and Sujātā have deep connections in the past, bringing to light the complex causalities hidden behind terrestrial events. He says to her:
For five hundred births you were my mother. In some future time you will be a Pratyekabuddha, vowed to a Conqueror’s life.\(^{197}\)

The gift of rice-milk is symbolic of the motherly role that Sujātā held in five hundred previous births. Just as she nurtured him with breast milk in the past, so she nurtures him with rice-milk in the present (non-sexually). Just as breast milk allows a child to grow and flourish, so will the rice-milk allow the Buddha to battle death and attain awakening that night. The relationship between Sujātā and the Buddha is continued, but transformed from a defiled to a sanctified relationship. This final act of giving milk will, in the distant future (via delayed causality), result in Sujātā’s own awakening as a buddha herself.

The narration of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s experiments with asceticism reveals a world in which Buddhist discipline makes sense. He does not claim that all other forms of asceticism are false or useless. They work in their own limited ways as effective means to an end; they simply do not reach the ultimate goal. Each is rational and reasonable, if one recognizes the true nature of their ends. The Buddha does not invent asceticism, he perfects it. He does not reject other ascetics, he tries to teach them a better way. After his awakening, the Buddha returns to his five former companions in extreme austerity, and they are some of the first to be converted and ordained. They are first because they are the closest to finding the true way. He converts other ascetics too, such as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, who were members of a rival parivṛājaka group, and fire-worshiping brahmanical renunciants, such as the three Kāśyapa brothers of Gayā. These interactions reveal something important about what it means to be...

\(^{197}\) Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.197. vyākari narapradīpo jātiṣatā paṃca janani mahyāsi / bheṣyasi anāgate dhvani pratyekajino jinavrato ti // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.206.
disciplined in the world among social others. Even if a monastic is sure about his possession of
the correct, ultimate means, that should not make one haughty or proud (pride is one of the
kleśa-s). One should not judge others, but focus on one’s own practice and be self-reflective
about its progress and obstacles. This sentiment is expressed in an injunction about begging in
a village from the Liturgy of Rules for Monks:

As a bee, not harming the scent or the color of a
flower, flies away, taking [only] the nectar;
so should a sage enter a village.
[One should not contemplate] the faults of others,
or what is done and not done by others;
but one should contemplate things done and not done
concerning himself. 198

This verse expresses that judgment and critique should be reserved for the self. Treatment of
societal others is based on respect and non-harm. The themes of the Buddha’s experiments in
asceticism thus resonate strongly with disciplinary imperatives. However, as before, this should
not be taken to mean that the narratives are merely didactic. They are still true history (from
the Buddhist monastic perspective) and significant for that fact. The historical and the didactic
are both necessarily present, just as Lincoln argues in his definition of myth. Even the verse
above displays these dual qualities. In the Liturgy of Rules for Monks, this verse was spoken by
the Buddha Kāśyapa in the distant past. Its significance is heightened for that reason because it
reveals the fact that even the mundane act of begging for alms participates in paradigmatic
truths. It was done in this way under past buddhas, just as it is done now. It is the strategic

198 Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 110. yathā hi brahmoro punyaṃ varṇagandhamahetḥayaṃ / pareti
rasamādāya evam grāme munisācet // na paresāṃ viḷomāni na paresāṃ kṛtakṛtam / ātmāno tu samīkṣeta
kṛtāṅkṛtāṃ ca // Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 16. This verse, with modifications, is found among other ascetic
texts as well. See Patrick Olivelle, Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism: Critical Edition and Translation
blending of the historical and the didactic that characterizes the mythical narratives of the *Mahāvastu* and other *vinaya* texts.

**The Historical Unfolding of the *Vinaya***

As Chapter One discusses, in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns*, each rule is prefaced by an introductory narrative. This narrative relates the circumstances that led to the promulgation of that rule by the Buddha. The cumulative effect of this pattern is the idea that the Buddha did not recite all the rules at once. He waited until a rule was necessitated by the first occasion (ādikarma) of the transgression of a hitherto unstated behavioral expectation. This pattern repeats the mythological principle of conformation explored above with relation to *vinaya* generally. Just as *vinaya* was not necessary until the world and humans reached a certain stage of defiled evolution, so were the individual rules not necessary until the monastic community reached a certain stage of defiled evolution. An example of this in relation to *pārājika* number one—the rule forbidding sexual intercourse—is explored in detail in Chapter Four. Here, the general pattern is discussed because it becomes an explicit object of reflection within the *vinaya* texts and other classical Indian Buddhist texts. The question arose as to why the Buddha, who was presumed omniscient, promulgated the rules in this peculiar manner rather than all at once.

This examination begins not with the *vinaya* texts, but a passage from another classical Indian text known as the *Milindapañha* to demonstrate that there was general concern about how the *vinaya* rules were promulgated. That this topic was explored in a non-*vinaya* text is significant because it shows that it was a topic of concern beyond the narrow confines of the
vinaya texts. Since the Milindapañha is today generally considered to be a Theravāda text, a few words are necessary to justify its inclusion in the present study.

The Milindapañha is extant, in an Indic language, only in Pāli among the Theravāda texts. However, as every scholar who has studied this text at length has stated, it is not a composition of Theravāda origin. The general conclusion is that it was composed in northern India in a Middle Indic Prakrit of some type, from where it came to Sri Lanka and was translated into Pāli. Consequently, the Milindapañha is not a Theravāda text in a sectarian sense.

Several affirmative points made by Nāgasena and Milinda, the two interlocutors, go against Theravāda doctrinal orthodoxy, not the least of which is the inclusion of space (ākāśa) among unconditioned phenomena. This is a technical issue, but the basic point is that Theravāda orthodoxy allows only nirvāṇa in this category. Contrarily, both the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika monastic orders include space in this category, and the latter includes seven other phenomena. Extensive use of the Pāli Milindapañha by the great commentator and scion of Theravāda orthodoxy Buddhaghosa shows that it became, in Sri Lanka, a Theravāda work, though it was not edited to conform strictly to Theravāda orthodoxy. The Chinese translation of the same (or similar) text, titled Sūtra of the Bhikṣu Nāgasena, became, according

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199 Trenckner states, “It must have been imported [to Ceylon] from northern India, where alone the name of the conqueror [Milinda] can have been preserved. In all probability the original was in Sanskrit, and our text is a translation.” Trenckner, Milindapañho, vii. C. A. Rhys Davids concurs and offers a more substantial discussion of its translation, see C. A. Rhys Davids, The Milinda-Questions: An Inquiry into its Place in the History of Buddhism with a Theory as to its Author (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1930), 7ff.

200 Bareau, Buddhist Schools, 400–402.
to Lamotte, a Sarvāstivāda work.\footnote{Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institute orientaliste de l’université catholique de Louvain), 423. Horner cites this point, proposing, “I have hinted earlier at another possibility, and one which is not to be ignored, for finding the sources of quotations so far untraced. This is that the compiler of Miln., though he drew so extensively from the Pali Piṭakas, may not have been altogether unacquainted with Sarvāstivādin literature, and that this is where some at any rate of the untraced prose and verse passages may be found eventually. There is some internal support for this suggestion.” I. B. Horner, trans., *Milinda’s Questions*, vol. 1, (London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1969), xvii.} What this shows is that the *Milindapañha* expresses a mostly non-sectarian view of Buddhism. It was used by multiple monastic orders because, presumably, it is full of discussions of general yet core Buddhist ideas. Some of the instances in which the *Milindapañha* differs from Theravāda orthodoxy (in a weak sense of the term) are in favor of points that resonate with Mahāsāṃghika positions, especially in relation to the status of bodhisattvas and buddhas.\footnote{Horner, *Milinda’s Questions*, 1.xxxv–xxxix.} The sameness of buddhas, for example, is signified by the term *dharmatā*. The legendary portions of the Buddha’s biography found in the *Mahāvastu*, such as his intentional choice of his mother and father, are also discussed. Use of the term *svayamabhū* for the Buddha is found, which appears in the Theravāda Canon only in texts considered late and in the commentaries.\footnote{Horner, *Milinda’s Questions*, 1.214, 227, and 236. On this Horner states, “So far as I know it [the epithet *svayamabhū*] is not found in the *Vinaya* or Nikāyas; but occurs at *Budv.* I.53, XIV. 1, *Pts* ii.3 (of a paccekabuddha) and, e.g., at *UdA.* 85, 136, 283 as *sayambhū-ñāna* in the exegesis of Tathāgata, and a number of times in *Ap*. (see *ApA*. Index of Words and Phrases; also *PED*. for further references) and in *KhpA*. Its chief significance is that without a teacher, without another’s instruction, the *pāramīs* have been fulfilled and brought to the highest perfection and Buddhahood attained. *Sayambhū* is therefore but another, and shorter, way of saying *na me ācariya atthi* (*Vin.* i. 8), ‘I have no teacher’ and have become what I am entirely of myself. The epithet is equally applicable therefore to paccekabuddhas and to perfect or supreme Buddhas. There was no one to help or guide them in any but the most elementary stages of their quest.” Horner, *Milinda’s Questions*, 1.xli.} These features—the *dharmatā* of buddhas, incidents from the Buddha’s biography, and use of the epithet *svayamdbhū*—place the *Milindapañha* closer to the Mahāsāṃghika than the Theravāda.
The sources on which the *Milindapañha* was based also seem to be non-sectarian, or at least eclectic. There remain sixty-odd quotations from canonical sources in the *Milindapañha* that cannot be traced to any extant text, Theravāda or otherwise. From this and other peculiarities, C. A. Rhys Davids and I. B. Horner both conclude that the compiler of the *Milindapañha* was not a sectarian monk, and perhaps not even a monk at all. What this means for the current study is that the *Milindapañha* is not out-of-bounds simply because it is currently extant as a Theravāda text. Contrarily, it represents a general knowledge of Buddhism in northern India in the first few centuries of the Common Era. Since the majority of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda canonical literature has been lost, the *Milindapañha* could have been included in their canon. The Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda had a strong powerbase in the Bamiyan region of Afghanistan, close to the ancient kingdom of Gandhāra where Milinda ruled as a historical figure. All of this demonstrates that reflections on the *vinaya* in the *Milindapañha* shed light on how the unfolding of the *vinaya* historically was understood in the classical Indian context.

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204 Horner states, “The compiler was not a bhānaka, a repeater. So, though he freely cites statements and sayings that had been recorded in the Pali Canon already, he was also perfectly at liberty to take what he liked from literature outside this.” Horner, *Milinda’s Questions*, 1.xxxix–xl.

205 One explicit connection between the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *Vinayapiṭaka* and the *Milindapañha*, in terms of language usage, is the use of the phrase “tamyathā ‘nusūyate” in the latter to introduce a canonical quote. Regarding the possible translation of the *Milindapañha* from a Sanskrit or Prakrit version, Trenckner states, “There are, I think, a few vestiges from which to infer that such is the case. The opening phrase ‘tamyathā ‘nusūyate’ is not found in any other Pāli writing, and it is only in Milindapañha that quotations, real or pretended, are introduced by ‘bhavatīha.’” Trenckner, *Milindapañha*, vii. These exact phrases are not found in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *Vinayapiṭaka*, but similar phrases are found in the *Mahāvastu* to introduce canonical quotes, namely *ettham etam śrūyati* (3.316, 3.317, 3.319, 3.417), *ithham etam śrūyati* (3.416, 3.418), *iththam etam śṛuyati* (3.67), *ettham anuśṛuyate* (1.153), and *tadyathā tadyathāḥ* (1.159, 1.226, 2.29 and 2.169). This is suggestive of a connection, but not definitive of anything.
In Division VII of the *Milindapañha*, King Milinda asks the monk Nāgasena why the Buddha did not promulgate the rules all at once and instead waited until a transgression had occurred. His question raises some salient points about this manner of promulgation:

Revered Nāgasena, those who were the former teachers of doctors—that is to say Nārada, Dhammantarin, Angūra, Kapila, Kaṇḍaragīsāma, Atula and Pubba-Kaccāyana—all these teachers, knowing everything completely—the rise of a disease and its source and nature and origination and cure and treatment and the (various) diets, and thinking: "In this body such and such an illness will arise," and forming an idea of the groups (of illnesses)—composed a (definitive) treatise at the outset dealing with all at once. None of these was omniscient. So why did the Tathāgata, who was omniscient, and knew through his Buddha-knowledge that what would happen in the future would be that, in such and such a situation, such and such a rule of training would have to be laid down—why did he not settle the (whole corpus of the) rules of training and lay it down in its entirety (from the beginning)? (As it was) as each situation arose, as (an offender’s) bad repute became common knowledge, as (news of) a defect (in a member of the Order’s conduct) had travelled far and wide, as people complained—it was only at each of these times that the Lord laid down a rule of training for disciples.206

King Milinda incisively puts his finger on the contradiction. If the Buddha was omniscient, why did he not promulgate everything in advance, and thus avoid the censure and calumny heaped on his monastic community when transgressions occurred? Is it not the case that he effectively let evil happen, for example, in the murder that took place before he brought himself to promulgate a rule against murder? Why would the Buddha proceed this way, especially when other famous doctors adhered to the method of composing a definitive treatise that encompassed all possible diseases and their cures?

Nāgasena’s answer reveals the intention of the Buddha and purports to show his reasoning. Nāgasena agrees with Milinda’s first point; yes, the Buddha was omniscient and knew every rule that would eventually be required. He therefore knew that his method of disclosure would allow transgressions to happen, at least once, and invite the censure of the community. Nāgasena states:

It was known to the Tathāgata, sire, that since these people were complaining, the hundred and fifty rules of training would at (some) time have to be laid down in full. But it occurred to the Tathāgata thus: “If I lay down the hundred and fifty rules of training in full and deal with all at once, the populace will take fright and think there is so much to be guarded here that difficult indeed it is to go forth in the Dispensation of the recluse Gotama. So, though they may be anxious to go forth, they will not do so. And they will not believe my words; not believing, these people will go to states of woe. So, as each situation arises, instructing them with a teaching on Dhamma, I will lay down a rule of training as each defect becomes common knowledge.”

Nāgasena expresses the Buddha’s intention as a form of care for the well-being of the monastic community and potential future recruits. The Buddha knows that his religion will eventually attract men and women who are not physically and mentally disposed to a life of discipline. They will require external coercion of disciplinary rules. However, if he promulgated all the rules at once in the beginning, the monastic community would not grow, and this would deprive those very people of the opportunity to improve their future prospects and avoid unfortunate rebirths. The Buddha is willing to trade the short-term influence to his

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community’s popularity among the people with the long-term influence of establishing a community that endures. The Buddha’s reasoning shows that it is more important to consider normal human fear and doubt than the inevitable necessity of the monastic rules. Again, the *vinaya* conforms to the defiled human condition, in the way people might approach the idea of joining a monastic community. Humans are naturally reluctant and full of fear, and the Buddha compassionately considers that.

So, the Buddha always intended to introduce the rules one at a time, according to the *Milindapañha*. This intentionality is also expressed in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*, in which there is another story about the Buddha’s reticence to promulgate the rules in advance. This narrative reveals an important principle at work in the historical unfolding of the *vinaya*: the purity of the early monastic community. In the narrative introduction to the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*, there is a dialog between the monk Śāriputra and the Buddha.\(^{208}\) The story begins with Śāriputra secluded in meditation when a thought enters his mind. He wonders what qualities ensure that a Buddha’s teaching long endures in the world, the same preoccupation expressed by Nāgasena in the previous dialog, and one discussed in the next chapter.\(^{209}\) With this in mind, he goes into the presence of the Buddha and asks the same question. The Buddha responds by reflecting on the practices of former buddhas. He


\(^{209}\) T1425.22.0227.b03–b04.
states that the monastic communities of past buddhas who had a *dharma* and *vinaya* with formal divisions did long endure, whereas those without such formal divisions did not long endure.

A metaphor is then given to further explain this state of affairs. A buddha’s teachings are compared to a heap of flowers. Imagine there is a heap of flowers on a table. If the flowers are just left there, when the wind blows, they will be scattered and destroyed. However, if one were to string together the flowers into a garland, when the wind blows, the flowers will not scatter. The same is true for a buddha’s teachings. The flowers are the individual teachings and the wind is time. When a buddha passes away, if the teachings are left loose, they will be blown away by time and destroyed. However, if they are strung together into a collection with formal divisions (perhaps playing on the term *sūtra*, which means thread), then the teachings will not be destroyed, and the monastic community will long endure.

On hearing this, Śāriputra immediately requests that the Buddha Śākyamuni proclaim the entire *vinaya*, with formal divisions, to him and everyone else. This, he says, will open the

210 The Theravāda version specifies Vipassī, Sikhī, and Vessabhū as those whose dispensation did not last long and Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa as those whose did. Oldenberg, *Vinaya Piṭaka*, 3.7–8. The Chinese version says “all buddhas who...” (*諸佛如來*) for each of the two cases.

211 T1425.22.0227.b12–b13. The text lists the “nine-limbs” (*navāṅga*) of the *dharma* and the divisions of the *vinaya*. This list is does not perfectly match that quoted above from the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*. The difference is that vaipulya seems to be its own category and *sūtra* is left off. Or, vaipulya could go with *adbhūta-dharma* (as in the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* list) and *sūtra* was unintentionally dropped due to its proximity to *sūtrānta*.

212 T1425.22.0227.b15–b20.
gate of deathlessness (nirvāṇa) for many people. The Buddha refuses. His answer reveals the crux of the issue. He replies that buddhas do not promulgate the monastic rules while the community is yet pure. The reference to purity signifies the fact that at that time, there had not yet been any transgressions among members of the monastic community. The rules were not yet necessary. This demonstrates that the rules, and the fortnightly Poṣadha Ceremony, are not a means for establishing purity, but a means for returning the community to purity. Since the monastic community is still pure, the rules would serve no purpose. Not only that, but they might be counterproductive because they would cast aspersions on the early community, suggesting that they need rules to keep their purity, which is not true. The Buddha again uses a metaphor to explain. Just as an emperor does not institute rules when his subjects are law-abiding and upright, so too a buddha does not promulgate rules while the monastic community is pure. The Buddha assures Śāriputra that a time will come when some good men will ordain, but will not be able to keep their purity. He says:

Someone with a perverted mind will arise in the pure assembly. The three poisons will flourish and many transgressions will be committed, Śāriputra. At that time the lord will promulgate the rules. Just wait, Śāriputra.

The reference to the three poisons and the emperor recall the prior story about the evolution of the world. The two cases are parallel. Just as a king and his laws did not arise until the evils

213 T1425.22.0227.c01: 為諸天世人開甘露門。
214 T1425.22.0227.c02–c03.
215 T1425.22.0227.c04–c05.
216 T1425.22.0227.c07–c10: 當來有正信善男子. 於佛法中信家非家捨家出家. 或有心亂顛倒起於淨想. 三毒熾盛而犯諸罪. 舍利弗. 是時如來當為弟子制定波羅提木叉法. 止舍利弗.
of theft, falsehood, and violence manifested, so too the Buddha will not promulgate any
monastic rules until evil manifests in the monastic community. It will happen, but not yet. So,
he tells Śāriputra to wait. The audience of the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* does not of
course have to wait because they live in that world. As with all the mythical narratives
examined thus far, this story helps the monastic audience locate themselves within a complex
unfolding of historical causality. It also reaffirms why the *Prātimokṣa* is necessary for them but
not the early community, and why discipline is a reasonable response to the presently existing
human world.

This mythical narrative from the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* shows that the
complex causality examined from the *Mahāvastu* is also present in this text. It is the nature of
things (*dharmatā*) that a buddha who codifies his rules and organizes his teachings contributes
to a long-lasting monastic community. However, from the perspective of terrestrial time, it is
not the right time for such codification to take place. That will come later, and will involve the
work of the monastic community itself, whose members will effect such a codification after the
Buddha’s death. This is narrated in the *Mahāvastu* near the beginning of the text. There, the
monk Mahākāśyapa, who has already been introduced, takes leadership of the community, and
when the other accomplished monks are ready to enter *nirvāṇa* alongside the Buddha states:

No, my friends, you cannot here and now pass away, immune from any source of rebirth.

For if you did, sectarianis and heretics would arise and do harm to the peerless doctrine. This is
the occasion of the Śramaṇa’s cremation, and that is all we are concerned with.

Those world-saviors, those many lion-hearted men, the wise and valiant yet to come, could not
appear exultantly in the world if the Master’s teaching were not unified.
Therefore, without a break and in perfect unison, recite the Sugata’s excellent teaching, so that this recital well and truly made, may long have bright renown among men and devas.  

Mahākāśyapa expresses concern for the long endurance of the teachings and the ability of future generations to renounce and gain benefit from membership in the monastic community. In the prior story, Śāriputra and the Buddha were concerned about ensuring that the teachings were promulgated and codified at the right time so that they would not be destroyed after the Buddha’s death. Mahākāśyapa recognizes that the Buddha’s cremation is the right time. The result of this unified recitation is the collection of texts in which these stories appear. The Buddha was the author of these teachings, but not their narrator or compiler. The vinaya texts, as organized and presented, are the products of the unified community and the discourses through which that community sought to guarantee its own future. This echoes Lincoln’s theory of myth with which this study began:

> Thus, myth is not just a coding device in which important information is conveyed, on the basis of which actors can then construct society. It is also a discursive act through which actors evoke the sentiments out of which society is actively constructed.”

The sentiment that helps construct the monastic community is care for the future. It was expressed by the Buddha, Śāriputra, and Mahākāśyapa. It motivated their actions of promulgating and preserving the teachings, which are themselves, in turn, the discourses out of

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218 Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction*, 25.
which the monastic community is (re)produced. Care for the future is a vital component and goal of the monastic community, a sentiment “out of which society is actively constructed.”

The next chapter examines further the goals that articulate the ways in which the monastic community are instructed to form their society in relation to each other and wider society. Vinaya is shown to be a project not just for the removal of the defilements for oneself, but an intentional form of life with and for others. It should involve active cultivation of sentiments such as fear, faith, and care for the future. These goals and sentiments, combined with the mythical narratives examined in this chapter, set the stage for examination of the three central aspects of defiled human life: sexual desire, time, and caste.
In the introduction, it was stated that discipline is both a personal practice of self-transformation and the “nucleus of communal identity,” as Holt puts it. In this chapter, these two interrelated aspects of discipline are discussed in greater detail through examination of various lists of goals (artha) that describe how discipline is meant to lead to personal and communal ends. They show that discipline reproduces a specific form of community, in which monastics live well with one another, and among lay society.

In the previous chapter, stories of the Buddha’s experiments in asceticism were examined briefly. He was shown to have practiced with different types of communities, some with a recognized leader and an organized dharma and vinaya, and another that lacked a leader and institutional organization. The subtle lesson of these mythical stories is that the Buddha had many options for how to design a monastic community. The Buddha was also shown, in the Mahāvastu, to have met countless past buddhas and witnessed their monastic communities. In the conversation between Śāriputra and the Buddha in the introduction to the Commentary on the Rules for Monks, the Buddha admits that past buddhas did not all do things the same way. Some did not codify their teachings, which resulted in their monastic communities not enduring long in the world. The monastic community of the Buddha Śākyamuni, motivated by Mahākāśyapa, decided to codify the teachings for the benefit of

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219 Holt, Discipline, 1.
future generations. These stories show that the formation of the monastic community was an intentional endeavor that was shaped by the past in multiple ways.

This chapter examines an important component of that overarching plan for the monastic community. In the introduction to the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*, and more sporadically in other *vinaya* texts, the Buddha lays out several goals for the disciplined life of the monastic community. The term *goal* translates the Sanskrit term *artha*. This substantive noun is derived from the verbal root *varth* meaning *to strive for*. That toward which one strives is an *artha*, or goal. It has been stated that asceticism can be generally characterized as a means to an end. Different forms of causality were discussed that each described a different way that actions in the past result in effects in the future. This teleological understanding of action participates in the general Buddhist idea that all intentional actions (*karma*) have a result (*vipāka*) that is colored by the quality of the previous action. Good deeds lead to good results, and bad deeds lead to bad results. Discipline is designed to restrict bad deeds (and results) and promote good deeds (and results). In addition to their effect on the doer, actions also have effects on other people, and this was recognized in the *vinaya* texts. The goals articulated by the Buddha expand understanding of action and result to include results of actions on others, both within the monastic community and in relation to wider society. Thus the personal

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220 There is also a third category of deeds that result in “indeterminate” (*avyākṛta*) results. The precise philosophical details of these categories were debated among the various Buddhist monastic orders. See, for instance, the discussion of *prāpti*-s in chapter two of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, where they are defined as “good” (*kuśala*), “bad” (*akusala*), and “neutral” (*avyākṛta*). Prahalad Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*, rev. 2nd ed. (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Center, 1975), 64ff; Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, trans. Leo M. Pruden, vol. 1 (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988–1990), 212ff.
practice of discipline becomes an ethos of a community. The communal and social aspects will come to light most prominently in Chapters Five and Six. The presence of these goals across vinaya texts lends those texts coherency rooted in the Buddha’s vision of a disciplinary ethos.

Lists of goals are found in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*, the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*, the *Mahāvastu*, and the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*. The list of ten goals in the first two texts, which are nearly identical, are the most prominent, but the presence of goals in all these texts demonstrates their importance across the entire Vinayapiṭaka. In the *Commentary on Rules for Monks* and the *Liturgy of Rule for Monks*, lists are given in the introductory portions, as a frame for the entire text. In the *Mahāvastu*, a list is given in the story of the ordination of Mahākāśyapa in relation to a specific prātimokṣa rule. In the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, a list of five goals expresses the Buddha’s motivation for interacting with his monastic community and inculcating discipline.

**The Five Goals in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks***

The *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* contains two lists, one given at the outset of the text and another embedded in an introductory narrative. The first is a list of five goals presented without a frame narrative. It is presented in prose and then reproduced, without appreciable change to the contents, in verse. This stylistic device, of content in prose and then verse, is characteristic of the Mahāsāṃghika vinaya texts, and encountered frequently in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* and the *Mahāvastu*. Here is the prose passage in full:

If a faithful son of a good family wants to obtain Five Goals, then he should adhere to this Prātimokṣa rule. What five? If a son of a good family wants to 1) establish the buddha-dharma, then he should exhaustively uphold this rule. If he wants to 2) cause the true teaching to long endure, then he should exhaustively uphold this rule. If he wants to 3) have no remorse when examined by another, then he should exhaustively uphold this rule. If he wants to 4) be relied
upon by monastics who feel fear from transgressions, then he should exhaustively uphold this rule. If he wants to 5) wander the directions unobstructed teaching others, then he should exhaustively uphold this rule."221

These goals are presented as personal—addressed to an individual son of a good family regarding upholding the prātimokṣa rules—but the goals include communal and societal others in their scope of effect. The first two goals are global goods concerned with the establishment and long endurance of the Buddha’s dharmavinaya in the world. As is frequently expressed in the Mahāvastu, the Buddha’s teachings are “for the good of the great mass of people, for the well-being of gods and humans.”222 The endurance of the dharmavinaya has already been discussed in the previous chapter, where it was a central concern of both Śāriputra and Mahākāśyapa, in relation to promulgating the vinaya rules and codifying the Buddha’s teachings, respectively. Here it is shown that personally upholding the prātimokṣa rules contributes directly to this goal, so personal discipline has an effect both on others and future generations. The first and second goals set up a horizon of concern that transcends the personal nature of the prātimokṣa rules. The same with goal five, which states that one who is disciplined is able to wander the earth freely and teach others. The ability of the monastic community to spread and grow depends on the personal adherence of each monastic to the prātimokṣa rules. By maintaining personal discipline, each monastic contributes to these collective endeavors.


222 mahato janakāyasyārthāya hitāya devānām ca manusyānām ca / Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.39.
Goals two and three concern the monastic community itself and its communal functioning. Although not stated explicitly, these two goals refer to the practice of confession in preparation for the fortnightly Poṣadha Ceremony, during which all local monastic communities reaffirm their adherence to the Prātimokṣa and their purity regarding transgressions. Those who adhere to the Prātimokṣa—that is, maintain the habit of restraint of the Prātimokṣa—will feel no fear when the time comes to confess transgressions, as they will be aware of the rules and confident of their purity. At the same time, the disciplined monastic can act as an upright confession partner to those who have, or fear they have, committed transgressions, because they will be confident in their knowledge of and commitment to the prātimokṣa rules. These goals place discipline within communal frameworks in which personal discipline considers the monastic other and performance of important communal ceremonies.

The Ten Goals in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*

After the list of Five Goals is presented, the narrative discussed in the previous chapter about whether to promulgate the rules all at once is given. Following this, there is another narrative involving the same two characters, Śāriputra and the Buddha. The story is that the two are out wandering the countryside when the Buddha stops at a certain place and takes a long look around. Śāriputra asks him why he has done this since a Buddha never acts without reason. The Buddha reveals that this place was the spot where a monastery belonging to the community of the Buddha Kāśyapa once existed. He points out where the central hall would

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223 T1425.22.0228.b19–0229.a15.
have been and the trail for walking meditation. Amazed by this revelation, Śāriputra requests that the Buddha sit down at this very spot so that it could be said that multiple buddhas had occupied the same place.224 Once the Buddha has taken a seat, Śāriputra asks him in the same formal manner as before an important question about vinaya. He asks, “With how many goals in mind do buddhas promulgate the Prātimokṣa and training instructions?”225 The question here, like the previous dialog between Śāriputra and the Buddha, asks about all buddhas, not just the Buddha Śākyamuni specifically. The Buddha replies, “All buddhas take into account Ten Goals in their promulgation of the Prātimokṣa and training instructions.”226 This small detail, that the discussion is about buddhas in general, once again places this discussion within a framework of paradigmatic truth and dharmatā. The Buddha Śākyamuni goes on to list the Ten Goals, first in prose and then in verse:

1. For the attraction of the monastic community,227
2. for the excellence of the monastic community,228
3. for the peace of mind of the monastic community,229
4. to subdue non-remorseful persons,230
5. to allow those with remorse to abide in tranquility.231

224 The same narrative frame is used in the Mahāvastu, where it introduces the story of Ghaṭikāra and Jyotipāla during the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa. Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.371–319; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.265–267.


226 T1425.22.0228.c22–23: 有十事利益故. 諸佛如來為諸弟子制戒立說波羅提木叉法.

227 一者攝僧故.

228 二者極攝僧故. The term 極攝 is not found in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. The translation is based on the Sanskrit parallel.

229 三者令僧安樂故.

230 四者折伏無羞人故.

231 五者有慚愧人得安隱住故.
6. to create faith in the faithless,
7. to increase the faith of the faithful,
8. to obtain the destruction of presently existing defilements,
9. to prevent the emergence of defilements in the future,
10. to cause the true dharma to endure for a long time and
to show gods and humans the door to the deathless.

With these Ten Goals in mind the buddhas promulgate the Prātimokṣa and training instructions.

The same list is then given in verse without appreciable difference in content. Since these
Ten Goals are nearly identical to the Ten Goals of the Liturgy of Rules for Monks, discussion of
them is delayed until those are presently introduced.

The Ten Goals in the Liturgy of Rules for Monks

In the Liturgy of Rules for Monks, a list of Ten Goals forms part of the introduction to the
recitation of the Prātimokṣa. The presence of this list in the Liturgy is significant because this
text would have been well-known to all monastics since they would hear it bi-monthly. As in

232 六者不信者令得信故.
233 七者已信者増益信故.
234 八者於現法中得漏盡故.
235 九者未生諸漏令不生故.
236 十者正法得久住.
237 爲諸天人開甘露施門故
238 T1425.22.0228.c24–0229.a01.
239 A more in-depth examination of the versified lists is warranted, but outside the scope of the present study,
which is concerned only with the content of the Chinese Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya, not the specific practices of
Chinese translation.
the Commentary on the Rules for Monks, the list introduces and frames the rules in a global sense, and places the rules in the context of all buddhas. The text states:  

With Ten Goals in mind the Tathāgatas, Arhans, Perfect Buddhas promulgate the rules of training for disciples and lay down the Prātimokṣa Sūtra. What ten?

1. For the attraction of the monastic community,
2. for the excellence of the monastic community,
3. for the restraint of non-remorseful persons,
4. for the comfortable living of tender monks,
5. to produce faith in the faithless,
6. to increase the faith of the faithful,
7. to destroy presently existing defilements,
8. to prevent the emergence of defilements in the future,
9. to cause the teaching, as it is, to endure for a long time, and
10. to ensure it is widely spread and propagated among gods and men.

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240 Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtraṃ, 5–6. This list of ten, translated by the author, differs from the list of eight given in Prebish’s translation. He states, “No matter how they are arranged, the list contains only eight members.” Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 118, fn. 13. Prebish takes what the author translates as nine and ten as general statements about the entire list. However, comparison with the Chinese list of ten and other such lists (the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka lists were consulted) strongly suggests the current arrangement of ten, not eight, which also agrees with Tatia’s numbering. The disagreement points to the necessity for a new definitive edition and translation of The Liturgy of Rules for Monks (Prebish based his translation on Pachow and Mishra’s defective edition).

241 saṃghasamgrahāya

242 saṃghasuṣṭhutāya

243 durmaṅkūnāṃ pudgalānāṃ nigrahāya

244 peśalānāṃ ca bhiksūnāṃ phāsvuihārāya

245 aprasannānāṃ prasādāya

246 prasannānāṃ ca bhūyobhāvāya

247 drṣṭadaṛmikānāṃ āśravāṇāṃ nirghātāya

248 samparāyikānāṃ āśravāṇāṃ āyatyām ananuśravaṇatāya

249 yathēmaṃ syāt prāvacanaṃ ciraśthitikāṁ

250 bāhujanyaṃ vivṛtāṃ surakṣitāṁ yāvaddevamanusyeṣu
This list is similar but not identical to the previous list of Ten Goals from the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*. The differences are minor and probably result from vagaries of transmission and translation (Table 4).

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Based on Table 4, it is apparent that the list in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* (PrVi) has an extra item: goal three. This caused goals number 10 and 11 to become a single goal, whereas in the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*, they are separate. This solution to the discrepancy is tentative because the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* does not number the individual goals, as does the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*. In his translation of the former, Prebish claims that there are only eight goals since he took goals nine and ten to be a general statement that concluded the list. Tatia, however, numbered the goals as they are listed here. Goal three of the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* is anomalous because it is basically the same as goal five on that same list, though other scenarios cannot be disqualified, such as a rule dropping off from the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*. Whatever the case, this requires further study of the Chinese translation and the manuscript of the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* (both tasks outside the scope of the present study). Since the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* is properly a Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda text, and extant in Sanskrit, it is taken as the basis for discussion.

The Ten Goals can be divided into the categories of personal, communal, and societal.

The term *communal* means the monastic community, and *societal* refers to wider society outside the monastic community.
Personal Discipline
7. to destroy presently existing defilements
8. to prevent the emergence of defilements in the future

Communal Discipline
2. for the excellence of the monastic community
3. for the restraint of non-remorseful persons
4. for the comfortable living of tender monks

Societal Discipline
1. for the attraction of the monastic community
5. to produce faith in the faithless
6. to increase the faith of the faithful
9. to cause the teaching, as it is, to endure for a long time
10. to ensure it is widely spread and propagated among gods and men

The goals are now discussed according to these categories.

Personal Goals: Elimination of the Defilements

The two personal goals are straightforward. They refer to the ultimate goal of the elimination of defilements that characterize human existence. Those defilements are here called āsrava, a term frequently used in this respect. Āsrava, or outflow, refers to the way in

251 dṛṣṭadhārmikāṁ āśravāṇām nirghātāya
252 samparāyikāṁ āśravāṇām āyatāṁ ananuśravanatāya
253 saṃghasusṭhitāya
254 durmaṅkūnāṁ pudgalānāṁ nigrahāya
255 peśalānāṁ ca bhikṣunāṁ phāsuvihāryā
256 saṃghasamgrahāya
257 aprasannānāṁ prasādāya
258 prasannānāṁ ca bhūyobhāvāya
259 yathemaṁ syāt prāvacanam cirasthitikam
260 bāhujanyoṁ vivrtom suprakāśitam yāvaddevamanusyeṣu
which the defilements cause harmful states of mind that lead to evil actions. The presence or absence of the āsravas in a human subject defines the division between the two states of with defilements (sa-āsrava) and without defilements (anāsrava). Beings with defilements are mundane (laukika, literally of this world), which is commonly expressed by the phrase “sullied by this world” (lokena upalipta). Beings without defilements (an-āsrava) are supramundane (lokottara, literally above this world) and are described as “unsullied by the world” (lokena anupalipta). The Buddha is the preeminent example of an undefiled, supramundane being, and he is often placed in a separate and unique category, but all humans have the capability of becoming thus. The rules of training have the goal of bringing about this self-transformation.

Communal Goals: Living Well Together

The monastic community is the concern of goals two, three, and four. These goals are about monastic community members living well together. Goal two states that the rules of training are meant to bring about the excellence (suṣṭhutā) of the monastic community. This is a difficult word to translate, and the English term excellence, though an adequate translation of the word itself, does not capture its full sense. Unfortunately, there is no explanation of this term in extant Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda vinaya texts. However, the term is shared with lists of goals from the vinaya texts of other monastic orders, where the term is explained. From them, it is possible to get a better sense of the implications of the term. Although this requires

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261 This phrase and its opposite (or slight variations thereon) appear throughout the vinaya texts, such as the Mahāvastu—Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.34 and 1.176—and in the Liturgy of Rules for Monks, Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtraṃ, 4.
the consultation of texts from another monastic order, it at least advances understanding of this important term and others to follow. In the Theravāda Commentary on the Rules for Monks, the same goal is expressed as item one in a list of ten: *saṃghasuttaṭṭhutāya*. The term is not explained in that text itself, but Buddhaghosa, in his commentary *Samantapāsādikā*, provides this explanation of the term:

> Like the common phrase “Excellent, Lord,” [said to one’s superior], the phrase “Excellent, Sir” [said to another monastic] is a statement of agreement. And since whosoever agrees with the speech of the Tathāgata will gain well-being and happiness for a long time, therefore, one should think, “I will make my agreement known to the community with the words ‘Excellent, Sir.’” In this way, in order to show the peril of non-agreement and the benefit of agreement, so that one doesn’t think “I will overcome him by force,” [the Buddha] made clear “it is for the excellence of the monastic community.”

The quality of excellence on the part of the community is an expression of agreement between members that is based on a common assent to the words of the Buddha. One’s disciplined adherence to the Buddha’s rules is a way of living in concord with others, with a common set of sentiments and expectations. According to this explanation, the rules provide a shared

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263 Buddhaghosa lived during the reign of King Mahānāma of Sri Lanka, which would place him in the first half of the 5th century CE. He presents his commentary as a compilation and translation, into Pāli, of three preexisting commentaries in old Sinhala preserved at the Mahāvihāra monastery in Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka. Norman states, “At the beginning of the Samantapāsādikā Buddhaghosa states that he is basing his commentary upon the Mahā-āṭṭhakathā, the Mahāpaccariya and the Kurundī commentaries, and he is embodying the tradition of the elders (theravāda) in it.” K. R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hinayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 121 and 130.


265 Compare this to Durkheim’s strong statement about shared concepts and sentiments in the formation of community: “If men do not agree upon these essential ideas at any moment, if they did not have the same
framework of agreement on the terms of living well together, based on the common authoritative source of the speech of the Buddha (“Tathāgata”). Living well with others is done through the vinaya texts as the touchstone of agreement, so that communal harmony can be brought about without use of force. This agreement is something that should be expressed openly to the community, if not in words then in conformation to behavioral expectations.

Non-agreement should be approached with an attitude of peril (ādīnava), a sentiment that resonates with others already presented, such as remorse and fear regarding transgressions. This goal shows that the rules not only communicate behavioral expectations, but evoke sentiments that contribute to a sense of community and communal ethos.

The second goal related to communal harmony is comfort (phāsu), expressed directly in goal four and implied in goal three. It is implied in the latter because the two are opposites (as demonstrated below). The term phāsu or phāmsu is another difficult term whose etymology is unclear. It seems to be a Prakritic form of the classical Sanskrit term sparśa (touch), but Edgerton states that this “may be only a hyper-[Sanskritism].” The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary suggests several possible etymologies, but Edgerton finds them

conceptions of time, space, cause, number, etc., all contact between their minds would be impossible, and with that, all life together. Thus, society could not abandon the categories to the free choice of the individual without abandoning itself. ... There is a minimum of logical conformity beyond which it cannot go. For this reason, it uses all its authority upon its members to forestall such dissidences. ... The necessity with which the categories are imposed upon us is not the effect of simple habits whose yoke we can easily throw off with little effort; nor is it a physical or metaphysical necessity, since the categories change in different places and times; it is a special sort of moral necessity which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will. (Durkheim 1912, pp. 29–30)” quoted in Douglas, How Institutions Think, 12.

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266 This is one of the main points of Lincoln in his discussion of myth, which as a form of discourse, binds people into a society without force through evocation of shared sentiments.

267 Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, 2.612, s.v. “sparśa-vihāra-tā.”
unconvincing. That *phāsu* is related to ease (*sukha*) is clear from use, so the English translation of *comfort* is adequate. Buddhaghosa’s commentary on the term *saṅgha-phāsu* provides a straightforward explanation that expresses this connection to ease:

“For the comfort of the community” means in order to produce comfort for the community, [that is,] for living together communally, [that is,] for the sake of living easily – that is the meaning.

Like excellence, comfort is placed in the context of communal living. It is a way of living well together (*sahajīvita*) that makes everyone’s life easy (*sukha*). It depends, like excellence, on active participation of each monastic doing his or her part; it cannot be produced separately and individually. Buddhaghosa’s explanation of goal three builds on the notion of comfort, and helps fill out what this would mean in practice:

The restraint of individuals without remorse alone provides for the comfortable living of tender monks. For, on account of individuals with bad conduct, there is no Poṣadha Ceremony, there is no Pravāraṇā Ceremony, community actions cannot proceed, there is no concord, monks are not able to remain dedicated single-mindedly to recitation, debate, meditation, and so on. But when those of bad conduct are restrained, then these activities are not oppressed. Then tender monks can live comfortably.

As this quote shows, the ability of the community to live together comfortably depends on individuals maintaining their own discipline, not only in relation to the *Prātimokṣa*, but more importantly in relation to communal ceremonies. The communal rituals listed—the Poṣadha

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and Pravāraṇa—are important events that require active participation of the entire group. The Poṣadha Ceremony has already been explained. The Pravāraṇa Ceremony marks the end of the rainy season retreat, during which the monastic community receives vital material support from the lay society, particularly new robes to use in the coming year. If some members of the group are undisciplined, then communal rituals break down and the entire group suffers. If monastics are misbehaving within the monastery, individual pursuits such as recitation, debate, and meditation are also disrupted. When everyone adheres to discipline, the communal rituals proceed smoothly, individual practice is unobstructed, and a comfortable living situation is maintained. A comfortable living situation, in turn, makes adherence to discipline easy.

**Societal Goals: Inspiring Faith in Lay Society**

Turning to maintaining good relations with the laity, goals one, five, and six are in this category. Number one introduces the important concept of attraction (saṃgraha). This is not physical attraction, but social. It is the strength of appeal that society feels for the monastic community. The rules are meant to ensure that the monastic community appeals to society in ways that form, maintain, and increase bonds and productive relationships. For example, the monastic community wants to attract lay members to the Pravāraṇa Ceremony to provide new robes and other items of material support. The monastic community also wants to ensure that lay members trust the community with their sons and daughters, and allow them to renounce. How does it work? Stated in goals five and six, the monastic community, through its adherence

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271 See Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, 2.548, s.v. “saṃgraha” and “saṃgraha-vastu.”
to discipline, produces and increases faith in societal others. Faith is a translation of the term \textit{prasāda}, which means both a sentiment of joy and an expression of confidence. Again, Buddhaghosa provides an informative explanation:

As for “generating faith in the faithless”—when the training rules are in force, or they are known, and those intelligent people who are not faithful see monks practicing according to those rules, they—thinking, “whatever in this world infatuates, enrages, and bewilders the great masses, these recluses, sons of Śākya, are far removed from that, they dwell abstaining from all that, they do what is difficult, they do what is serious”—become faithful, just as a wrong-thinking Vedic brahman who sees a book of the \textit{Vinayapiṭaka}. Therefore it is said, “to generate faith in the faithless.”

The generation of faith depends on a correspondence between intent and action. Faith arises from lack of falsehood and hypocrisy. The lay society knows generally what monastic discipline is meant to accomplish: elimination of defilements based on greed (infatuates), hatred (enrages), and delusion (bewilders). If monastics act in ways that conform to that general notion, they inspire faith in lay society. Once they have faith, some laypeople become members of the monastic community. Then they come to know even more about the details of how a monastic should act. The sixth goal, to increase the faith of the faithful, considers this knowledge:

As for “increasing the faith of the faithful”—those gentlemen who are already faithful towards the Buddha’s dispensation, they too, when they know the training rules and see monks practicing according to them, become even more faithful, thinking, “O these noble ascetics! They protect their vows to the Discipline for their entire lives, living on a single meal [per day] and remaining celibate.” Therefore it is said, “to increase the faith of the faithful.”

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\footnote{pasannānaṃ bhīyyobhāvāyā ‘ti ye pi sāsane pasannā kulaputtā te pi sikkhāpadapaññattim vā yathā-paññattaṃ paṭipajjamāne bhikkhū vā disvā: aho ayyā dukkarakārino ye yāvajīvaṃ ekabhāttaṃ brahmacariyāṃ}
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Here, laypeople know the disciplinary habits of monastic life, such as living on a single meal per day, and seeing monastics adhere to these habits increases their faith. So, the growth of faith in lay society is based on personal discipline, showing that the latter transcends its individual basis of application.

The joyful and confident disposition expressed by faith is not an end in itself, but also the stereotypical disposition that motivates the laity to interact with the monastic community. Personal discipline is a type of performance directed toward a lay audience that attracts them to the monastic community, and induces them to support the community through service and acts of donation. Without these donations, whether it be food, clothing, or entire monasteries, the monastic community could not continue long into the future. Additionally, the monastic community had to recruit new members from among lay followers to replace previous generations that had passed away. This shows that there is a future horizon to this goal that connects to continued existence of the monastic community.

Concern for the future is expressed in the last two goals, nine and ten: to ensure that the Buddha’s dispensation long endures and is widely spread. The work of personal discipline is shown to be a form of care for others not in one’s immediate vicinity, either temporally or spatially. It ensures that the Buddha’s dispensation will provide the maximum amount of sentient beings with the benefit of its transformative power. Here, the work of discipline becomes completely other-directed. Whereas in the previous goals of discipline the personal

\[
\text{vinayasamvaram anupālentīti bhīyyo bhīyyo pasīdanti. tena vuttaṃ pasannānām bhīyyobhāvāyā 'ti. Takakusu Samantapāśādikā, 1.225.}
\]
dimension remained, even if the scope of concern expanded to include others, here it is others alone to which discipline is directed. Future monastics and lay followers do not provide ease or material support. It is not a question of living well together or material exchange. In the case of Mahākāśyapa at the First Council, to give the most extreme case, when he and the other awakened monks decided to unify the teachings through their communal recitation, they had all already reached the ultimate goal. They were assured of nirvāṇa when they passed away, never to be reborn again. Their actions were purely for the sake of future generations who they would never know.

The lists of Five and Ten Goals in the Commentary on the Rules for Monks and the Liturgy of Rules for Monks establish the importance of personal, communal, and societal dimensions of practice. The Prātimokṣa and training instructions are aimed at the individual, but their purpose considers multiple others: those within the monastic community, in the surrounding society, and distant from oneself in time and space. This widens the understanding of discipline beyond its specific legal application to a wider horizon of consideration. It also reveals the intentionality of the Buddha in the creation of the monastic community. The global nature of the goals and the intentionality of the Buddha contribute to the coherence and reasonability of discipline. It is a complete package, not a mere collection of rules. Combined with the mythical narratives examined in the previous chapter, the goals provide a way to understand discipline in its multiple aspects within an overarching rationale guided by the awakened intentionality of the Buddha.

Mahākāśyapa’s Ordination and the Goals of Discipline in the Mahāvastu
A list of goals appears only once in the *Mahāvastu*, but that single instance is significant. It occurs in a narrative between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda concerning application of the *prātimokṣa* rule that states that monastics should eat together in small groups. The rule is found in the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* at *pācattika* number forty: “in a group meal, except at the right time, there is a *pācattika* [offense].” A *pācattika* offense is a minor transgression that requires confession to be expiated. The *Mahāvastu* invokes this rule by using the key term *group meal*, and further specifies the correct size to be a group of three (or less).

The conversation between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda on this *prātimokṣa* rule arises from a breakdown in discipline, just like other occasions narrated in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* and the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*. Here is what happened according to the narrative. Ānanda was traveling the countryside with a large following of five hundred novices. He is their official teacher, meaning he oversees their training, but he is not doing a very good job of inculcating discipline. One day, these five hundred boys eat together in large groups, and this causes the defilements to take hold of their minds. Thirty of the novices take off their robes, renounce the teaching, and go into town to indulge in sexual pleasures, presumably in the local red-light district. Mahākāśyapa hears about this and goes to enforce discipline.


He goes to Ānanda, exchanges formal greetings with him, and then proceeds to interrogate him about the rule on eating in small groups. Mahākāśyapa accuses him of wrongdoing using terms that have already been introduced as central concepts. He states:

And here are you, O Venerable Ānanda, going the rounds of families with this party who have no guard on the doors of their senses, who know no moderation in food, who are ever unused to vigilance and are irresponsible. It seems to me you are like one destroying a harvest.²⁷⁷

Mahākāśyapa accuses Ānanda’s disciples of lacking the basic habits (śīla) that characterize the disciplined life of a monastic. They do not practice guarding the senses, they do not maintain moderation in food (bhodaye mātrajñātā), or practice vigilance (pūrvarāstrāparātraṃ jāgarikāyoga). The practice of moderation in food refers to the fact that monks should eat only one meal a day (also mentioned in an above quote from Buddhaghosa), and should desire only a little (alpīcchā). This practice resonates with the evolution of the defilements in the mythical narrative of cosmogenesis, which was caused by overconsumption of food. The practice of vigilance refers to the fact that monastics should remain awake (jāgarika) during the first (pūrva) and third (apara) watches of the night. Sleepiness is a manifestation of defilement, and thus an obstacle (nīvaraṇa) to the pursuit of awakening.²⁷⁸ Mahākāśyapa is using the basic disciplinary teachings of the Buddha to criticize Ānanda’s behavior as a teacher and the novices’ behavior as trainees.


²⁷⁸ See Buswell and Lopez, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 596, s.v. “nīvaraṇa.”
That critiquing another monastic was itself approved as a disciplinary practice is clearly stated in another rule in the Prātimokṣa: saṃghātiśeṣa number twelve. According to this rule, monks should not fail to criticize one another for lax practice; such criticism is desirable and appropriate as long as it is done in terms of the dharmavinaya spoken by the Buddha. This resonates with the discussion on excellence above, where it was stated that monastics should actively express their agreement with one another through “the speech of the Tathāgata” and see peril in non-agreement. The prātimokṣa rule states:

Do not, O Venerable One, being spoken to by the monks in accordance with the Dharma and in accordance with the Vinaya, concerning the moral precepts in the training included in the exposition, make yourself one who is not to be spoken to; let the Venerable One make himself one who is to be spoken to, and then the monks will speak to the Venerable One in accordance with the Dharma and in accordance with the Vinaya, concerning the training. Also let the Venerable One speak to the monks in accordance with the Dharma and in accordance with the Vinaya, concerning the training. Thus, by mutual speech and by mutual helping to eliminate faults, shall the community of the Blessed One, the Tathāgata, the Arhant, the Fully Enlightened One increase.279

According to this rule, all monks should make themselves open to critique by others, and engage in critique of others when appropriate. Critique should be done “in accordance with the Dharma and in accordance with the Vinaya, concerning the training.” This reinforces the claim made in the introduction that speech itself is a means of disciplinary training. This is precisely what Mahākāśyapa is doing. He is using the terms and concepts from the Buddha’s teachings to criticize Ānanda and his novices’ behavior. Ānanda is also doing the right thing. He

invited Mahākāśyapa to speak to him in this way, and by the end of the discussion, fully admits to his wrongdoing and commits to doing the right thing in the future.

A nearby nun named Sthūlanandā exemplifies the incorrect response to such critique. She reacts negatively to Mahākāśyapa’s critique and says nastily that he should not speak to Ānanda in that fashion. Sthūlanandā says that Ānanda is the Buddha’s cousin, and thus someone of high standing. She implies that Mahākāśyapa has no right to speak to him critically. That this is the wrong reaction to critique is shown by Mahākāśyapa’s sober response. He states, “[the] Sister here, O venerable Ānanda, spoke out of thoughtlessness and conceit.”

When Sthūlanandā remains unrepentant, she immediately dies and is “reborn in one of the great hells.” No greater punishment could be imagined.

To teach Ānanda the correct path, Mahākāśyapa asks a question about the goals of the Prātimokṣa. He says: “What, think you, were the several goals that the Buddha had in mind when he prohibited disciples from eating in a group and prescribed that they should eat in groups of three or less?” Ānanda does not know the answer and defers to Mahākāśyapa’s greater knowledge, so Mahākāśyapa explains that there were two such goals. First, “it


conduces to the protection, safeguarding and comfort of householders.” Second, “it conduces to the breaking up of cliques of wicked monks, stopping them from banding together out of defiled desires, and from causing dispute, wrangling, squabbling, quarrelling, contention, and mischief in the monastic community.”

As before, at stake here is not merely one’s personal discipline, but societal and communal discipline, respectively. Eating in small groups protects societal others in that it prevents a single household or village from having to provide an inordinate amount of food, which could lead to resentment and other negative emotions. It also prevents disagreements and fighting within the monastic community by limiting generation of defiled states of mind. The assumption is that large groups of people tend to get out of control and reinforce each other’s bad behaviors. The rule against eating in groups is given a reasonable basis that considers communal and social others. This narrative is significant because it puts all of these factors together in a single, powerful narrative that includes two of the most well-known and prominent monks of the Buddha’s early community. If even Ānanda submitted to critique and a lecture on the rules—and on a rule that could be seen as insignificant—then how much more should normal monastics hark to their teachers and strive to maintain their restraint of the Prātimokṣa. It is not only for one’s own benefit, but the benefit of the monastic community and wider society.

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285 The Chinese version of this story makes this fact even more explicit by placing the narrative during a time of famine. See T99.0302.c15: 時世飢饉乞食難得.
Five Goals in the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*

A list of five goals is also found in the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, the last of the texts examined in this chapter. The goals in this text differ from those just examined. They do not restate, either in key terms or in general meaning, the sets of goals examined to this point. However, they are introduced by the same formulaic phrase as used in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* and the *Mahāvastu*. The phrase expresses the intentionality of the Buddha (all buddhas), and describes his motivation for promulgating specific instructions.

Chapter Two of the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* contains various training instructions related to treatment of communal property and distribution of such property to different types of monks, such as resident monk and guest monk. In the first section of Chapter Two, on the distribution and care for beds (śeyyāsana) within the monastery, a list of Five Goals is given that explains why the Buddha sometimes took a tour of local monasteries. Such a tour becomes the narrative occasion that leads the Buddha to promulgate a rule of training regarding storage and maintenance of beds. The text states:

With Five Goals in mind the Tathāgatas, Arhans, Perfect Buddhas take a tour to inspect local monasteries every five days. What five?

1. To ensure that his disciples are avoiding [secular] work, living not content with such work and not committed to the joy of such work;
2. to ensure that they are avoiding [secular] conversation, living not content with such conversation and not committed to the joy of such conversation;
3. to ensure that they are avoiding sleep, living not content with sleep and not committed to the joy of sleep;
4. to bring comfort to sick monks;
5. and so that those faithful sons of good families, who have been taught about the Tathāgata and have renounced the household life for homelessness, are able to see the Tathāgata and become even more upright, joyful, and delighted.
With these Five Goals in mind the Tathāgatas, Arhans, Perfect Buddhas take a tour to inspect the monasteries every five days.  

These Five Goals are directed toward ensuring that a certain kind of discipline is upheld within the monastery. Monastics should be engaged in religious practice, not secular work; they should be engaged in conversations on the dharmavinaya, not secular topics; they should be practicing wakefulness, not sleeping; and they should be taking proper care of their sick brethren. The fifth goal is unique to the Buddha himself since he is the only one who is able to provide a vision of the Tathāgata to his monastic followers.

Although this list of Five Goals is different from previous ones, it still provides the same idea that buddhas have good reasons for promulgating the training instructions in the manner they do. Goals two and three resonate with the prior discussion related to dialog between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda, where the proper basis for conversation and wakefulness was an issue. The fourth goal, to take proper care of the sick, comes up in Chapter Five in the context of how to ensure that sick monks get enough food to eat.

The importance of this list is to show that the rhetoric of goals is found throughout the entire Vinayapiṭaka. These lists show that in the mythical imagination of the vinaya texts, the Buddha had specific intentions and motives in mind when he promulgated the various rules and

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training instructions. They have an overarching rationale that transcends the narrow scope of any one rule. They also reinforce the idea that the Buddha was a proper lawgiver, whose laws were well-intentioned and not capricious. Recall the Buddha’s strong statement to Mahākāśyapa during the latter’s ordination, that his teachings are well-grounded and reasoned. The rhetoric of goals communicates that the vinaya is the product of an awakened mind that deeply understands the mundane world of defiled human beings, and how to teach in a way that is efficacious in moving everyone toward a better future.

The mythical narrative of cosmogenesis and the promulgation of the vinaya rules, combined with the rhetoric of the goals of the monastic life, provide a basis for more detailed discussions of particular disciplinary themes in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Each of these chapters discusses an aspect of human existence in the terrestrial world that was shown to be part of its evolution. Chapter Four discusses the defilement of sexual desire and the means to remove it, and Chapter Five the ways discipline conforms to terrestrial time. Chapter Six examines human difference and the ways discipline responds to the notion of caste distinctions, a prominent feature of social life in classical India.
CHAPTER FOUR: SEXUAL DESIRE AND GUARDING THE SENSES

The defilement of sexual desire has already been introduced and discussed briefly. As a process of self-transformation, discipline is designed to remove this defilement from the monastic subject, resulting in reaching the stage of anāsrava (non-defiled) and lokottara (above the world). This state is described figuratively in a common metaphorical comparison to a lotus growing in a lotus pond. Just as a lotus, born in the mud of the pond, grows to rise above the mud and remains unsullied by it, so too a monastic, though born in the defiled world, grows to rise above it, unsullied by the defilements of sexual desire. This metaphor relies on the fact, well-known to anyone who has seen a lotus pond, that lotus leaves and petals have a property known as ultrahydrophobicity, which allows them to shed water and self-clean. This phenomenon even became known as the lotus effect in scientific literature.

It is an apt metaphor to describe the process of self-transformation inherent in discipline.

This chapter examines mythical narratives that describe the defilement of sexual desire and depict a form of interacting with the world that attempts to counter and remove it. If a lotus accomplishes this feat by its property of ultrahydrophobicity, a monastic accomplishes it through the vow of celibacy and the habit of guarding the senses (indriyasamvara). The


scientific term *phobic* can even take the metaphor one step further because in the case of the monastic, the goal of guarding the senses is to cultivate an aesthetics of fear that keeps sexual desire at bay. This is not fear in the sense of fight-or-flight, but a detached experience that seeks to unmask the deceptions of desire and see the dangers inherent in it. This aesthetic experience was already described in Chapter One, in the words of Sarabhaṅga, which are reproduced here:

> The wise man perceives the truth concerning the pleasures of the senses, that they are ill, impermanent and liable to change. Perceiving this he shuns desire as one of the things of terror, one of the things that is like to destroy him.²⁸⁹

The pleasures of the senses (*kāmaguṇa*) are described as things of terror (*mahadbhaya*), but that terror is not a base emotion. It is a cultivated aesthetic reaction based on a true perception of the world attained through *vipaśyanā*. When one sees the world as it truly is—that all things are characterized by suffering, impermanence, and change—the so-called pleasures are unmasked and seen for what they really are: nothing but handmaidens of death, the mud and muck of the world that keeps defiled humans within the cycle of recurrent death. Knowing this, the wise man—that is, the disciplined monastic—avoids them just as one would wisely avoid any obvious dangers of the world, like sticking one’s hand into fire or walking into a lion’s den. Knowing that walking into a lion’s den “is like to destroy him” does not mean one is constantly afraid of lions; it is to have a cultivated sense that correctly perceives the danger of that action. In the case of lions, the danger is obvious. In the case of sexual desire, it is not

because the normal human condition is characterized by greed and delusion. It is something that must be cultivated, and monastic discipline is a means to that end.

The way to overcome sexual desire is to unmask the world and cultivate an aesthetic sense of its true dangers. The habit of guarding the senses is one important practice to that end. It is not a practice meant to completely cut off sense perception. It is a practice of not allowing a false perception to trigger a sensual reaction. This is accomplished primarily through cultivated attention to danger and death. Things of this world that seem beautiful and attractive, such as a young women’s body, must come to be seen as dangerous.

This chapter examines how this truth and the habit of guarding the senses are presented in the mythical narratives of the Vinayapīṭaka. First to be examined is the mythical narrative that introduces the first pārājika rule, which defines the transgression of sexual intercourse. This is the most important rule in the entire Prātimokṣa. Celibacy is the foundational practice of Buddhist monasticism, without which one simply cannot be a monk or nun. The mythical narrative of the first pārājika rule shows how the evil of sexual desire first entered the early monastic community, directly connecting back to the narrative of cosmogenesis discussed in Chapter Two. Mythical narratives from the Buddha’s renunciation in the Mahāvastu and the story of the ordination of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are then examined in turn. These two narratives show the role of a perception of the dangers of sensual pleasures in the conversion that leads to ordination, in the former case, the self-ordination of the Buddha, and in the latter, ordination by the formula Come, Monk!. Finally, an additional narrative is examined that involves a non-Buddhist ascetic, demonstrating two points. First is that narratives of non-monastics can communicate lessons for monastics just the same as those
directly involving monastics and ordination. The reading practice revealed here is that stories about different types of people and from different times and places reveal paradigmatic patterns that underlie all human action and its consequences. The narrative is about a mythical figure of the distant past named Ekaśrṅga. This story, like the first narrative accompanying the first pārājika rule, is a cautionary tale of failure. It shows what can happen when an ostensibly accomplished ascetic fails to perceive the dangers of sexual desire and becomes trapped like an animal by the wiles of a woman. This demonstrates a second point, that the prātimokṣa rules—practiced as a habit of restraint of the Prātimokṣa—are necessary as an external check on behavior that works in concert with the internal habit of guarding the senses.

The First Transgression—Sexuality Enters the Monastic Community

It was well-known to every candidate for ordination that membership in the monastic community required strict, lifelong celibacy. The term used to describe monasticism as a general form of life, brahmacarya, means celibacy, and was a concept shared by other religious traditions in South Asia. The first men ordained by the Buddha (in the second part of the Mahāvastu) never had to be taught this as a condition of their ordination. For this reason, the early community did not need a formal rule against engaging in sexual intercourse. Discussed in Chapter Two, the early community was able to maintain purity without the Prātimokṣa. Eventually, however, as the Buddha foresaw, a rule would eventually become necessary. The
mythical narrative that accompanies the first pārājika rule is about the first violation of this hitherto unwritten rule by a monk named Yaśika Kalandakaputra.\(^\text{290}\)

In the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks*, which usually contains only the bare prātimokṣa rule, the association between the rule and the mythical narrative is stated explicitly, something that is done only for the four pārājika rules. This suggests that the narratives of these four rules were considered especially important. Whereas it might not matter if monastics were aware of the specific story introducing a minor rule, the mythical narratives of the four pārājika rules must have carried interpretive weight. The rule in full from the *Liturgy of Rules for Monks* is:

Whatever monk, having undertaken the proper course and training of the monks, should, not having rejected the training and revealed his weakness, engage in sexual intercourse, even so much as with an animal, this monk is pārājika, expelled [from the monastic community]; he is not to obtain dwelling together with monks.

This moral precept was prescribed by the Blessed One, with regard to the Venerable Yaśika Kalandakaputra, in Vaiśālī, in the afternoon of the twelfth day of the fifth half-month in the winter, in the fifth year after perfect enlightenment. [At that time] the shadow cast by one sitting with his face toward the north was equal to one and one half man. When this moral precept has been laid down, that which has been declared [therein] is to be conformed to. That is called Dharma and Anudharma.\(^\text{291}\)

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\(^{290}\) In the Theravāda *Vinayapiṭaka* the monk’s name is Sudinna, but the story is generally the same. See Anālayo, “The Case of Sudinna: On the Function of Vinaya Narrative, Based on a Comparative Study of the Background Narration to the First Pārājika Rule,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 19 (2012): 396–438; Achim Bayer, “A Case for Celibacy: The Sudinna Tale in the Pāli Vinaya and Its Interpretation,” (Unabridged version of the paper read at the International Conference *Buddhist Narratives and Beyond*, Bangkok, 2012), https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/bayer/bayer-2012-a-case-for-celibacy.pdf

The event of the first occasion of the transgression of celibacy in the nascent monastic community is given specificity. The exact time and place is recorded, and the identity of the first transgressor. As the Buddha predicted to Śāriputra in the story examined in Chapter Two, the evil of sexual desire would eventually enter the hitherto pure community. This happened five years after the Buddha’s awakening and self-ordination.

The story of Yaśika is recorded in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*.\(^{292}\) It goes like this. Following the conversation between the Buddha and Śāriputra on the Ten Goals of the monastic life, the two monks travel to Vaiśālī and stay there. In Vaiśālī there lives a monk named Yaśika, who has only recently left his wife and family to ordain into the monastic community. At that time, there was a famine, and it was difficult for monks to obtain food for themselves in the normal manner, by begging house to house. So Yaśika and many other monks returned to their natal homes to be fed by their families, where they would not be considered a burden (recall the statement of Mahākāśyapa that eating in small groups was meant to protect householders). While at home, Yaśika’s mother expresses her displeasure at his renunciation. She thinks him to be an object of ridicule and berates him for not living what she sees as the correct way of life, that is, being a husband to his wife, indulging in pleasures, producing a family, and ensuring the well-being of his parents in old age. This is a common argument made against renunciation and the same argument one reads multiple times in the

\(^{292}\) T1425.22.0229.a15–0231.b16. Since the Indic version of the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* is not extant, it will be necessary to rely on the Chinese translation to examine this mythical narrative.
Mahāvastu, where the Buddha’s father, King Śuddhodana, attempts to persuade his son to stay at home, father children, and continue the royal lineage (more on this below).

Yaśika resists his mother’s persuasion and sticks to his vow of celibacy. He refuses to disrobe and return to his life as a householder. His mother then shifts her tactics. She says that he does not have to give up the renunciant life, simply have sex with his former wife and produce an heir so that the family can live on without him. After this is done, he can continue to be a monk and do as he pleases. To entice and persuade him to this course of action, Yaśika’s mother has the home decorated and dresses up Yaśika’s wife in sexy finery. Yaśika finally succumbs to these temptations. He has sex with his wife, she becomes pregnant, and a son is born, much to the delight of the family. However, rumors begin to spread around town about this illicit affair, illicit because Yaśika did not disrobe prior to his sexual act. If he had disrobed first, then it would not have been a problem. The rule specifies a transgression only in the case of a monk who does not first reject the training and reveal his weakness. This caveat was added to emphasize that monastic vows, though explicitly stated to be “for as long as one lives,” were abrogated on formal disrobing. The novices of Ānanda, for example, did not break the Prātimokṣa because they explicitly disrobed before running off to town. The rumors spreading around Vaiśālī eventually get back to Yaśika. Reflecting on what he has done, he feels great shame and remorse. He feels such remorse that he becomes physically sick. He reflects:
Among the renunciant sons of the Buddha Śākyamuni, this thing [e.g. sexual intercourse while in robes] has never before been seen or heard. The Buddha’s community is for the dharma, not for non-dharma. I should now go to Śāriputra and tell him in detail what has happened.

He duly goes to Śāriputra, who is still dwelling in Vaiśālī with the Buddha, and tells him in detail all that has happened. Śāriputra listens to his story and tells him that they need to go together and tell this to the Buddha. They do so, and the Buddha, in his role as disciplinarian, rebukes him in no uncertain terms:

Yaśika, you have committed a grave error. Such a thing is unprecedented among the monastic community. You delusional fool! You are the first to commit a serious crime. Where before there was no defilement, now there is defilement. Before the Evil One [the God of Death] was always seeking to tempt monks, but did not succeed. You now are the first to allow this evil demon a way in. You have now defamed the banner of dharma and established the banner of the God of Death. You delusional fool!... It would have been better for you to place your penis in the mouth of a venomous snake, in the mouth of a mad dog, in a great fire, in burning coals, than to engage in sexual intercourse with a woman. Yaśika, have you not heard the countless ways that sexual desire has been criticized? Desire makes one drunk, desire burns up one’s wholesome roots, desire produces great suffering. The one who is learned in skillful ways praises the abandonment and elimination of desires. Why is it that you have now done this harmful act? Yaśika, this is not dharma, not vinaya, not the Buddha’s teachings. It does not lead to the long endurance of the good dharma.

In doing this act, Yaśika succumbed to the defilements and states of mind rooted in greed and delusion. The juxtaposition of sexual desires and death is clear and repeated. The God of Death, Māra, seeks to tempt monks into sexual desire. By succumbing, he raised Māra’s victory banner and defamed the banner of the Buddha. Not only has the Buddha in countless ways criticized sexual desires, he has explained that they are truly dangerous. He compares sex with

\[\text{[293 T1425.22.0229.b12–b14: 沙門釋種中. 未曾見聞有如此事. 此爲法耶爲非法耶.}
\text{我今當以此事廣白尊者舍利弗.}
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\[\text{[294 T1425.22.0229.b20–c01: 耶舍是爲大過. 比丘僧中未曾有此. 汝愚癡人最初開大罪門. 未有漏患而起漏患.}
\text{天魔波旬常求諸比丘短而不能得. 汝今初開魔徑路. 汝今便爲毀正法幢建波旬幢. 汝愚癡人.}
\text{寧以利刀割截身生. 若著毒蛇口中若狂狗口中. 若大火中若灰炭中. 不應與女人共行婬欲.}
\text{耶舍汝常不聞我無數方便呵責婬欲. 欲爲迷醉. 欲如大火燒人善根. 欲爲大患.}
\text{我常種種方便稱歎離欲斷欲度欲. 汝今云何是不善. 耶舍此非法非律非如佛教. 不可以是長養善法.}
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a woman to sticking one’s genitals in the mouth of a venomous snake or burning coals. Any sober man would see that such an action is dangerous and to be avoided. It is not that other monks were not so tempted, but they were able to keep Death at bay, recognizing him and his tricks. Yaśika acted as one drunk on desires. His mother convinced him that he was doing good, helping the family, but this was all a trick of Death. If nothing else, the dharma and vinaya are meant to reveal the true dangers of sexual desire and teach men to avoid them as they would a mad dog. It is the responsibility of each monastic to eliminate sexual desires, not only for their own personal benefit, but to ensure the long endurance of dharma.

After this rebuke, the assembled monks, who were witnesses to Yaśika’s undressing, ask the Buddha why this monk, specifically, was the first one to introduce evil into the hitherto pure monastic community. The Buddha replies with a tale of Yaśika’s past life, a jātaka story, that shows the longer causal history behind this event (an instance of delayed causality). The story connects directly to the story of cosmogenesis from Chapter Two.

It turns out, the Buddha relates, that Yaśika was in a past life the sentient being who first dipped his finger in the primordial earth, and out of desire, ate it. In that previous story, the Buddha stated, “Monks, some being who was wanton and of greedy disposition tasted this essence of earth with his finger.” This act was the trigger for evolution of sentient beings into defiled humans, which eventually caused the three evils of theft, violence, and falsehood to enter the world. As with Yaśika in this life, in his past life too it was the pleasures of the

senses (kāmaguṇa) that caused evil to appear. So, the Buddha concludes, “Just as that first being ate the earth [and introduced evil into the world], so too was Yaśika the first to commit a transgression and introduce evil into the pure monastic community.”

For five years, the monastic community was able to form a collective without desires. However, just as the Buddha predicted to Śāriputra:

Someone with a perverted mind will arise in the pure assembly. The three poisons will flourish and many transgressions will be committed, Śāriputra. At that time the lord will promulgate the rules. Just wait, Śāriputra.

Now that Yaśika has committed the first transgression, the Buddha takes on himself the new (but not unforeseen) role of lawgiver, just as King Mahāsammata, the first king, took on himself the new role “to reprove whoever among us deserves reproof, and to approve whoever deserves approval.” These connections between the story of cosmogenesis and the story of the early community are not metaphorical. Yaśika was that first sentient being to taste the primordial earth. The Buddha too is connected directly by royal bloodline to King Mahāsammata. In this way, the mythical narratives of the Mahāvastu and Commentary on the Rules for Monks reveal both delayed causality and inherent causality. They are significant as history and as revealing paradigmatic truths that transcend this world.

**The Aesthetics of Desire and Death**

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296 T1425.22.0229.c21–c22: 今日復於清淨僧中先開漏門.


The story of Yaśika also brings to attention an important means for counteracting desire. In the Buddha’s rebuke to Yaśika, he tells him that placing his penis inside a woman is equivalent to, or even worse than, placing it inside the mouth of a venomous snake or into a burning fire. Yaśika is called a delusional fool because he has not realized this fact and has not internalized it. The Buddha is clearly exacerbated by his failure to heed the many warnings and criticisms of sexual desire that his teachings have consistently set forth. “Desire makes one drunk, desire burns up one’s wholesome roots [kuśalamūla], desire produces great suffering.” This is the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, but Yaśika, who by all accounts is a conscientious monk, has not been able to internalize this as all other monks up to that point were able to do.

The startling juxtaposition of sexual desire with bodily torture is meant to associate and ultimately convert sexual desire into pain and horror, in a reflective sense. The reflective nature of this conversion—the fact that it takes place in perceptual response, rather than in the sexual organ itself—places it in the realm of aesthetics. Aesthetics names the reaction of the body to sense perceptions of objects in the world. Although based on direct perception,
aesthetic reaction is learned and cultivated. The perception of beauty in a work of art, for example, is not obvious to a child; it is the aesthete or connoisseur who has such a perception. Disciplined reactions to sense perception are of this type; they are cultivated reactions based on habitual practice. Habitual practice is important in this case because the conversion of sexual desire from pleasure to pain requires overcoming the natural (defiled) reaction. The goal of discipline is to reorient perception in ways that produce an aesthetic experience that is directed toward healthy goals. The healthy goal is the elimination of presently existing defilements (e.g., sexual desire) and prevention of defilements in the future, which are goals seven and eight, examined in the previous chapter. To produce this reorientation, the disciplinary texts use the objects of death and bodily suffering, objects to which the natural reaction is aversion, and superimpose them onto objects to which the natural reaction is sexual attraction. Returning to the Buddha’s rebuke of Yaśika, the goal indirectly expressed there is to come to see a woman’s vagina as deadly and horrific, not in a direct, emotional sense, but in an aesthetic sense of detached reflection and understanding.³⁰²

Perception and an Aesthetics of Death

Desire is the result of a perceptual process with one or more of the organs of sense: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. These five organs of sense all have the capability of incorporate another. The senses revolt against some bodies, while other bodies please them. The responses represent the corporeal substrata on which aesthetic effects are based.” Tobin Siebers, Disability Aesthetics (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010): 1.

³⁰² The obvious misogyny of this disciplinary program is not pursued here. For a detailed analysis of this, see Wilson, Charming Cadavers and Sponberg, “Attitudes toward Women.”
producing desire when they contact a sense object. This is why objects of desire (kāmaguṇa) also number five, one for each sense organ; a sixth is sometimes added to incorporate the mind and mental objects. Each of the senses is capable of producing desire, either on their own or in concert with one another. Turning back to the story of Yaśika, it is apparent that Yaśika’s mother appealed to multiple senses in her plot to lure her son into his wife’s bed. She dressed up his wife’s body, no doubt also using perfumes to appeal to his sense of smell. She decorated the house and fed him food. In the household environment, it was difficult for Yaśika to resist the cumulative effect of these assaults on his senses. It was not just the wife’s (natural) body that attracted and sexually aroused Yaśika; it was the combination of multiple means of attraction that set a seductive mood.303

In the Buddhist analysis of perception, a subject perceives an object when contact (sparśa) is made between the sense object and the sense organ. This then produces a state of consciousness of that object, called samjñā, and triggers a reaction, either attraction or aversion. For example, imagine a red ball on a table and a human standing near the table. The subject’s eyes contact the red ball, and a state of consciousness of the red ball is produced. What will the reaction be to that state of consciousness? That depends on the experiences of the subject. The quality of the state of consciousness is conditioned by the accumulated habit

303 This type of multi-object seduction is treated extensively in the Kāmasūtra and allied literature, where one is taught at length how to correctly set up one’s bedroom, wash, perfume, and adorn the body, and what food and drink to provide, all to produce sexual desire in the target individual. Daud Ali has shown that monastic literature and kāmasūtra/kāmaśāstra literature participated in a common episteme, even if they proposed radically different prescriptive practices. See Daud Ali, “Technologies of the Self: Courtly Artifice and Monastic Discipline in Early India,” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 41, no. 2 (1998): 159–184.
of past reactions. This accumulated habit is called *saṃskāra*, and is one of the fundamental attributes of an individual, according to the Buddha’s analysis. The *saṃskāra*-s are a form of habitual causal effect, examined in Chapter Two. The state of consciousness is said to be perfumed (*vāsanā*) by the *saṃskāra*-s. Perhaps as a child the subject played with that red ball over and over with his or her father, memories associated with positive emotions of love. So, the perception triggers a reaction of desire, which could be further refined as sentimental attachment to the red ball.

In the case of Yaśika, the sense object is a beautiful woman, his wife within a sensually decorated home. Yaśika has been habitually conditioned to sexual desire in this life through his continual, sexual association with his wife, and also in past lives during which he loved and married countless men and women, perhaps the same being as his current wife. It takes a powerful force to counteract this habitual conditioning. As the Buddha states on multiple occasions in the *Mahāvastu* (in slightly different formulations):

> By living together in the past and by kindness in the present, love is born as surely as the lotus in the water. By living together, by a look, or by a smile, thus is love born in man and beast. When it enters the mind and the heart becomes glad, even the intelligent man always succumbs to it, for it means that there has been acquaintance in the past. 304

Past habits of the heart are a powerful force, over which normal humans have little control.

Discipline is a means to assert control and restrain these desires. Overlaying the perception of

his wife with an awareness of death and horror is a powerful means to short-circuit this habitual conditioning, and convert the reaction away from harmful actions and toward healthy ones. The prātimokṣa rule, and the sentiments of fear and remorse associated with transgressions, provides additional tools of restraint, in case inner discipline is ineffective.

**Scenes from the Buddha’s Renunciation**

The conversion and overcoming of habitual reaction is depicted in several other narratives in the *Vinayapiṭaka*. In a scene from the Buddha’s adolescence from the *Mahāvastu*, for example, the Buddha explains the process to his father, who like Yaśika’s mother is trying to convince him to stay in the house and indulge in sensual pleasures. The Buddha’s father, King Śuddhodana, knows that his son is inclined to the renunciant life. The great seer Asita had predicted when he was just a baby that he would leave the home and become a buddha, but other soothsayers predicted that if he stayed in the home, he would become a great emperor. The latter outcome is the one desired by King Śuddhodana, even if he knows it is unlikely to happen. So, he tries, like Yaśika’s mother, to do everything in his power to entice the Buddha to stay and father children. The Buddha’s father repeatedly encourages him to indulge in pleasures of the senses and engage in orgies with his many wives and concubines. These scenes are presented several times in the *Mahāvastu*, the repetition showing their

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305 This conversion from pleasure to pain, or the opposite, is not unique to Buddhist psychology and discipline. It is the root of many psychological therapeutic techniques, including Freudian psychotherapy. Geoffrey Harpham discusses this at length in relation to just this type of conversion. See Geoffrey Harpham, *Getting it Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

importance and the paradigmatic truth to be learned from the piling up of instances of the same situation.

During one such scene, the Buddha and his father explicitly reflect on what is going on in the Buddha’s perception and bring attention to the aesthetics of death:

Then the king showed him the crowd of women. “Here is a noble sight for you, my son,” said he, “fair, faultless, loving women, with eyes bright as jewels, with full breasts, gleaming white limbs, sparkling gems, firm and fine girdles, soft, lovely and black-dyed hair, wearing bright-red mantles and cloaks, bracelets of gems and necklaces of pearls, ornaments and rings on the toes, and anklets, and playing music on the five musical instruments. Delight yourself with these, my son, and do not yearn for the religious life of a wanderer.”

Here, as in the case of Yaśika, the women who serve as objects of desire are more than simply sexually available bodies. They are decorated and dressed in the finest ornaments, appealing to a cultivated sense of beauty. They wear costly gems, have soft hair, and their anklets no doubt chime gently with the women’s delicate movements. They play music instruments, appealing to a cultivated sense of hearing. Although not mentioned here, they dwell in the finest inner apartments of the royal palace, which are themselves decorated and furnished with plush, comfortable furniture and everything that a young man could possible desire. In another section that describes the Buddha’s adolescence, the Buddha tells his assembled monks that his father constructed three sumptuous palaces for him, one for each season of the year, so that he would always be comfortable.

I was delicately, most delicately brought up, monks. And while I was being thus delicately brought up, my Śākyan father caused to be built for me three palaces, for the cold, the warm and the rainy seasons, where I might divert, enjoy and amuse myself. 308

I was delicately, most delicately brought up, monks. And while I was being delicately brought up, my Śākyan father caused to be made in those palaces gabled upper rooms, plastered inside and outside, free from draught, with close-bolted doors and well-fitting casements, fumigated with incense and embroidered with strips and braids of coloured cloth and with festoons of flowers, where I might divert, enjoy and amuse myself.

I was delicately, most delicately brought up, monks. And while I was being delicately brought up, my Śākyan father caused to be made in those upper rooms couches of gold, silver and precious stones, spread with sixteen fleecy covers, white blankets, ...that I might divert, enjoy and amuse myself.

My Śākyan father provided me with various kinds of ointment, namely aloe, sandalwood, black gum, [and so on.]

My Śākyan father provided me with a varied diet, namely rice from which the black grain had been sifted and curry of various flavours, [and so on].

My Śākyan father provided me with the means of enjoying the five varieties of sensual pleasures, namely dance, song, music, orchestra and women, that I might divert, enjoy and amuse myself.

Many types of pleasures were provided to the Bodhisattva, appealing to each of his five sense organs. They were meant to ensure that he would remain ensconced in desire and not think to leave the house for the renunciant life. Day after day, King Śuddhodana provided these

308 These three actions—krīḍa, rati, pravicāra—all have sexual overtones.

309 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.111–113. In this last passage the five sensual pleasures are enumerated in an alternate manner. sukhōra haṁ bhikṣavaḥ paramasukumāro / tasya me bhikṣavaḥ sukumārasya pitā sākya traya práśadā kārayat* hemantikaṁ griśmikaṁ vārśikaṁ mama yeva krīḍārthaṁ ratyartham paricāraṇārthaṁ // sukhōra haṁ bhikṣavaḥ paramasukumāro / tasya me bhikṣavaḥ sukumārasya paramasukumārasya bhikṣavaḥ pitā sākya tehi prāśadehi kūṭāgarāṇi kārayet* uilliptāvaliptāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni pihitavatāyanāni dhūpanadhūpitāni osaktapaṭṭāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni muktapupavākīrnāni mama eva kriḍārtham ratyartham pravicārārthaṁ // sukhōra haṁ bhikṣavaḥ paramasukumāro / tasya me bhikṣavaḥ sukumārasya paramasukumārasya bhisākṣavaḥ pitā sākya tehi prāśadehi kūṭāgarāṇi kārayet* uilliptāvaliptāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni pihitavatāyanāni dhūpanadhūpitāni osaktapaṭṭāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni muktapupavākīrnāni mama eva kriḍārtham ratyartham pravicārārthaṁ // sukhōra haṁ bhikṣavaḥ paramasukumāro / tasya me bhikṣavaḥ sukumārasya paramasukumārasya bhikṣavaḥ pitā sākya tehi prāśadehi kūṭāgarāṇi kārayet* uilliptāvaliptāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni pihitavatāyanāni dhūpanadhūpitāni osaktapaṭṭāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni muktapupavākīrnāni mama eva kriḍārtham ratyartham pravicārārthaṁ // sukhōra haṁ bhikṣavaḥ paramasukumāro / tasya me bhikṣavaḥ sukumārasya paramasukumārasya bhikṣavaḥ pitā sākya tehi prāśadehi kūṭāgarāṇi kārayet* uilliptāvaliptāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni pihitavatāyanāni dhūpanadhūpitāni osaktapaṭṭāni vātāsparśārgaṇāni muktapupavākīrnāni mama eva kriḍārtham ratyartham pravicārārthaṁ //

Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.115–116.
pleasures of so many sumptuous varieties so his son would cultivate a daily habit of indulging his desires, a habit that was articulated to him as an ethical good, as living up to a virtuous ideal of what it means to be a king. This was the same tactic used by Yaśika’s mother, who combined a sensual enticement with an ethical argument about doing the right thing and becoming a certain type of moral man.

The Buddha, unlike Yaśika, did not fall for these tricks. Due to the accumulated habit of his countless past lives, such as during his lives as Sarabhaṅga and Mahāgovinda, when he had cultivated an aversion to the pleasures of the senses, the Buddha was not prone to the normal, defiled reaction. He explains this to his father in a tone and language that is almost clinical in its detachment. He rips away the illusions of death for the king, and reader, to see:

The prince said, “Look, father, awareness of a woman may arise in a man, who would be excited, disturbed and intoxicated by it.”

The king said, “What is your awareness like?”

The prince said, “My awareness is one of aversion.”

The king said, “What is your awareness of aversion like?”

The prince said, “It is like this: the body is nothing but a machine to which we are attached. It comes and it goes; it stands and it sits; it acts and it remains still; it is an empty shell, whether strong or weak—for me all that is said about it is a lie.”

King Śuddhodana said, “My son, if you are not attracted by physical beauty, then are you at least attracted by musical performance? How do you see things?”

The prince said, “It is like this, father. The dancing and singing of women I perceive as the dance of death, with consciousness as the props and feelings as the actors producing the scenes. The

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310 The following quote is a difficult passage to translate, and is tentative in parts. The reading of machine (yantra) is from Senart’s manuscript B, whereas Senart himself printed yatra (following manuscript C), and Jones followed this reading. The reading of yantra seems to be supported by use of yantra (props) in the subsequent response. The reading of for me (māyā) replaces Senart’s printed reading of māyā (illusion). This passage, and the whole Mahāvastu, must be re-edited based on the oldest surviving manuscript, which was unknown to Senart.
three-sided stage represents the six spheres of existence in which sentient beings are reborn. There enter upon the stage craving and fond affection, and the depths of the hundred defilements. No one knows how long this dance of death has been going on, deceiving, entangling, and destroying everyone. There is no sentient being or class of sentient beings who is not beguiled and deceived in their accumulated habits [saṃskāra], and so it is even among our respected teachers. So, father, lift up your heart, for I shall end this dance of death and enter the citadel of tranquil nirvāṇa, which old age and death cannot assail." 

The Buddha describes to his father that his perception and awareness of the world differ from that of a defiled man. For a heterosexual man, the sight of beautiful, sexually available women produces excitement and intoxication. These two mental states are inimical to the disciplined life of a celibate monastic, something that even King Śuddhodana knows full well (“do not yearn for the religious life of a wanderer,” he says). However, the Buddha is well past the stage of being enticed by female beauty because of his long program of discipline that extends into the deep past. Unlike defiled humans, who are beguiled and deceived because of their accumulated habits, when the Buddha sees a beautiful woman, it produces awareness of aversion because he can see through the deception to the truth of the matter. The truth is that there is nothing to see but death, expressed by the Buddha in the metaphor of the theater. When the Buddha looks out on the world of sense pleasures, he sees it as if it were a play of puppets, with death pulling the strings. Humans are so caught up with objects of pleasure that
they cannot determine what is real and what is not. It seems natural and healthy to King Śuddhodana for a man to indulge in sexual pleasures with beautiful women. In reality, these forces are destructive and lead humans to recurrent death. When one has fully realized this—both through the Buddha’s teachings and the practice of vipaśyanā—one does not see a beautiful woman; one sees only death, which cuts off the possibility of sexual attraction. The Buddha declares his intent to unmask these actors and put an end to the dance of death by conquering the citadel of nirvāṇa. He tells his father to be happy because this is what should truly give men pleasure: renunciation and the pursuit of awakening.

Interruption of the normal, defiled perceptual process by the superimposition of an awareness of death defines the disciplined aesthetic reaction. This conversion of perception is depicted multiple times during the story of the Buddha’s adolescence. Perhaps the most well-known scene, repeated in nearly every biography of the Buddha, is the Buddha’s sudden perception of his inner chambers as a charnel ground and all his wives as dead bodies. Waking up one night, the Buddha surveys his quarters and sees the women all asleep, their arms akimbo and saliva dripping from their mouths. “And when the Bodhisattva saw them one and all lying on the floor in the harem there arose in him an awareness of the burial ground.”

This prompts him to immediately call for his horse and set off into the night to take on the robes of a renunciant and seek an end to death. As he flees into the night, he recites this verse to himself:

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Though I were to fall into hell and get poisoned food to eat, I shall not again enter this city before I have won beyond old age and death.\textsuperscript{313}

Even the last site of his natal home is superimposed with thoughts of death and bodily torture. This is the correct attitude of a monastic, to see death everywhere and to use that awareness to discipline the body and the body’s reactions to sensual pleasures.

\textbf{Mahākāśyapa’s Ordination}

The Buddha himself, being supramundane and immune to defiled desires even before his awakening, does not need this discipline in the same manner as a defiled human. His stories and speech are directed outward toward characters in the story, like his father, and the monastic audience in the frame narrative. They are further meant as a teaching for the model monastic audience outside the text, removed from the time of the Buddha, to provide a consistent vision of what it means to have disciplined perception and practice guarding the senses. In the second half of the \textit{Mahāvastu}, narratives show characters within the stories either being taught or practicing disciplined perception as a part of their ordination.

The practice of guarding the senses is taught in a straightforward, formulaic manner in the story of the ordination of Mahākāśyapa. There, the Buddha teaches this practice as part of his disciplinary training of Mahākāśyapa directly following the latter’s ordination. The Buddha states:

\begin{quote}
Therefore you must train yourself in this respect, O Kāśyapa. You will say [to yourself], “Shall I not then live with the doors of my six senses well-guarded, mindful of care, mindful of kindness, abiding in steadfastness, discerning danger, wise as to the way out, and endued with an
\end{quote}

undefiled heart? When I see an object with my eye I shall not make it an object of thought nor give attention to its details. Inasmuch as when I live unrestrained as to the faculty of sight, covetousness, discontent and several other sinful and wrong states overflow the heart, I will undertake to restrain myself from these and take care against them, and display restraint with regard to the faculty of sight.” Thus must you train yourself, O Kāśyapa. You will say, “When I hear sounds with my ears, smell scents with my nose, taste flavors with my tongue, touch tangible things with my body, and cognize mental objects with my mind, I shall abide without making them the object of thought or occupying myself with their details. Inasmuch as when I abide unrestrained as to the faculty of mind, covetousness, discontent and several other sinful and wrong states overflow the heart. I will undertake to restrain myself from these and guard the faculty of mind and abide restrained as to the faculty of mind.” Thus, O Kāśyapa, must you train yourself.

This formulaic injunction defines the practice of guarding the senses in technical language. It is meant to interrupt and prevent the perceptual process from attaching itself to objects and triggering a causal process of desire that leads to “sinful and wrong states” of “covetousness” and “discontent.” Here there is no mention of death specifically as an instrumental means for accomplishing this goal. Mahākāśyapa has no need for this instrument because he has already realized the dangers of the household life and renounced his ample wealth and wife. He voluntarily took up the life of celibacy before meeting the Buddha, with the formulaic words:

Home life is cramped, full of defilements. The life of religion is in the open air. It is not possible while dwelling in the midst of home life to live the completely bright, blameless, pure, the

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314 By skipping from sight to mind, the rest of the senses are implied in the same formulaic pattern.

315 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.51–52. tasmād iha te kāśyapa evaṃ śikṣitavyam // kim tv aham satṣu indriyeṣu guptadvāro viharisyāmi āraṇśaṃrti niedhyapanaṃrtiḥ samavasthāvihāri ādīnavadarśāvī niḥśaṇānāḥ prājñā araktena cetāsa samanvāgataḥ / so caksuṣā rūpam drṣṭvā na ca nimittagrāhi bhavisyān na cānuvyaṃjanagrāhi / yato adhikaraṇaṃ ca me caksuvindriyena asamvṛtasya viharantasya abhidhyā daurmanasya aneke pāpakāḥ akuśalā dharmāḥ cittam anuprāvensuḥ tēṣām samvarāya pratipadyāmi rakṣṣiyāmi caksuṃvindriyena samvaram āpadyāyāmi iti // evan te kāśyapa śikṣitavyam // śrotre śabāṃ drṣṭvā ghrāyitvā cānuvyaṃjanāgriḥ vijñāya na ca nimittagrāhi viharisyāmi na cānuvyaṃjanagrāhi viharārta abhidhyā daurmanasya aneke pāpakāḥ akuśalā dharmāḥ cittam anuprāvensuḥ tēṣām samvarāya pratipadyāyāmi rakṣṣiyāmi manindriyam manindriyena samvaram āpadyāyāyāmi iti // evan te kāśyapa śikṣitavyam // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.52.
entirely clean Brahma-life [brahmacarya]. Let me now then leave home and take up the homeless life of religion.\textsuperscript{316}

Mahākāśyapa did not struggle with sexual desire. He gave it up himself after correctly perceiving the fact that it was inimical to the life of religion. This did not mean, however, that he did not need to practice guarding the senses. This latter practice is, like celibacy, necessary for all monks, whether they are lustful or asexual. Everyone needs to renounce the home and everyone needs training. Even those who are extremely close to awakening due to their past lives, like Mahākāśyapa, must still go through a process of training to reach the ultimate state. That message would no doubt resonate strongly with monastic communities, among which there must have been monks and nuns of varied dispositions and tendencies. Monastic training does leave room for human difference, but it also assigns a non-negotiable set of practices, among which celibacy and guarding the senses are preeminent.

The Conversion of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana

Unlike Mahākāśyapa, the two chief disciples of the Buddha, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, did experience a conversion event associated with a perception of death that convinced them to renounce the household life and seek an awakened teacher.\textsuperscript{317} This story is told in the \textit{Mahāvastu} directly after the story of Mahākāśyapa. As a brief aside, this order is significant. Mahākāśyapa was to become the leader of the monastic community, and his story

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 3.49. \textit{saṃbādho punar oyaṃ grhāvāsa rajasāmāvāso abhyavakāśaṃ pravrajyā / tāṃ na labhyāṃ agāraṃ adhyāvāsantena ekāntasamīkhitam ekāntam anavadyāṃ pariśuddham ekāntaparyavadātaṃ brahmacaryaṃ caritum / yan nūnāhaṃ agārasyānagāriyaṃ pravrajeyat // Senart, \textit{Le Mahāvastu}, 3.50.}
\footnote{Senart, \textit{Le Mahāvastu}, 3.56–90; Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 3.56–93.}
\end{footnotesize}
is told first. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were to become the two chief disciples, and their stories come next. The order of the stories reflects the order of their importance within the monastic community. This explains why these stories are given before the (chronologically prior) ordination of the five monks at Benares. Seniority trumps strict chronology. A failure to recognize this has contributed to the erroneous conclusion that the Mahāvastu lacks an order.

The story of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana begins with brief descriptions of the setting and background of the two main characters. In two neighboring villages in Magadha, there live two brahman families, each with a son the same age. These two sons are both sent to the same Vedic school, where they meet and become best friends. One day the two young men decide to attend a local festival. At the festival, they both have a confrontation with death that changes the course of their lives. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana park their chariots on a hill overlooking the festival and take in the scene. The narrator reports that the park was full of hundreds of people, tents, and festive attractions of all types. However, when Śāriputra looks out over the hustle and bustle of the cheerful crowd, he sees nothing but death:

> For when Śāriputra saw that great crowd of people there arose in him the awareness of the impermanence of things. “In a hundred years,” thought he, “all this crowd will have ceased to exist because of their impermanence.”

Maudgalyāyana has a similar experience:

> In Maudgalyāyana, too, when he saw that crowd laughing uproariously and throwing about their wreaths of ivory, there arose the idea of a skeleton.


For both Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, their perception of the festive occasion is superimposed by images of impermanence and death. For Śāriputra, perception of the festive crowd led to a thought about how the truth (dharma) of impermanence applies to all living beings: everyone who is born will eventually die. For Maudgalyāyana, his perception of garlands of ivory and open mouths—in both cases the focus is on teeth—causes him to see nothing but frolicking skeletons. In both cases the festive scene is transformed into a spectacle of death, just like the Buddha’s perception of dancing women and his sleeping wives.

The consciousness of death in these two young men, which seems to happen spontaneously, leads to an aesthetic reaction in which they cannot take joy in the festival scene in front of their eyes. They remain standing on the fringes, unable to move forward and take part in the “fun.” This is the moment of their conversion. Their immanent rejection of the world of the festival is not, however, a rejection of human warmth and friendship. Maudgalyāyana, ever the good friend, immediately notices that Śāriputra is downcast and tries to cheer him up. Even though he sees nothing but skeletons in the scene below, he recites two verses about the pleasure and thrill of the festival, echoing the words of King Śuddhodana examined above:

Entrancing strains of lyre and notes of song issue from the crystalline bathing pool. Enchanting and sweet sounds are heard. So be in love with life; why be downcast of countenance?

This is the time for gladness, not for sorrow. It is a time for delight; so do not breed discontent. Hark to the chorus that is like to a chorus of the Apsarases, and be glad with this rejoicing throng of men.320

Although Maudgalyāyana feels the same as Śāriputra, he does not yet know this, and places his friend’s happiness above his own. He describes the sights and sounds of the festival in poetic language, comparing it to the delights of heaven. Believing that Śāriputra has a normal frame of mind, he thinks that these verses will cheer him up. However, Śāriputra is in no mood to be cheered up. Like the Buddha in response to his father quoted above, Śāriputra has seen through the deceptions of death into the truth of things:

> These are the ways of passion and wantonness. In life and its affairs what satisfaction is there either for the foolish or the wise?

> Ere long all these poor devotees who indulge in sensual pleasures will have to leave their bodies unsatisfied, and die. And their end will be ashes.

> So it is, Maudgalyāyana, that the awareness of these things delights me not, and I have no joy therein. It is profound reflection exercised in my mind that gives me joy.321

Śāriputra does not mince his words or hide his state of mind. All these happy people, indulging in the sensual pleasures of conviviality and festival, will have a common end, reduced to nothing but ashes. Śāriputra sees nothing but dead people, just as Maudgalyāyana sees nothing but frolicking skeletons. This aesthetic reaction is rooted in the awareness of death superimposed onto the perceived scene, or more accurately, an awareness of death as the true perception. Śāriputra continues with his response to Maudgalyāyana, and proposes a new goal for their lives together:

> It is time to live by dharma. For men and Kinnaras, Suras and Asuras, will, though they live, if they have coveted the joys of the senses, go to destruction unsatisfied.

321 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.60. ete viṣayasaṃroktā viṣayāś ca calācalā / bhavesu ca dravyesu ca kā ratir bālabuddhīnāṁ // acirām munisā sarve atṛptā kāmalolūpāḥ / vyastagātrā gamisyantī mṛtā bhasmaparāyanaḥ // tan me sāṁjñā na rameti maudgalyāyana na me ratī / vipulā pratimā caiva bhāvitā matiyā ratīḥ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.58.
The devas envy him who joyfully resorts to physical seclusion in the forest even at the time of his life when he could indulge in sensual excess. For the hard life he has take up is that which is lived by the gods.

The man who is equable in joys and sorrows, in prosperity and adversity, the man whom soothsayers speak well of, such a man would I, the son of Śāri, become.  

Maudgalyāyana heartily agrees and reaffirms his bond of friendship to Śāriputra:

The way desired by you seems good to me also. It would be better to die with you than to live without you.  

The two head away from the festival and immediately take up the religious life of a renunciant. Their reactions show that Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are not clinically depressed. Their awareness of death does not prevent them from feeling joy at “profound reflection” or finding a purpose in a life of renunciation. They are still mentally healthy young men who value friendship. This reiterates the point that personal discipline is practiced in community with others, not as a solitary recluse (Śāriputra’s comment thereon notwithstanding). Eventually, the two young men meet a monastic disciple of the Buddha and ordain into his monastic community.

The Habitual Cause of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana’s Conversion Experience

Why did Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana have this reaction to the festival scene? Like the Buddha, but unlike Yaśika, these two young men did not have to be taught how to perceive the truth of death in all things; it seemed to happen spontaneously. What caused this to happen,


beyond the perceptual event itself? The answer lies in the deep past, in the past lives of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. Just like the transgression of Yaśika had habitual causes (his habitual love for his wife) and a distal cause (in the story of cosmogenesis), so too did the conversion of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. In the main story, the narrator has already alerted the reader to this fact:

The two were men who had merit and the roots of goodness [kuśalamūla]; who had excellent safeguard in the service they had rendered to former perfect Buddhas, to Pratyekabuddhas and to great disciples; who has scattered the seed of true service; who had broken the bonds that tied them to rebirth and who, through their attainment of Āryan states, were for that cause and reason living in their last existence.324

It was this accumulation of past deeds that led, in the present of the text, to their disciplined perception and conversion. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are both “living in their last existence,” a technical concept that means that they will definitely reach nirvāṇa in their present lifetime. This is an example of habitual causal effect. These past deeds, carried out by the two men in life after life, accumulated to cause a single effect during their last life.

The Distal Cause, The Island of the Ogresses

The conversion event of the festival scene—the perception of death behind the illusion of festivity—also has a distal cause from the past. The Mahāvastu goes on to narrate an important past life of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana that reveals this distal cause. Like Yaśika, whose past life story revealed that he had done the same thing in a past life, the past life story of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana also reveals that they had also perceived the truth of death in

a past life. Following a pattern found throughout the Mahāvastu and other vinaya texts, after the Buddha finishes narrating the story of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana to his assembled monastic audience, the monks ask a question about why it happened in that way, as was the case in the story of Yaśika. The Buddha proceeds to tell a past life story that explains the form of causality at work.

Long ago, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were merchants who sailed the great ocean with five hundred sailors for trade. One day, their ship was wrecked in a great storm, and they washed up on a remote island. At first, they thought this to be a deserted island, certainly spelling their deaths, but on that day, a strange and wonderful sight greeted their eyes: a band of beautiful women, carrying food, blankets, and clothing. They tended to the men and brought them back to their village. None had a husband; in fact, only women lived on the island, so each man took one to be his wife. They lived a life of ease and luxury, as the women (somehow) had plentiful stocks of food and well-appointed houses, replete with all the comforts of a king. The women tell a story about how they lost their husbands to the sea, but in reality, the sailors were too ensconced in sensual pleasures to give it much thought, except for Śāriputra. He became suspicious because the women had forbidden the men from travelling to the far side of the island. One night, he sneaks out and goes there, and what he sees shocks and terrifies him:

And on his way he came within sight of a habitation of a frightful aspect in a clear space, and heard the sound of the wailing of many men.... He climbed an acacia tree and within the stronghold he saw hundreds of famished men. Their hair, nails, and beards were long, their clothes were filthy and ragged, and their skin and flesh shriveled by the hot winds. They were dark and dirty, their hair was unkempt, and they were suffering the pangs of hunger and thirst.
With their nails they were digging the ground for water. When they rose up from the ground they fell back again from weakness.

Śāriputra asks the men how they came to be in such a state, trapped within this fortress, and they reply with a familiar story. They were sailors, shipwrecked on the island, and seduced by a strange band of beautiful women. They thought themselves lucky, until one day when they realized the women were fearsome ogresses who fed on human flesh. They were rounded up and thrown into the fortress, where each day one was taken to feed their depraved appetites.

The prisoners tell Śāriputra how he and his men can escape from their impending calamity (it was too late for those inside the impenetrable fortress). On a certain night, when the moon is full, a magical horse named Keśin comes to the island to feed on uncultivated grain. After he is done eating, Keśin looks around for any humans to take back across the sea. If Śāriputra and his men can make their way to that spot, Keśin will carry them all to safety, back to their homes and families.

Śāriputra returns to the village and surreptitiously reports this to his men. They devise a plan, but even in full knowledge of the terrible truth, some decide not to leave, their addiction to sensual pleasures being so great. When the night comes, Śāriputra and his men find Keśin

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325 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.75. yathā yathā va gacchati kathā paśyati ākāśe śaraṇaṃ ca pratibhayaḥ bahūnāṃ ca puruṣānāṃ ravantānāṃ śabdam śrṇoti // so dāni puruṣānāṃ tām śabdam anurasanto paśyati ayomayaṃ nagaram tāmā-prākāraparikṣiptam // so dāni tasya nagarasya dvāram mārganto samantena pradakṣiṇikaroti na ca tām dvāram paśyati bahūnāṃ ca puruṣānāṃ ravantānāṃ śabdam śrṇoti // hā ambeti krandanti hā tātā ti krandanti hā putreti krandanti hā bhrāteti krandanti hā svaseti krandanti jambu-dvāpakāhā udānavarāho ti krandanti // so tām śabdam śrṇanto tām nagaram paryāgacchanto nagarasya uttare pārśve prākārasya anuśīṣṭam ucchat śīrivṛkṣaṃ paśyati / so dāni śīrivṛkṣaṃ abhiruhitvā nagare puruṣāśatāṁ paśyati sopavāsikānāṃ dīrghakesanakhaśaṃśrūnām pūtikhaṇḍavasanaṇānāṃ vātāpadaghatvacamāṇānāṃ kṛṣṇānāṃ malinānāṃ malinakesanānāṃ kṣutpipāsasamarpitānāṃ / nakhalīhi pāniyārthaḥ bhūmiṃ khananti prthivito utkṛṣyanti daurbalyena punardharanāṃ patanti // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.71.

326 The description of this grain recalls the grain that grew on the earth in the early days of its evolution.
and climb on his back. The ogresses, in their guise as women, make a final attempt to persuade them to stay. They make themselves a pitiable sight, holding aloft their baby children and tearfully begging the men not to abandon them. Some of the men look back and fall off the horse to their deaths. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and the bulk of the other men, hang on tight and make it across the great sea back to their homes.

The Buddha ends the story by identifying the connections between the story of the past and the story of the present, a common trope in this type of joined narration. It was he, the Buddha, who was the magical horse Keśin in that past time. Just as he saved those men in that past life, he saves them now in this one. Just as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana saw through the deceptions of the ogresses in that past life and sought a savior, so too in this life they saw past the deceptions of the festival and sought the Buddha. The Mahāvastu then repeats this story in verse, with the same plot but a different style. The repetition reinforces the point and the central meaning. Alongside previous stories of the Buddha’s adolescence, the constant repetition reveals the paradigmatic truth, embedded in different plots and with different poetic techniques, but always with the same meaning: death attempts to ensnare humans with deceptions of sensual pleasures. The wise man sees through these and realizes their dangers. The wise man seeks a savior and joins a community of like-minded men, fleeing from the household life. 

A Cautionary Tale – Ekaśrṅga and the Dangers of Ascetic Naiveté

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327 Again, the misogyny is clear and should not be ignored. However, it also needs to be explained in its role in training monks to maintain celibacy.
A final story from the *Mahāvastu* exemplifies the dangers not of the household life, but of naïve asceticism. This is a story about a famous seer from the distant past, who was widely known throughout South Asian literature because his story was part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, and other Buddhist story collections.\(^{328}\) His name was Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, or as he is called in the *Mahāvastu*, Ekaśṛṅga.

This story is told twice in the *Mahāvastu*, both times in relation to the Buddha meeting his former wife and son. This takes place after the Buddha has ordained Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, when he travels back to his natal city of Kapilavastu to convert his family. This action of returning to the natal city is something that all buddhas do. Before setting out, the Buddha Śākyamuni recalls the journey of the past Buddha Śikhin and describes it to Śāriputra in poetic language.\(^{329}\) This poetic passage echoes the idea of the Buddha as a savior and his monastic community as a refuge from the dangers of the world. The description in verse emphasizes the spreading of joy and blooming of flowers as the Buddha Śikhin traveled. Every place he visited was blessed with happiness and purity. Divine beings showered him with blossoms and played musical instruments. When the Buddha Śākyamuni proceeds on his journey, the same events happen as with the Buddha Śikhin, using the same words and poetic verses. He is repeatedly called the Leader of the World (*lokanāyaka*), an epithet that is


exemplified by his receiving the worship of divine beings, and, once he reaches Kapilavastu, the royal family and leading townspeople.\textsuperscript{330} When placed in contrast to the previous stories of death and terror, the impression is that the Buddha and his community are a source of peace and safety. No demons can bear the sight of the Buddha, a point made clear in another episode in which the Buddha expels plague-causing demons from the city of Vaiśālī by his presence.\textsuperscript{331} In this way, the Buddha is shown to be a savior and a refuge. The idea of the Buddha as a refuge is invoked during ordination and the taking of precepts, when the practitioner takes refuge in the Buddha, \textit{dharma}, and \textit{saṅgha}. The practitioner is to say three times:

\begin{quote}
I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dharma,
I take refuge in the Saṅgha.\textsuperscript{332}
\end{quote}

The act of taking refuge takes on its full meaning when placed in contrast with the stories of the terrors of the household life. The Buddha, as the verses of Sarabhaṅga declare, has found “the place where no terror is.”\textsuperscript{333} He has, as the Buddha predicted to his father, conquered “the citadel of tranquil nirvāṇa, which old age and death cannot assail.”\textsuperscript{334} These two contrasting ideas—the dangers of sensual pleasures and the tranquil refuge offered by the Buddha—go hand-in-hand as “problem” and “solution.”


\textsuperscript{334} \textit{samathanirvānapuram...yatra jārāmaraṇaṃ nākrāmanti} / Senart, \textit{Le Mahāvastu}, 2.149.
After his joyful and beautiful journey, the Buddha and his retinue reach Kapilavastu, and Śuddhodana invites his son for a meal at his house, where his former wife and son are also present. The Buddha thus finds himself in the same situation as Yaśika, and the actions of Yaśodharā follow the same pattern. Yaśodharā wants her husband back, or at least wants his blessing for Rāhula to become king. Rāhula has never met his father because the Buddha left the house while Yaśodharā was still pregnant. Yaśodharā makes fine and tasty food for her former husband. She gives some to Rāhula and sends him to “ask for his father’s wealth,” thinking that now the Buddha would bestow his inheritance on Rāhula and signal his rightful place as crown prince.\(^{335}\) The Buddha responds to Rāhula that he should leave home. Only then will he receive his father’s wealth (that is, the dharma and vinaya). Yaśodharā is dismayed, and she tries another tactic:

> Yaśodharā decked herself out in all her finery, went to the Exalted One and asked him, “How can our noble son go out into the homeless life? Is it not possible for the Exalted One to make him change his mind?”\(^{336}\)

The Buddha is unmoved and ignores Yaśodharā’s request. He finishes his meal, delights his family with a teaching on dharma, and then leaves. Clearly, the Buddha is not going to fall into the same trap as Yaśika, to no one’s surprise. The reader has been told countless times that the Buddha, even before his awakening, was immune to pleasures of the senses. The occasion does, however, provide an opportunity for another past life story that contrasts with the

\(^{335}\) Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.138; Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.142.

actions of the Buddha. The assembled monks, in the now familiar pattern, make a declaration after the story. They state, “Behold, Lord, how Yaśodharā sought to entice the Exalted One with sweetmeats.” The Buddha informs his monastic audience that this is not the first time such a thing has happened; it also happened in the past. However, unlike the previous pattern, where the past life story reveals how the same thing happened in the past, in this case, the past life event was different. In that past life, the Buddha, as an ascetic seer named Ekaśṛṅga, did fall victim to the enticements of sweetmeats and was lured into the household life by a beautiful woman.  

Ekaśṛṅga is a very peculiar human. His father was a powerful seer named Kāśyapa who lived in a hermitage in the Himalayas, deep in the forest. His mother was a deer, who became impregnated after she drank water in which Kāśyapa had passed some semen and then licked her genitals. Ekaśṛṅga, who was named for the fact that he had a small horn (śṛṅga) on his head (reflecting his ungulate heritage), was raised without a mother among the animals of the forest. Since he knew only one other human, his father, he had no concept of gender, and since his father was celibate, had no concept of sex. This would be his undoing.

In a nearby kingdom there lived a king without heir, but he did have a daughter named Nālinī. He decides that his daughter should marry this seer’s son named Ekaśṛṅga (the reason


338 The story of Ekaśṛṅga is called the Nālinī Jātaka. Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.143–152; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.138–147. This is the same name as in the Theravāda Jātaka collection. Francis, The Jātaka, 5.100–106.

339 This is also how his upbringing is described in the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. See van Buitenen, The Mahābhārata, 433; Goldman, The Rāmāyaṇa, 141.
for this odd choice is not explained, though it is in other versions of the story). He sends Nālinī with some other maidens to capture him, as one would a wild animal for domestication. Nālinī entices Ekaśrṅga with her beautiful, young body and sweetmeats given with her own hand:

He ate the sweetmeats and swallowed the drink. Now in the hermitage his sense of taste had been offended by the bitterness of the various fruits there, so as he ate these sweetmeats he was charmed by their exceeding sweetness of their flavor.  

Nālinī also clings to his neck, repeatedly kissing him and embracing him with her supple body.

Ekaśrṅga, not knowing what a woman is, thinks that he is just making a new friend, who has some strange habits. He allows the pleasures of these embraces to take hold. Returning to the hermitage, Ekaśrṅga no longer takes pleasure in the simple life of the hermitage or its bitter foods. Kāśyapa realizes what has happened and attempts to warn Ekaśrṅga of the dangers:

My son, those were not young seers. They were women who seduce seers and keep them from their austerity. Seers should keep them at a distance, for they are a stumbling-block to those who would live chastely. Have nothing to do with them. They are like snakes, like poisonous leaves, like charcoal pits.

The resonance of this warning to the Buddha’s teaching to Yaśika is clear. The metaphorical comparison of women to snakes and charcoal pits is the same. However, his training instruction is naïve. Kāśyapa’s means for maintaining chastity is seclusion and shunning of women, keeping them at a distance. This will ultimately fail, showing to the monastic audience


the necessity for a means that allows one to live among women but not become trapped by them. That means is guarding the senses and the restraint of the Prātimokṣa.

Ekaśṛṅga does not heed his father’s warning. When Nālinī comes back, Ekaśṛṅga happily sports with her, and she further entices him with her body and tasty food. She takes him to a place where they perform a wedding ceremony, though Ekaśṛṅga has no idea what is happening. Kāśyapa, realizing what had happened, sends Ekaśṛṅga away to the city, not wanting to violate the sacred bonds of marriage that had already been performed. This is another important difference from Buddhist discipline, which has no compunction about breaking up a marriage. In the city, Ekaśṛṅga is anointed and eventually becomes king, ruling justly over a prosperous kingdom. He has a son, anoints him to the throne, and again takes up the life of a seer in old age. On death, he is reborn among the Brahmā devas in one of the higher heavens. The Buddha concludes the story by identifying the characters as himself and Yaśodharā. “Then, too, did she allure me by decking herself out in finery, just as she did on this other occasion.”

This story has a complex moral lesson. Ekaśṛṅga was not tortured to death by ogresses after being seduced. Kāśyapa and Nālinī were not immoral individuals. Ekaśṛṅga ruled over a prosperous kingdom with his wife by his side, and no doubt ensured the safety and happiness of their subjects. The lesson about the dangers of women is put starkly by Kāśyapa, but it is not


heeded by Ekaśṛṅga. It was the way he was raised, oblivious to gender and sexuality, that set him up for failure. Kāśyapa was deferential to the customs of the household life, not wanting to abrogate the proper marriage of Ekaśṛṅga and Nālinī. Asceticism was a secondary concern, to be practiced in old age after one had produced an heir and ensured the continuance of the family. All of this represents a standard presentation of Brahmanical asceticism, in a general sense, from the Buddhist perspective. The actions of Kāśyapa and Ekaśṛṅga reflect what King Śuddhodana had hoped the Buddha would do: become a householder, produce an heir duly anointed to the throne, and only then take up the ascetic life in old age. It is not a rejection of the asceticism, but a subordination of it to the imperatives of the household life. At one point during the Buddha’s adolescence, for example, King Śuddhodana argues:

> Enough, my son, think no more of that. At present you are of tender age, in the bloom of youth. Go and perform your royal duties. You have a spacious harem of young women. With these divert, enjoy and amuse yourself, and set not your heart on leaving home to become a recluse.... I am old and advanced in years. My youth is past. Therefore wait until I am dead before you leave home.  

King Śuddhodana is not completely against the Buddha taking up the religious life, but he wants him to wait until he has completed his royal duties and become old. Patrick Olivelle points out the centrality of this compromise to the classical brahmanical formulation of the āśrama system:

> A compromise between the values of domesticity and asceticism is found in the widely shared view that ascetic modes of life are best suited for people of advanced age who have fulfilled their domestic obligations and whose natural passions have subsided. This view finds expression in the classical āśrama system, according to which a person should live as a student during his

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adolescent years, get married and live as a householder during his prime and, when his domestic obligations are fulfilled, leave the world and devote himself to ascetic pursuits.\textsuperscript{345}

The \textit{āśrama} system was a powerful ideology in classical India, and the primary opponent of the Buddhist imperative to renounce immediately, even if that meant breaking up marriages and families. Even if they both lived morally upright lives, Kāśyapa and Ekaśṛṅga still did the wrong thing. They allowed the deceptions of death to overcome their pursuit of asceticism in the forest. Although Ekaśṛṅga achieved a rare feat in being reborn among the Brahmā devas, this was still just another form of rebirth. Recall the lesson of Maudgalyāyana from Chapter Two. He saw the great joys of living as one of those gods, but even they will die and some will be reborn to the sufferings of hell. In the end, the seemingly moral choice of having children and paying one’s debts to the ancestors and gods, as the Brahmanical texts put it,\textsuperscript{346} is nothing but another trick of Death.

Returning to the story of the Buddha and Yaśodharā, the Buddha is not going to relent. When Rāhula takes hold of his robe, the Buddha indicates that he will ordain him, even at his young age (he was around seven years old). This causes an outpouring of grief and lamentation among the family, and King Śuddhodana begs the Buddha to not let Rāhula renounce so young:

\begin{quote}
And so both within and without [the palace] all was lamentation.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
When King Śuddhodana had done with weeping, he wiped his tears, went to the Exalted One, bowed at his feet, arranged his robe over one shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, held out his joined hands, and said to him, “It is enough that the Exalted One should have renounced his great universal sovereignty and left his family and gone forth from home. Well
\end{quote}


would it be, therefore, if the Exalted One should order Prince Rāhula not to go forth so that this royal family be not made extinct.\(^{347}\)

The Buddha refuses his weeping parents. He declares that Rāhula is in his final life and that “it is impossible that he should live with a wife at home.”\(^{348}\) He does what Kāśyapa should have done, and ensures that his son will in no way be seduced by the wiles of a woman and put on the throne to rule. He cares not for the continuance of his family line, even in the face of his weeping and grieving father. This imperative to renounce soon and while young is discussed in the next chapter, where the urgency of time is discussed in more detail. Here, the episode shows the cautionary lesson of the story of Ekaśṛṅga. In previous past-life stories, there was a form of delayed causality that showed how the same event happened in the past as in the present. Yaśika was seduced by pleasures because he had succumbed to them in the past. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana had a conversion experience because they had had one in the past. The story of Ekaśṛṅga, in contrast, shows the necessity of intervention to interrupt the repetition of the same (harmful) event. Ekaśṛṅga was seduced because his father did not sufficiently intervene. There was no savior around to help him as there was for Yaśika, Śāriputra, and Maudgalyāyana. Left to his own devices, secluded in the forest without means of controlling his desires, Ekaśṛṅga was susceptible to temptation. This points to the necessary

\(^{347}\) Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.251. evaṃ dāni abhyantarato vāhyato ca ekarodanaṃ vartati // rājā śuddhodano roditvā aśrūṇi parimārjayanto yena bhagavāns tenopasamārāṃ bhagavataḥ pādau vandītvā ekāsam uttarāsāmam krtvā daksinām jānumandalam prthivyām pratisthāpayitvā yena bhagavāns tenāmjaśīṃ prāṇāmayitvā bhagavantam etad avocat* // paryāptam yam bhagavām cakravartirājyam avahāya mahāntam ca ...eko abhiniśkrānto tat sādhu bhagavas rāhulakumāram anujānāhi yaṃ na pravrajisyati mā ayaṃ rājavamśo udvidhiṣayati // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.263 (ellipses in original).

role of the prātimokṣa rules and the monastic community as an external intervention and source of critique. Both provide an external means of coercion, keeping each monastic on the proper path. The habit of the restraint of the Prātimokṣa is meant to produce a feeling of fear and remorse in relation to transgression against the rules. This feeling of remorse should, as happened with Yaśika, return the monastic subject to the proper path. It is an intersubjective sentiment because the feeling of remorse is produced in concert with the necessity of confession in the monastic community. Yaśika’s remorse caused him to seek Śāriputra and confess his transgression. Fear of transgressing the rules should act as a check on one’s behavior before a transgression occurs, or at least lead to confession after the fact.

As Chapter Three discussed, the rules are meant to allow those with remorse to dwell in peace and subdue those with no remorse. The sentiment of remorse is the path back to purity, but this is only possible when the rules are present and known. For Ekaśrṅga, no such rules were known. He did not even know what sex was, let alone that it was bad. His father tried belatedly to teach him the dangers of women, but it was too late. Ekaśrṅga had no one to rely on, no refuge from the dangers of the world. As goal four from the Commentary on the Rules for Monks states, one who upholds the rules can “be relied on by monastics who feel fear from transgressions.” To feel such fear, one must know what characterizes a transgression. For monastics, these are taught during the ordination ceremony itself, when the rule against sex is clearly taught, and during the fortnightly Poṣadha ceremony, when the audience is reminded about the story of Yaśika. As the Buddha stated in seeming exasperation to Yaśika, countless times monks are taught about the dangers of desire. Sex is not something to be hidden from monastics, and the monastic community is not meant to keep monks secluded from contact.
with women. Monks will necessarily interact with women, perhaps even their former wives.\textsuperscript{349}

For those who renounce before puberty or marriage, some sort of sexual education, in a monastic mode, is part of their training. The \textit{Mahāvastu}, for its part, is full of stories about sex. Sex is not a forbidden topic, but it must be discussed in a way that emphasizes the dangers of women and sex, such as the story of the island of ogresses or the story (not retold here) about the horse salesman from Taxila, the Buddha in a past life, who almost dies at the hands of a courtesan, who was Yaśodharā in a past life.\textsuperscript{350} Constant repetition of such stories generates habitual disposition toward sex as something dangerous. Alongside the practice of guarding the senses, monastic training gives monks the tools needed to counteract sexual desires while still living in the defiled world and interacting with women.\textsuperscript{351}

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\textsuperscript{349} Shayne Clarke discusses the interaction between monastics and their families. See Clarke, \textit{Family Matters}.

\textsuperscript{350} Jones, \textit{The Mahāvastu}, 2.162–170.

\textsuperscript{351} The same is true, of course, for women in relation to men. This section discusses only men because the \textit{Mahāvastu} records stories only of monks, not nuns.
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CHAPTER FIVE: TIME

The mythical narrative of cosmogenesis from the Mahāvastu supplies the paradigmatic truths that guide an understanding of vinaya as a process of discipline. In the previous chapter, the defilement of sexual desire was examined, which was the product of the historical evolution of this world and led directly to the first transgression of Yaśika and the promulgation of the first pārājika rule against sexual intercourse. This chapter examines another aspect of the evolution of this world: time.\(^{352}\)

In the story of cosmogenesis, the Buddha made a point of stating that terrestrial time—that is, calendrical time—is not an inherent property of existence. It evolved along with the world. He states that at the beginning of the evolution of this world:

The moon and sun were not yet known in the world. Hence the forms of the stars were not known, nor the paths of the constellations, nor day and night, nor months and fortnights, nor seasons and years.\(^{353}\)


Although time existed in the sense of causality, it did not exist in the form known to humans as days and weeks, seasons and years. This chapter examines how discipline incorporates this evolved terrestrial time. Just as discipline responds and conforms to human defilements, it also responds and conforms to the way that humans experience time. Guiding this chapter is the simple yet profound question: how does one come to know the right time for acts of discipline?

The experiences and actions of life take place within time, and are themselves timed. Take the familiar action of running. Going for a run in the morning is a different experience than going for a run at night, or in the summer versus winter. The body reacts to the activity differently, and sensations associated with the experience vary. Running in the winter, one’s hands might become cold, one’s lungs might burn. Running is also a timed experience. Running for one minute is much different than running for an hour. The latter can be called harder because the body becomes tired over time. It takes more willpower to run for an hour than for a minute. The precise phenomenology of running differs for each person, but generalizations can be made that apply across individuals and groups. My experience of time is unique to me, but it is also shared with other humans like me. When I see another person getting tired from running for an hour, that experience is knowable and shareable, even in the absence of direct communication. This allows humans and groups to share generalizable experiences and create generalizable models and prescriptive formulae. So, a running coach can train another runner without inhabiting the experience or knowing it exhaustively through reports. Someone can write a book about running and trust that the reader, whom the author does not know, will understand the experience behind the words. What is true for running is true for monastic discipline. It is a practice centered on the individual, and unique to the
individual’s experience and his or her body, but since discipline is carried out in time and is timed, it is something shared.

Time and discipline relate closely. By its nature, discipline is repetitive. It is not a single action done once, but an action done repeatedly. The goal is to cultivate a habit (śīla). A habit requires repetition to keep up and maintain a practice over time. A practice considers periodicity and duration, and these are regulated by time. A practice is not just a repeated action, but a repeated action within a pattern. It is not just running many times, to take the previous example, but running every morning, and not just running every morning, but every morning for an hour. Periodicity and duration must be regulated for a practice to develop, though these can, of course, change over time. As one’s endurance increases, the duration can be extended, but again in a regulated fashion. This is what makes running a practice and a discipline. In this way, there is a distinct pattern to disciplinary time that is regular and regulating. Actions are, in a sense, choreographed to a beat. They happen at the same time and the right time.

The regularity of time lends its regularity to action, which becomes thereby recognizable as a practice. Therefore, cultivation of discipline requires methods of keeping time. If, as in Buddhist monasticism, discipline is a shared, group activity, methods of keeping time must also be shared. Disciplinary instructions in the form of imperative commands must communicate action in the context of shared time so that discipline can be regulated. A command bereft of reference to time is difficult to cultivate as a habit. Take the action of brushing the teeth. The vinaya texts prescribe this action and allow monastics to own a toothbrush, one of the few pieces of personal property allowed to a monastic. But when should one brush, how often, and
for how long? Without guidance, it is easy to get the rhythm of brushing wrong. The instruction to brush your teeth *every morning* is intelligible as a basis for cultivating habit. The action of brushing can be done at the same time and the right time. The practitioner can self-regulate, without active surveillance, regularly. Discipline relies on notions of time that are articulated in terms of periodicity and duration. These are shared and reinforced in the context of a community.

Disciplinary texts aimed at the specific but generalizable audience of monastics living in a monastery rely on notions of time shared by and reproduced within the monastery. Consequently, the reproduction of monastic time is itself an imperative taught in the disciplinary texts, ensuring that every monastery, no matter its location and local culture, could reliably recreate shared notions of time and imagine others doing the same.\(^{354}\) Beyond providing the rhythm for self-regulation, the shared production of time allows for the coordination of group activities. It might be possible to imagine individual discipline without shared notions of time, but group discipline would be impossible without it.

With this introductory framework in mind, this chapter examines the shared notions of time that underlie discipline in the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda *vinaya* texts, and specific examples of how different disciplinary practices consider shared time. This chapter connects these instructions to the goals discussed in Chapter Three. Three types of discourse are examined: liturgies of communal rituals, disciplinary instructions, and mythical narratives.

\(^{354}\) The idea that shared notions of time create imagined communities is discussed at length by Anderson. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 22-36.
Time is discussed primarily in relation to calendrical time, which is based on movements of the sun, moon, and celestial bodies. It is defined by its periodicity and repeatability within an overall linear flow of time. There are repeatable divisions of the day, week, month, and year. These forms of time are universally shared. The sun, moon, and stars exist for every person. On this basis, disciplinary instructions can be codified in impersonal instructions whose audience cannot be predicted beyond a general level of monastic. They provide a connection between the world of the text and the world of practice, demonstrating that practice within textual discourse manifests in lived experience.

**Calendrical Time**

The calendrical time of the classical Indian monastery is, like modern time, an integer-based system governed by the movement of the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies. Each day, month, and year is divided into significant phases. Day and night are divided into equal phases according to the position of the sun and stars. The month is divided according to the phases of the moon. The year is divided into months and seasons. To track time, Buddhist monasteries in classical India maintained a publicly accessible sundial and calendar. The difference is that modern time no longer depends on the movement of celestial bodies, even if it is still coordinated to it. Modern time is now atomic time, which is based on a different principle of counting than planetary movement. Atomic time makes it possible to extend shared time to the dark vacuum of deep space.

rotating institutional position was assigned the task of keeping the calendar for the community.\textsuperscript{357} In addition, all monastics were expected to know how to tell time on their own, by reading the sun and shadows in various ways.\textsuperscript{358} All of this is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

The divisions of calendrical time were taught (or at least tested) during the ordination ceremony. This inclusion is highly significant because the ordination ceremony is short, and it is understood that a considerable period of training takes place following a monastic’s ordination. In theory, the teaching of shared time could come after the ordination ceremony. However, at a certain point in the history of the ordination liturgy, several points of disciplinary training were incorporated into the liturgy itself. The most plausible explanation for this inclusion is that these points of disciplinary training were too important to be left to the initiative of the newly ordained monastics and their teachers. The Introduction briefly examined a narrative from the \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct}, in which initiates were ordained only to be left to their own devices, without any training at all. These newly ordained monks did not know how to behave, and caused problems and embarrassment for the monastic community. It is no doubt for similar reasons that key points of disciplinary instruction were included in the ordination ceremony itself.

\textsuperscript{357} The name for this institutional position is itself derived from the length of time one performs the duty: fortnight duty (pakṣa cārika) and month duty (māsa cārika).

\textsuperscript{358} As Yijing notes in his discussion of the water clock, the reading of shadows was difficult, if not impossible, during cloudy and inclement weather. For this reason, Yijing voiced his support for water clocks in Chinese monasteries. Takakusu, \textit{A Record of the Buddhist Religion}, 146.
The ordination ceremony has several sections. The first part is a series of inquiries to ensure that the candidate fulfills the requirements for ordination, such as minimum age and lack of serious illnesses. The initiate must respond verbally in the assembly of monastics to each of these inquiries. Following this inquiry, the initiate changes from lay clothes to monastic dress, and the formal motion (jñapticaturtha) for ordination is put forward for approval by the chapter of ten or five monastics. This formal motion must be passed unanimously, but in practice agreement has already been assured beforehand so there is no suspense. After the motion passes, the initiate is formally pronounced to be ordained, with all associated rights and obligations. The ceremony is not yet over. The initiate is next taught the basic points of training. This section differs slightly in detail among monastic orders, but is defined by a common set of general instructions. These general points are introduced before turning to aspects concerning time.

The instruction on keeping time comes first and is examined below. Next, the initiate is taught the Three or Four Dependencies, the basic possessions and means of livelihood appropriate to a monastic. They are called dependencies (niśraya) because a monastic should depend on only these items to survive. The Four Dependencies are 1) a robe for clothing, 2) begged alms for food, 3) the foot of a tree for shelter, and 4) putrid cow urine for medicine.

359 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 38–39 (for female novices) and 47–48 (for nuns).


361 For each of these items, a list of exceptions is given that relaxes the rule somewhat. This is a common pattern throughout the Vinayapiṭaka: a strict rule is given at the outset that is then relaxed through a series of exceptions and special circumstances. On exceptions to the Three Dependencies, see Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 38–39 & 47–48.
When a list of three is given, as in the *Vinaya for Nuns*, the third item is left out. These dependencies are the most visible markers of a monastic, and define the bounds of material existence. That the third item was omitted from the *Vinaya for Nuns* might indicate that life in the wilderness was not deemed appropriate for women, probably due to the dangers of sexual harassment and assault, which are explicitly recognized dangers found throughout the *Vinaya for Nuns*.

The initiate is then taught the *pārājika* rules, which have already been discussed extensively. Finally, the initiate is taught the Four Characteristics of a Renunciant. These convey a set of fundamental attitudes and dispositions, expressed in the *Vinaya for Nuns* in a set of three verses:

Do not return anger with anger, nor irritation with irritation;
Do not return derision with derision, nor blow with blow.

Renunciation is for she who is faithful, ordination is for she who is completely pure;
It has been proclaimed by the perfect Buddha, who verily is truth, who really knows.

Ordination, for the skilled, results in the destruction of all evil deeds;
The taming of the mind – this is the Buddha’s teaching.  

These verses address the cultivation of positive states of mind, summarized by the phrase taming the mind. This means on a basic level not succumbing to provocation and negative emotions coming from others, thus removing the harmful state of mind (*akuśalamūla*) of hatred. Positive control over the mind is the mark of skill (*kuśala*) that causes the destruction of accumulated evil deeds. This in turn is the condition for attaining advanced spiritual states.

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In total, this section of the ordination ceremony on key points of training outlines the entire scope of monastic life. Being a monastic has a material basis (the Four Dependencies) that defines one’s mode of livelihood. It involves active restraint against the defilements of human existence that are articulated in a set of binding rules (the Four pārājika). This restraint is combined with the positive cultivation of attitudes conducive to taming the mind (the Four Characteristics). Together, these represent the essence of the Buddha’s teachings to his fellow monastics, monks and nuns alike.

Instruction on keeping time must be understood in this context. It too is a fundamental aspect of being a monastic. Time is not one disciplinary instruction among others. It provides the fundamental temporal structure for understanding and carrying out disciplinary instructions. Stated above, for discipline to become habit, it must be placed within a shared temporal framework of periodicity and duration. The ordination liturgy contained in the Vinaya for Nuns (the only one extant from the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda) has only one very short sentence for the instruction on keeping time. The text instructs the ceremonial officials to “make her measure the shadow or count the stars.” The lack of detail in the text could reflect the fact that measuring shadows is a practical skill not easily put into writing. It could also indicate that during the ordination ceremony, the initiate was not taught this skill for the first time, but tested perfunctorily.

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363 atrāntare cchāyā māpayitavyā | nakṣatrāni vā gaṇayitavyāni | Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 50. The “or” is most likely intended to account for ordinations during the day or night.
To explore divisions of calendrical time more fully, it is necessary to turn to another ordination liturgy. The Mūlasarvāstivāda *Upasampadāññapti, or Liturgy of Ordination*, provides a much longer and more detailed instruction in Sanskrit. Like the *Vinaya for Nuns*, the *Liturgy of Ordination* includes the simple imperative sentence to “make him measure the shadows.” It then adds crucial details. Although it is unfortunate to rely on the ordination liturgy of another monastic order, this is a necessity of the present state of the evidence.

The procedure of the *Liturgy of Ordination* is as follows. The first instruction is about measuring the shadow of a sundial to tell the time of day. First, the initiate is taught, or reminded, that the Buddha personally instructed his monastics to use a gnomon of the correct size, one that was neither too long nor too short. The correct length is given as four finger-lengths. The length is important because a gnomon of incorrect size might give an inaccurate measurement of time. Following this, the initiate is taught the divisions of time. First, the divisions of the day and night are given. Both are separated into three parts: morning, noon, and evening for the day, and first watch, second watch, and third watch for the night. The divisions of the day are determined by the position of the sun and the reading of shadows. The various positions of the sun are, from morning until evening:

1. pre-dawn (no red sky)
2. dawn (red sky)

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364 Jinananda, *Upasampadāññapti*.

365 There were sectarian differences related to time but they are irrelevant to this general discussion. For a detailed study of one historical case (in colonial Sri Lanka), see Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 131ff.

366 *caturāṅgulamātreṇa śamkunā māpayitavyā /* Jinananda, *Upasampadāññapti*, 16.
After this, the initiate is taught the seasons (samaya), which divide the year into three parts. In the *Liturgy of Ordination*, five seasons are listed, but the last two are sub-types of the third:

1. winter (cold season)
2. summer (hot season)
3. rainy season
4. short rains
5. long rains

Each of these seasons has a specific duration counted in lunar months. The names of these lunar months are widely shared across Indian traditions, but variations do occur. The *Liturgy of Ordination* provides the following correspondences between the seasons and lunar months:

winter ........................................ four months.........mārgaśīrṣa – pusya – māgha – phālguna
summer ................................. four months.......caitra – vaiśākha – jyeṣṭha – āśāḍha
rainy season .............................. four months........srāvaṇa – bhādrapada – āśvayuja – kārttika

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367 Eight and four units refer to the length of the shadows cast by the sun, so they are longer earlier in the day and later in the evening, with zero units signifying noon.

368 *tataḥ paścāt kāla ārocayitavyah pūrvāḥ madhyānah śayānah rātryāḥ prathamo ’rdhayāmo yāmah madhyo ’rdhayāmo yāmah paścimo ’rdhayāmo yāmah anuddhato ’runah uddhato ’runah anudita āditya udita ādityah asṭabhāgadita ādityah caturbhāgadita ādityah aparinato madhyānah parinato madhyānah caturbhāgāvaśiṣṭo divaso ’ṣṭabhāgāvaśiṣṭo divasah anastāṃgata ādityah astāṃgata ādityah / anuditāni nakṣatrāny uditāni nakṣatrāṇī // Jinananda, *Upasampadājñāpī, 16.*

369 *tataḥ paścāt samayaḥ ārocayitavyah paṇca samayaḥ haimantiko graśmiko vārṣiko mṛtvārṣiko dirghavārṣika / Jinananda, *Upasampadājñāpī, 16.*
The *Liturgy of Ordination* then explains the determination of short and long rains, based on these monthly divisions. This concludes the training on time in the *Liturgy of Ordination*.

These divisions of time provide monastic life with its rhythm. They underlie the disciplinary routine of the monastery and the performance of individual and group activities. The next three sections examine this in relation to daily routine, weekly routine, and seasonal variation, with attention drawn to the ways in which disciplinary routine considers communal and societal others.

**Morning Routine**

The routine of monastic life is one of the most obvious expressions of discipline. It is therefore surprising that there is very little scholarship on the routine and schedule of monasteries in classical India. This is partly due to the paucity of evidence. Scholars have little material from the monastic orders of classical India, let alone documents that record such mundane matters as a daily schedule. It is fortunate that in the absence of evidence of schedules for specific monasteries or monastic orders (as exist in some number for monasteries in other parts of the world), there are sections of the *vinaya* texts that record duties for certain types of dependent monastics, such as novices (śramaṇera) and probates (parivāsa or

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370 *tatra haimantikaḥ catvāro māsāḥ mārgaśirṣapasyamāghādhyāṅgunāḥ graismikaḥ catvāro māsāḥ caitravaiśākhajēṣṭāḥsādāḥ vārṣika eko māsāḥ śrāvanāḥ mṛtavārṣika ekam rātrīmolinam bhādrapadasya māsasya pratipat* dirghavārsika ekarātryūnās trayo māsāḥ bhādrapadāsvayujākārtikaḥ // Jinananda, *Upasampadājñāpti*, 16.
Gregory Schopen, author of the only recent study on this topic, provides some context:

Anyone who is even vaguely interested in how a typical day was spent in the Buddhist monasteries of India must be thankful that either some Mūlasarvāstivādin monks got into serious trouble, or the redactors of their Vinaya thought they would. This is so because the closest thing we have in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya to something like a daily work schedule occurs in two sets of rules redacted to govern the behavior not of monks “in good standing” (prakṛtisthaka), but of monks who were either on probation (pārivāsika) or undergoing penance (śikṣādattaka).... But both sets of rules also contain lists of what such monks must do, and these are the lists of most immediate interest since, as has been noted elsewhere, these lists contain references to both menial chores and liturgical practices that must, it seems, be performed on a daily basis at certain times of day. They constitute, in effect, a kind of daily monastic schedule.

The same observation that Schopen makes about the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayapiṭaka is true for the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka. In *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, a daily schedule is provided for novice monks alone, not for fully ordained monks. This set of instructions is given in response to the situation already discussed in the Introduction: some monks were ordained and then not trained, and because of this, the Buddha instituted a daily routine for novices and outlined their duties to their teachers and preceptors (the instructions are identical in each case, suggesting that the novice served only one or the other). The instructions are lengthy, so the following quote is considerably abbreviated:

371 Noted above, a novice is a monk-in-training assigned to a particular preceptor and teacher. A probate is a fully ordained monastic that has been reduced to the status equivalent to a novice due to a transgression of the rules. A parivāsa has violated a rule of the saṅghātiśeṣa type and will return to full status after a set period of time. A śikṣādattaka has violated a pārājika rule and will never return to full status. For a useful summary of these types of probates, see Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 631, s.v. “parivāsa,” and 819, s.v. “śikṣādattaka.”

The co-resident novice has to get up early in the morning and knock on the door of his preceptor. The moment that permission is given the door should be carefully opened. Then, entering with first the right foot and then the left foot, he should greet him and inquire if he slept well or not.

After speaking and inquiring the small bowl for spit has to be emptied. The urine pot has to be emptied. The bench for sitting has to be prepared. If it is winter, then the coal pan should be lit.

He should give some rice porridge. After the rice porridge has been eaten, he should wash the bowl. After washing the bowl he should collect food from the quartermaster and bring [the preceptor] food. Then he has to clean the bowl and put it away.

Water for the feet should be offered. A flattish stool for the feet should be offered. The feet have to be washed. If it is hot, the feet should be bathed. If it is cold, a coal pan should be lit.

If begging has been done, then food has to be offered. After finishing the food, the bowl has to be carried away.

The monastery has to be sprinkled with water and has to be washed. From time to time cowdung has to be laid. The couch and seat have to be cleaned by beating. The book has to be brought. The pot has to be brought. After taking the indication, the novice should sit down and study.

These varied activities take place between the early morning and noon (numbers 1 through 8 in the list of divisions of the day given above). The day starts before dawn. The novice must ensure that he wakes up well before his teacher since he must take care of his own morning needs (which are not described) before attending to his teacher. He should arrive at the teacher’s dwelling at the right time, not too early and not too late. Besides the ordinary morning tasks common to all humans (using the bathroom and cleaning one’s body), the most

important task of the morning is to eat food. This is critical because all monastics are bound by
a rule that forbids eating after the noon hour. This rule is incumbent on all monastics, both
novices and fully ordained monks and nuns. It is contained in a list of basic habits (śīla) that all
monastics take on themselves as part of their ordination. The rule against eating after noon is
expressed simply as “no food at the wrong time” (vikālabhojana). It was understood that the
wrong time means after the noon hour. The quote above describes two occasions for eating.
The first is during the very early morning, and consists only of leftover rice gruel, and the
second, the more important one, is a real meal of food acquired from begging.

The rule against eating after noon sets the rhythm of the morning. All the disciplinary
tasks connected to eating must be accomplished during this limited period, such as begging for
alms, distributing food, washing bowls, and getting the mess hall ready. To meet the noon
deadline, the monastery had to begin its work early in the morning. Since eating was a
communal activity, individuals with different responsibilities had to coordinate their activities.
Those assigned to go begging had to do so. The monk assigned quartermaster duties had to be
present to distribute food, bowls, and other utensils as appropriate. Other monks assumed
responsibility for other communal tasks, such as getting the mess hall ready. Everyone had to
keep to the same schedule for the meal to be served on time. This observance was especially
important since lunch was the only proper meal of the day. This coordination of activity,

374 Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 28.
375 The term “wrong time” (vikāla) is used in relation to other rules as well. So the precise meaning of “wrong”
varies according to the rule to which it is applied.
ensuring everyone gets something to eat, is a good example of how personal discipline influenced the comfort of the community, a goal discussed in Chapter Three. If everyone keeps to the schedule, the monastic community will be able to live together in ease. If some individuals are lazy or disorganized, it will cause trouble and discomfort for everyone.

*Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* records several occasions when coordination of the morning routines does not happen, or when time runs short. As before, these failures of discipline prompt the Buddha to issue instructions. On one occasion, for example, a monk was sent to the village to bring back alms food for himself and another. While he was gone, the other monk, who remained in the monastery, “took a tooth-cleaning stick and wandered about the monastery” as he was brushing his teeth. When the other monk came back with the food, he could not find his eating partner. So, he placed the food by the door and left. By the time the other monk returned to his dwelling, someone had stolen the food, so the monk went hungry. The next day he inquires into what happened, and the two monks end up quarrelling—a very bad thing from the viewpoint of monastic discipline—and the matter is brought to the attention of the Buddha. He instructs that a monk waiting at the monastery must not get distracted and wander away; he should keep himself busy (responsibly so) and get ready for the meal. He “should brush his teeth in advance, clean his hands, filter water, fill the water pot, prepare two seats in the meditation hall of the monastery, reserve them, and wait there.”


The monk bringing the food, for his part, should not just leave it by the door unattended. Although not stated, the implication is that he should join his colleague in the mess hall, where the reserved seat is waiting. After the meal, the two monks must clean up together.

The problem between the two monks was caused by their lack of coordination. Neither technically broke a rule, but neither was attentive to the time and situation, nor were they conscious of the other. This lack of agreement recalls the communal goal of achieving excellence, which was necessary for harmony in the monastic community.

Other types of troublesome situations surrounding the eating of food before noon are also brought to attention in *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*. What if there is a conflict between bringing food to another and eating before noon? Should the monk with food go ahead and eat himself, thus depriving the person waiting back at the monastery of a meal? In these occasions, where there is no perfect solution, the text gives some guidelines to make the best of the situation:

If the noon hour is drawing near, then the monk [commissioned to obtain food] should not sit by eating. Rather he is to take the two helpings of almsfood [back to the monastery]. As he goes back to the monastery he should pay attention to the time. If he is sure he can reach it in time, then he should go back. If he thinks, “The very last moment to eat approaches. It is impossible to reach [the monastery] in time. Let us not both be without food!” Then he can [stop to] eat.378

Here, there is a conflict between oneself and another that cannot be resolved perfectly. There simply is not enough time. So, the monk with food is allowed to eat, even if it influences a

378 yadi uppakko kālo bhavati / na dāni tena bhuñjantena āśitavyam / atha kholu ubhaye piṇḍapātā niharttavyā / tena gacchantena kālo nīdyapayitvā yadi jānanti / śakyaṁ sakālena saṃbhāvayitum / gantavyāṁ gacchitvā tasya upanāmetavyam / atha paśyati upakkho kālo antāntiko na śakyaṁ sakāle saṃbhāvayitum / mā dāni ubhaye cchinnabhaktā bhaviṣyāma tena paribhuñjitavyam / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmā, 414.
communal other negatively. Better that one monk has a meal and adheres properly to the rule than both go without, or even worse, both break the rule and eat after the noon hour.

Eating at the right time requires group coordination and accurate reading of time. If one is out in the village, for example, one needs to be able to gauge how long it will take to get back, and whether one will arrive before the noon hour. One must consider seasonal variations in the length of a day. This latter consideration is expressed in relation to caring for sick monks back at the monastery. One of the goals expressed by the Buddha in *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* in relation to his tour of local monasteries was to ensure that sick monks were cared for well. This was a concern that the Buddha expresses on multiple occasions throughout the *Vinayapiṭaka*. In a fragment of the (not otherwise extant) *Commentary on the Rules for Monks*, found in Śāntideva’s seminal text *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, the Buddha reprimands a group of monks for failing to care for a monk with dysentery.\(^{379}\) He not only instructs them to care for the sick generally, but personally takes charge of caring for that sick monk himself, along with his attendant Ānanda. He gently takes off the monk’s soiled robes, washes them with Ānanda’s help, and ensures that the sick monk is made comfortable and put at ease. This shows how special attention is given to sick monks to ensure their comfort. This also applied to distribution

of food. Whereas a healthy monk might not suffer overly much from missing a meal, for a sick monk the consequences could be serious, so they merited extra consideration.

This extra consideration is expressed in the context of seasonal variation. During the summer, days are longer, whereas during the winter, they are shorter. The winter is also cold and dangerous for the sick. So, during the winter, if monastics are being fed at a layperson’s house, they must take food to the sick back at the monastery before eating themselves. Otherwise, there might not be enough time. This necessitates being somewhat rude to the layperson since they invited the monks for a meal, not just to receive takeout food. It also involves eating out of order since it is customary for the most senior monk to eat first and on down the line of seniority. However, during the winter, considerations of the sick become paramount. When the layperson asks the monks, “Please eat in order of seniority,” the monks should reply:

Not today. The Blessed One has taught us to safeguard the sick in countless teachings. How can we leave the monastery empty [when there is a sick monk waiting for us]? Time is short, so please quickly give us the food.380

During the summer and rainy seasons, there is more time. So, the monks can take the food in order of seniority according to the wishes of the layperson. In these scenarios, correct discipline needs to balance the goals of eating before the noon hour, caring for the sick, and pleasing the laity.

380 paṭipātikāya grhnatha / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 29.

381 nahi ni(tti) / bhagavatā anekaparyāyena glāno parīta kim vā ambhehi vihāraśūnyam śakyam karttum ti laghu kālo atikramati / detha yūyan ti / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 29.
Weekly Routine

The weekly routine of a monastery was regulated by the fortnightly Poṣadha Ceremony. This ceremony was held on the new and full moons. During the ceremony, gathered monastics demonstrated their purity by voicing their lack of transgression in relation to the Prātimokṣa. After the recitation of the liturgy, laypeople were invited to give gifts, and if they pleased, listen to sermons taught by resident monastics. This preaching could last all night if there was prior agreement to do so. This was called an all-nighter (*sarrvarātrika*) and recalls the monastic habit of practicing wakefulness (*jāgarika*).

The Poṣadha Ceremony was obligatory for all monastics in the local area, defined by a boundary called a *sīma*. Any monastic belonging to a community within that boundary, whether a year-round resident or guest, was obligated to attend unless sick or otherwise incapacitated. To carry out this ceremony, the monastery had to track days of the week, and all monastics had to be aware of when the designated time arrived. Although it might seem obvious when the new and full moons had arrived by simply looking at the moon, this ceremony was too important to leave to visual observation to determine the correct day. The moon might be obscured by clouds or rise low over the horizon during certain times of the year. Variation of lunar phases and solar days meant that sometimes the Poṣadha Ceremony took place on the fourteenth day and sometimes on the fifteenth day of the month, so simply counting days was not a foolproof method either. There were also optional ceremonies that could take place between the full and new moons, called an in-between Poṣadha.

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(sandhiposadha), that had to be announced in advance.\textsuperscript{383} For these reasons, an organized and communal way of tracking days of the week and the times of the Poṣadha Ceremony was developed and implemented in each monastery. As with all other rules, a failure in discipline causes the Buddha to implement a standard way of keeping time in the monastic community.

The \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct} narrates several scenarios in which a personal failure to know the correct time creates problems for the community in carrying out the Poṣadha Ceremony. This connection between personal discipline and group harmony was expressed directly in Buddhaghosa’s explanation of the monastic goal of comfort. There he said it was the failure of individual discipline that led to situations in which “there is no Poṣadha Ceremony, there is no Pravāraṇā Ceremony, community actions cannot proceed.”\textsuperscript{384} In \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct}, punctuality and its opposite tardiness is the core of the problem. Three scenarios are given that are essentially the same. In the first, the community leader \textit{(saṅghasthavira)} does not show up on time. In the second, it is the deputy leader \textit{(dvitiyasthavira)}, and in the third, it is “someone else.” These three scenarios relate to basic institutional roles within a monastery, and their responsibilities. In each case, the transgression is the same, and the subsequent instruction is consistent. The only difference is that the community and deputy leaders have additional responsibilities that do not apply to someone

\textsuperscript{383} Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 5.

\textsuperscript{384} \textit{dussīlapuggale nissāya hi uposatha tiṭṭhati pavāraṇā tiṭṭhati saṅghakammāni na ppavattanti sāmaggi na hoti} / Takakusu, \textit{Samantapāsādikā}, 225.
else. However, the responsibilities of the two leadership roles are identical, and the deputy leader is only responsible if the community leader is somehow incapacitated.

So, what happens when someone does not show up on time for the Poṣadha Ceremony? Those left to wait grow annoyed. The reaction of annoyance should be understood as a stereotypical negative reaction, not a specific reaction with content that can be differentiated from other negative reactions. It is found throughout *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* and other *vinaya* texts in relation to transgressions that have a negative effect on others, whether monastic or lay. The stereotypical reaction of annoyance leads to the imposition of disciplinary instructions by the Buddha to rectify the situation.

The gathered laypeople become annoyed because their time is being wasted. They tell the partially assembled group, “We have come here leaving aside our own work.” The sentiment communicated by this formula is easily understandable. Laypeople were expected to show up, gifts in hand, at the time appointed by the monastic community. Although the Poṣadha Ceremony was an opportunity for the laity to earn religious merit, it was still an imposition, whose costs became apparent when monastics did not fulfill their side of the bargain. The reciprocal respect expressed by showing up on time is the basis for good relations between monastics and laity. Participation in the Poṣadha Ceremony should be a pleasing experience for the laity, one that increases their bonds of affection with the monastic

385 “Annoyance” is expressed with forms of the verb *ojjhāya-/odhyāya-/avadhyāya*.

386 *te dāni ojjhāyanti / vayam yeça(va) karmmāntām cchoriya cchoriya āgatā āgacchāma / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, 16.
community. The monastic community wants the laity to want to come and give it gifts.

Punctuality goes a long way to accomplishing this goal of making the monastic community attractive (monastic goal number one discussed in Chapter Three).

The assembled monks, for their part, become annoyed because of the breakdown in discipline. They say to themselves, “The Blessed One will punish us.” The reference to the Buddha is significant within the story of the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* because the Buddha himself rebukes those monks. Outside the world of the text, “the Blessed One” stands for the authority of the *Vinayapitaka*, and the expression is related to the sentiment of fear that the rules are meant to produce. The fact that the monks are afraid of punishment is the correct sentiment to have in relation to transgressing the rules, rather than a base emotion of fear of being physically punished.

In the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, the Buddha criticizes the lax behavior of the transgressive monk and reiterates the obligation for all monks to know how to tell time and keep the schedule of the Poṣadha Ceremony. To do so reliably, he instructs them to keep a common calendar:

All monks have to know whether today is the first day of the fortnight, or the second, up to the fifteenth day. If someone asks, “Sir, what is the day today?” One should not reply, “What was the day yesterday?”

A calendar should be set up [consisting of] a strip of bamboo or reed with marks cut into it [to represent the days], and it should be hung by a thread from the door, either at the gate [of the monastery] or at the residence hall or at the kitchen. Next to that one should plant a stake in the ground [for the gnomon of the sundial].

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388 This “smart-ass” answer is not helpful.
Then the monk who is on duty for a month or on duty for a fortnight should, each day, move the pin to the next mark [in the strip of bamboo or reed]. In this way everyone will know what day it is.  

These instructions show the individual and communal responsibilities related to keeping time. Individuals had to track time, especially if they were wandering about, but in the monastery, tracking time was a collective endeavor delegated to an administrative role. This role would presumably rotate among members of the group (the way this administrative role was delegated to an individual is not discussed). The areas in which the calendar and sundial should be established were public and readily accessible. The calendar was not set up in an individual monastic’s room or behind a locked door; all monastics had access to the calendar, and an individual would be assigned the responsibility of maintaining it and keeping it updated.

The leader and deputy leader were responsible for ensuring that the whole group stayed on schedule. Part of the duty was to inform each member when the day of the Poṣadha Ceremony had arrived, and provide details of its occurrence. The instructions state that the leader should announce to each monk:

Sirs, today is the Poṣadha Ceremony of the assembly of monks, that of the fourteenth day, that of the fifteenth day, or that of a day in between. It will happen at a certain place, at the meditation hall, at the worship hall, or at the main pavilion. It will happen [when the length of a shadow cast by a man is so long], \(^{390}\) [either] after the meal or before the meal. \(^{391}\)

\(^{389}\) tena hi sarvvehi evaṃ poṣadhe pratipadyitavyām / kin ti dāṇi / evaṃ sarvvehi poṣadhe pratipadyitavyām / sarvvehi jānitavyām / kim khalv adya pakṣasya pratipadā dvitiyā yāvat paṅcadasī yadi dāṇi koci prcchati / bhante katamādyā na dāṇi vaktavyām / katamā puna hi yo bhūṣiti / avaśyaṃ vaṃśavidalikāhi vā nalaśavidalikāhi vā likhiṭvā sūtreṇa ābra(bu)ṇītavā dvārakoṣṭhake vā paṃśakte vā kalpiyakūṭikāyāṃ vā bandhitavyāṃ kilakāni khanetvā dvāre sthā(ta)vyāṃ / yo dāṇi bhavati māsacāriko vā pakṣacāriko tena ekam ekam samsārayitavyāṃ devasikāṃ yathājñāpetā katim ādya sarvvehi jānitavyām / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 17.

\(^{390}\) The bracketed phrase is left out of the direct quote, but it is part of the prior considerations that the leader had to make before he informed others, so it is implied here.
These instructions are embedded in shared conceptions of time, including counting the days of the month and measuring shadows. The reference to before or after the meal clearly indicates before or after noon, as discussed above. Each monastic had to track the time and be punctual.

If both the individual members and the community leaders kept to their responsibilities, communal ceremonies would be harmonious and good relations would be maintained with the laity.

**Seasonal Variation**

The seasons influenced the timing of discipline in several ways. As the section on morning routines shows, seasonal variations regarding the length of the day had to be considered when deciding when to bring food from a layperson’s house to sick monastics back at the monastery. If it was winter, it should be brought back right away; if summer, the food would be taken back after the meal. Instructions for how a novice should act toward a teacher, also quoted above, similarly consider the seasons. Here, variations of seasons are connected to climate and bodily comfort. If it is winter and cold, the novice should light the coal pan to keep the teacher’s feet warm; if summer and hot, the novice should bathe the teacher’s feet in cool water.

The seasonal climate also affected the ways in which group ceremonies were carried out throughout the year. During the summer, the heat often became oppressive, and so too the

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391 *kīṃ adya saṃghasya poṣadho cāturddāśiko vā pāñcadaśiko vā sandhi poṣadho vā divārātrau vā poṣadhе purodbhakтam vа paścādbhakтam vа kаti pauruṣāhī cchāyāhī kahim bhaviṣyati / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāh, 18.
cold during winter.\textsuperscript{392} In such situations, communal meetings, such as the Poṣadha Ceremony, could be abbreviated to ensure the comfort of the community. The \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct} states:

\begin{quote}
If it is too cold or too hot, if the monks are weak with age or weak due to disease, if the cells are far away from each other, if there is fear of a lion, fear of a tiger, fear of a thief, if the monks are not willing to listen in detail, then the four \textit{pārājika} rules can be recited briefly, along with the frequently verses.\textsuperscript{393} As it pleases, so it should be done.\textsuperscript{394}
\end{quote}

These regulations recognize that time affects the bodies of monks. Monks are sometimes ill, they grow old, and they experience discomfort during the seasons. Discipline must consider this. With the exception of the very ill, all monastics were obliged to attend the Poṣadha Ceremony. Forcing the group to endure a lengthy recitation in the burning heat or freezing cold does not contribute to the good of the group, even if it does conform to the rules. This would be, in effect, an extreme form of asceticism that the Buddha is said to have rejected. In the \textit{Mahāvastu}, for example, in the \textit{Dharmacakrapravartanā Sūtra (The Rolling of the Wheel of Dharma Sermon)},\textsuperscript{395} the Buddha declares that his monastic discipline is a middle path between indulgence in pleasures and mortification of the body. He repudiates the ascetic who tortures

\textsuperscript{392} Monastics wear only thin robes and often go barefoot, so \textit{cold} is relative to the tropical climate.

\textsuperscript{393} This last detail—the “frequently recited verses”—is not clear. What are the verses to which this refers? Since the present context is specifically limited to the Poṣadha Ceremony, then perhaps the introductory and/or concluding verses of the \textit{Liturgy} are meant. The same phrase—“frequently recited verses”—occurs in other instructions as well, such as on the instructions for training new ordinands in textual knowledge (Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 63 and 79). In the latter case, since the context involves the teaching of the \textit{dharma} and \textit{vinaya}, the identity of the “frequently recited verses” may be different than in the prior case.

\textsuperscript{394} \textit{yadi tāva atisītam vā ati-uṣṇam vā bhavati / bhikṣū vā jarādurbbalā vā vyādhidurbbalā vā bhavanti dūradūre vā pariveṇā bhavanti simhabhayam vā vyāgṛhabhayam vā corabhayam vā bhavati / bhikṣū vā na vistareṇa śrūtakāmā bhavanti / saṃkṣiptena catvāri pārājikā uddāsītavyaṃ / śiṣṭokaṃ abhikṣṇaśrutikāye gāthāyo ca / tato yathāsukham karttavyaṃ /} Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 15.

his body. One common form of mortification was to endure extreme heat during the summer and extreme cold during the winter.\textsuperscript{396} Contrarily, Buddhist discipline is not about pain and austerity; it is about creating a community within which asceticism is comfortable (phāsu) and easy (sukha). Recognition of when it is the right time for a short Poṣadha Ceremony shows awareness of this balance between adherence to the letter of the law and the experience of comfort.

Attention to the time of day and season was also important for the group performance of the invitation to a meal. The following instructions are given in the \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct}:

\begin{quote}
If it is winter, then one should go to the house at the right time,\textsuperscript{397} with the thought, “Do not be late.” Now if it is the hot season, then one should go to the house at the right time, when it is cool. If it is the rainy season, then one should go to the house early when it stops raining, with the thought, “Do not be late.” If someone has the thought, “It is a long time until the meal. I will go somewhere.” He should be told, “We are going to the house when the meal is ready. Do not stray far.” He shouldn’t act like Bhadrapāla did, when he was told that the laity were running late and acted irresponsibly.\textsuperscript{398} Rather, he should arrive early.\textsuperscript{399}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{396} See, for example, the descriptions of the asceticism practiced by Viśvāmitra in the Bālakhaṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa. “In the summer the ascetic kept the five fires, during the rains he lived outdoors, and in the wintertime he stood in water day and night. In this fashion he practiced the most dreadful austerities for a thousand years.” Goldman, \textit{The Rāmāyaṇa}, 244 (Sarga 62, verses 23–24).

\textsuperscript{397} The Sanskrit term is anukāla, and in the next sentence anukālya. Both terms mean generally “the appropriate time.” Karashima translates both instances as early (frühzeitig), which makes sense since monastics had to eat before noon. Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 27 (Übersetzung).

\textsuperscript{398} This translation is an interpretation of a laconic phrase. Karashima’s German translation has been followed. Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 27 (Übersetzung). Cf. Singh and Minowa, “A Critical Edition,” 124. The latter, however, interprets the mention of Bhadrapāla as a positive example.

\textsuperscript{399} yadi tāva hemanto bhavati anukālaṁ praviśitāvyaṁ / mā kālo tikrayi(m)iṣyatīti / atha dāni grīśmo kālo bhavati śītalakasangena anukālaṁ praviśitāvyaṁ // atha dāni varṣārātro kālo bhavati devāntarāyena anukālaṁ praviśitāvyaṁ / mā kālo atikramisyatīti / yadi tāva (na) saṁjñā(jja)ṁ bhavati / mahanto ca kālo bhavati kahiīci ca gantukāmo bhavati / kasyacita bhikṣusya jalpitāvyaṁ / anukāmo kulaṁ upasāṃkramisvathya yadā sajjāṁ bhaveya / tato mā paṭisaresi / na dāni tena āmantritaṁ mayā ti bhadrālakṛtyeḥi haṁhitāvyaṁ / atha khalu praṭikṛtyeva āgantāvyaṁ / Karashima, \textit{Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ}, 27.
Here, the season again plays a role in determining the right time to show up to an invitation to a meal. During winter, there was not as much time between dawn and noon as during the summer, and one had to be aware of these differences. It was important for everyone to arrive and enter as a group in a choreographed manner, in order of seniority. The details of this, such as not stepping over the utensils or jostling one another, shows the regular and regulated manner in which the group was meant to act. This coordinated performance was an external indication of monastic harmony, and made the monastic group attractive to the laity. Attractiveness is, at least here, a question of rhythm—careful coordination of the group is appealing, while a group that arrives and moves about chaotically is not. Through discipline and attentiveness to time, the monastic community demonstrates its fitness to receive gifts and patronage from the laity.

The Briefness of Life, the Rarity of a Buddha, and the Urgency of Renunciation

This chapter has thus far examined temporal divisions of day, month, and season. The final form of time is the year and the progression of years. The way that discipline conforms and responds to the progression of years is in the subjective urgency generated by attention to the length of a human life. As the mythical narratives in the Mahāvastu clarify, the length of a human life is variable. During the initial stages of the evolution of sentient beings in a terrestrial star system, the length of a life is very long and decreases over time. Discussed in Chapter Two, only when the length of a human life becomes short, and old age, sickness, and

400 Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 28.
death become apparent, does a buddha appear. This was the case in the description of the
time of the Buddha Samitāvin, where it was stated:

When the duration of men’s lives began to be limited, and old age, sickness and death became
known, the Exalted Samitāvin, the perfect Buddha, came to Jambudvīpa, and there taught men
dharma.401

In addition to the shortening of a human life over time, the stories of past buddhas in the
Mahāvastu show that the length of a human life is highly variable. In the section of the
Mahāvastu called The Fifth Stage of a Bodhisattva, several buddhas and their times are
discussed. During the time of the Buddha Nareśvara, “the span of men’s lives was then nine
thousand years.”402 During the time of the Buddha Vijaya, “the span of man’s life was twenty-
thousand years,”403 and during the time of the Buddha Puṣpadanta, “the span of man’s life was
then fifty-thousand years.”404 These are only a few examples, but the very long lengths of a
human life during these past times contrasts starkly with the length of a human life in this
world, when it is a mere hundred years, far shorter than during times in the past. So, if
monastic discipline was thought to be appropriate when a human life was fifty thousand years,
it is even more so now.

401 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.44. yadā manuṣyā parimitāyuṣkā bhavanti jarāvyādhimaraṇā ca prajñāyanti tadā
bhagavān samitāvī saśrāvakasamgho jambudvīpām āgacchati // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.52.

402 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.88. nava ca varṣasaharāṇi manujāṇa tadā abhūṣy āyuḥ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu,
1.112.

403 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.89. viṃśan narāṇa āyuḥ varṣasahasrāṇi tatkālaṃ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.113.

404 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.91. paṃcāśaṁ ca abhūṣi varṣasahasrāṇi āyuḥparimāṇam // Senart, Le Mahāvastu,
1.115.
The extreme brevity of human life, even if one’s experience of it makes it seem very long, should generate urgency for renunciation. As a quote below puts it, “the time is now” (idānīṃ). The disposition of urgency is closely connected to the argument for renunciation while one is young, rather than renunciation in old age. Discussed in the prior chapter, the Buddha decisively rejected the argument that asceticism is for the old and should be preceded by life as a householder. Cultivating this disposition of urgency toward time as a discipline is a way to conform to a shared notion of time in the monastic community.

The urgency of renunciation while young forms a prominent trope in the narratives of the Buddha’s adolescence. One day, for example, the king goes to the palace and finds his son deep in meditation while surrounded by dancing women. The king assumes that something must be wrong with his son, that perhaps he has some affliction that is causing his unnatural attitude. He asks his son whether all is well with him, or does he have some malady. The Buddha replies with a statement about the urgency of renunciation:

Yes, father, I do see affliction of this body. Disease presses upon health, and death upon life. And, father, I consider an old man as but another dead man. All the saṃskāras pass away, and the tumbling mountain stream, the things that are solid as the best iron, the cycle of the seasons, and life itself all pass away. Death comes on. Father, it is this affliction of the physical body that I see. Yes, father, I see the decay of wealth. Everything is empty, void, vain, illusive, deceptive and false. Wealth has no permanence. It is destroyed and passes from one to another.405

The Buddha goes on like this, in a dark, seemingly depressive vein, until his father cuts him off, no longer able to bear these statements from his darling child:

Enough, my son, think no more of that. At present you are of tender age, in the bloom of youth. Go and perform your royal duties. You have a spacious harem of young women. With these divert, enjoy and amuse yourself, and set not your heart on leaving home to be a recluse. 406

To teach his father, the Buddha pretends to be open to persuasion. This gives him the opportunity to demonstrate the reasonableness of his position. He tells his father that he will stay and rule the kingdom as a householder if his father promises that he will never die or lose those he loves, that no evil will ever befall the kingdom or its inhabitants, and that everyone will have perfect health and happiness forever. 407 The king cannot grant this, as everyone knows. The Buddha is proving, through the absurdity of the request, the truth of the urgency of renunciation. Everyone knows that they will become sick and die; everyone knows that it could happen tomorrow or even the next minute. But no one acts as if this were true. Instead, people act as if they will live forever, as if they will never lose loved ones or their wealth, as if happiness can last forever. This is another deception of death. Once one knows the truth about death, the urgency of renunciation becomes a reasonable conclusion. The position of the householder comes to be seen as irrational, as the Buddha expresses in his absurd conditions to accept his father’s pleas.

After these conversations with his father, the Buddha retires to his chambers and prepares to leave the house. He will not wait even another night. He sends for his attendant,


407 Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.146; Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.141.
Chandaka, a loyal friend, and asks for his horse. Chandaka, surprised by his master’s request for a horse so late at night, replies with a version of the same argument as above:

O prince, it is now midnight. What need of a horse is there at such a time? Thou hast a mansion like the abode of Kuvera. So be happy in it. Why dost thou call for a horse? Thou hast a harem of women as fair as the Apsarases. Be happy in it. Why dost thou call for a horse?\(^{408}\)

The Buddha responds with a simple but powerful line: “Chandaka, now is the time I need a horse.”\(^{409}\) There can be no more waiting, not even until the next morning. Chandaka’s relaxed attitude reflects his misunderstanding of the world. The mansion and harem of women described by Chandaka, and the Buddha’s father before him, are not pleasurable and peaceful resting places. The palace is an abode of death. This trope of entrapment and confinement versus the freedom of renunciation is a common refrain in the stories of renunciation, as already discussed. One cannot live the religious life within the home. The first step is to remove oneself from that situation immediately. Otherwise, one has no hope of truly conquering death. As the Buddha states, now is the time.

After the Buddha flies into the night on the back of his trusted horse, the *Mahāvastu* summarizes the way the Buddha renounced, emphasizing again as a kind of epilogue his heroic journey to conquer death as a young man:

Thus the Bodhisattva, leaving beyond him his great army..., his great stores of wealth..., went forth from home into the homeless state. The Bodhisattva, oppressed by birth, went forth... to


attain the way that leads beyond birth. Oppressed by death, he went forth...to attain the way that leads beyond death.

And, monks, it was not when he was worn out with decay that the Bodhisattva went forth from home into the homeless state, but when he was in the prime and perfection of his youth. Not when he was worn out with disease...but when he was in the prime and perfection of his health. Again, monks, it was not when he was worn out by the loss of wealth. Again, monks, it was not when he was worn out by the loss of his kinsmen...but he left behind him a large family of relations. 410

The text refutes arguments that one should wait to renounce until one is old or sick, or bereft of wealth. One should renounce now in the prime of youth, even if one is rich in wealth and relatives.

The Buddha’s ordination of his young son Rāhula shows that he practices when he preaches, and that renunciation while young is a paradigmatic truth appropriate for everyone. Even children as young as Rāhula are fit to become monastics. 411 To take care of such children, the Buddha instituted the special category of novice, and the roles of teacher and preceptor (as already discussed). This was a fundamental change in the character of the early monastic community, which up to that point had ordained only adults. In the Mahāvastu, the story of

410 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 2.157. atha bodhisatvo mahāntam hastikāyam...mahāntam bhogaskandham...agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati // bodhisavto jātiye arttiyanto jātisamatikramanaṃ mārgam adhigamanārthāṃ agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati...maranenā arttiyanto maranasaṃmatikramanaṃ mārgam adhigamanārthāya agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati // ...na khalu punar bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo parijūṃṇaḥ parijūṃṇaḥ agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati // atha khalu bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo agrena paramena yauvanena samanvāgataḥ agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati // na khalu bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo vyādhiparijuṃṇena parijūṃṇo... / atha khalu bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo agrena paramena yauvanena samanvāgata agārād anagāriyam abhinīskramati // na khalu punar bhikṣavaḥ bhogaparijūṃṇena parijūṃṇo... // na khalu punar bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo jñātiparijuṃṇena parijūṃṇo... / atha khalu bhikṣavaḥ bodhisatvo mahāntam jñātivargam // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 2.161–162.

Rāhula’s ordination is the first occasion of the ordination of a young boy as a novice, and provides the occasion for giving instructions on how to ordain a novice.

Discussed in the previous chapter, when the Buddha had gathered a sufficient community of early followers, including the characters Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, the Buddha returned to his natal city of Kapilavastu to convert his family and kinsmen. One of his targets was his young son, Rāhula. The Buddha insisted that Rāhula be ordained now. He disregarded the pleas of his family to allow Rāhula to remain a householder and be raised as the crown prince. In a precedent-setting move, the Buddha does not take Rāhula personally under his tutelage as the reader might expect. He assigns that duty to Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, his chief disciples. This is highly significant because it sets a pattern that will define community life. Older members are expected to be, in effect, the parents of younger members. They are meant to live together in a domestic situation, perhaps even in the same room, signified by the name given to a novice as “one who shares the dwelling” (śārddhavihārin)⁴¹² and “one who lives within” (antevāsin). As the Buddha says to Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, “Ordain Rāhula, and let him share your hut with you.”⁴¹³

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⁴¹² The *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct* records an alternative spelling of this term, śrāddhevihāra. See Karashima, *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, 62ff.

Each generation, whether raised from childhood in the system, is expected to contribute toward the raising of the next generation. This is the flip-side of the urgency of renunciation. If the monastic community is going to be based on an argument for urgency, it needs to have the institutional capacity to socialize and train young members. These institutional capacities in turn build trust in the rhetorical argument. Families like the Buddha’s acquiesce to the renunciation of their young sons and daughters only if they can trust that they will be looked after and raised right. The Buddha’s delegation of this authority to his chief disciples shows his trust in the community to accomplish this task. Throughout the vinaya texts, the Buddha promulgates various regulations that ensure the harmonious functioning of a multi-generational community in which older members are expected to act responsibly toward their younger charges (and vice versa).

Although ordination while young was encouraged, there has to be a limit. The monastery was in no position to take care of infants. Rules were set regarding the minimum age for ordination as a novice and ordination as a full monastic. Monastics therefore had to have an accurate and consistent way of reckoning age. This was done in terms defined by the calendrical time of the monastery.

In Commentary on the Rules for Nuns, there are three rules connected to minimum ages of ordination: pācattika 92, pācattika 96, and pācattika 100. Pācattika 92 sets a minimum

\[\text{pācattika} \ 92, \ 	ext{pācattika} \ 96, \ 	ext{pācattika} \ 100.\]

\[\text{Pācattika} \ 92 \text{ sets a minimum}\]

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414 There is no requirement for a fully ordained monk or nun to take on students, but it does increase one’s standing and perceived virtue. The teacher gains the services of an attendant, as the description of the daily routine at the beginning of this chapter states.

415 See Karashima, Abhisamācārika Dharmāḥ, 61–81

ordination age for the ordaining nun at a “full twelve years,” ensuring that the nun ordaining others was herself capable of taking on the responsibility. Ordination age is different from biological age; it is the number of years that have passed since one has been ordained. 

_Pācattika_ 96 and 100 both concern the minimum biological age for a young woman seeking ordination. _Pācattika_ 96 sets the minimum age of an unmarried girl seeking ordination at 20, and _Pācattika_ 100 sets the minimum age of a married girl seeking ordination at 12.⁴¹⁷

These three rules explain how to determine age in each case. Since they are formal rules, compliance required careful understanding of how to reckon age in years, and what counts as a year in relation to these rules. In their commentarial explanations, all three rules state that years are counted according to rainy seasons, regardless of when a girl was born. The completion of one rainy season to the next comprises one full year. The formal and precise end of the rainy season is defined as “after the Pravāraṇā Ceremony has been performed.”⁴¹⁸

The Pravāraṇā Ceremony marked the end of the rainy season retreat, during which all monastics were obliged to cease wandering and settle in one location for the duration of the rainy season. During the ritual, which was a collective endeavor, laypeople were given the opportunity to present gifts, particularly new robes. In theory, these gifts provided for the monastics’ next year of life out on the road, since they were now free to roam again until the beginning of the next rainy season. In practice, most monastics stayed put and registered for

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⁴¹⁷ The difference seems to be that a married girl is able to endure the hard work of monasticism. See Hirakawa, _Monastic Discipline_, 308–309.

⁴¹⁸ _pravāraṇāyāṃ kṛtāyāṃ_ / Roth, _Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya_, 238.
residency at the same monastery right away. It is significant that the age of every monastic is coordinated to a group ritual, rather than directly to calendrical time.

Few people are born on the day of the Pravāraṇā Ceremony, and all nuns are not ordained then. So, how can one be sure that the female initiate is a full twenty years old, as pācattika 96 requires? The commentary provides guidance on all possible scenarios to determine biological age in terms of rainy-season years. At the outset, one year of age is defined as having passed one rainy season, and biological age must be recalculated accordingly. For example, the commentary on pācattika 96 states, “If she was born in winter and is ordained during her twentieth year, but before the Pravāraṇā Ceremony, then she is [still] less than a full twenty years old.” In this scenario, the female initiate is a full twenty years old for nearly the entire year by reckoning from date of birth. However, if she is ordained before the Pravāraṇā Ceremony, there is transgression of the rule because, according to monastic time, the female initiate is still only nineteen rainy seasons old. This transgression does not invalidate the ordination because she is, as the rule recognizes, really twenty years old. However, in the case that she is fewer than twenty years old in both birth and rainy season years, and any or all of the nuns ordaining her know that, her ordination is invalid. If none of the nuns ordaining her

\[\text{hemante jātā tena viṁśena upasampādeti akṛtāyām pravāraṇāyām ūnavimśatīvarṣā} \quad \text{Roth, Bhikṣuni-Vinaya, 238.}\]
knew that, her ordination is valid. In other words, there cannot be deliberate falsehood, which was considered a fundamental defilement.420

What happens if the initiate does not know her birthday? One can easily imagine scenarios in which an initiate lacks this information, especially young boys and girls in an era before watches and cell phones. The Commentary on the Rules for Nuns provides instructions for this eventuality:

When a young lady wants to ordain in the dharma and vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata, she should be encouraged [by asking the following question]: “When were you born?” If she doesn’t know then the nun should inquire further into the circumstances of her birth. If the young lady doesn’t know these, then the nun should ask her parents about it. And if they do not know, then the parents should be asked [the following questions]: “In which kingdom was she born? How long has it been since then? Did she have a good horoscope421 or not?” [Thus] they should be questioned. One should not travel using miraculous and wonderful means. One should go by foot to inquire further.422

The questioning nun, most likely the initiate’s future teacher, is instructed to take a considerable amount of time and effort to inquire into the details of the young woman’s birth. This shows the importance placed on minimum ages of ordination; the nun must exercise due diligence. The monastic community could easily gain a reputation for snatching away young

420 Why would a nun participate in a deliberate deception? That is not discussed in the Commentary on the Rules for Nuns, but a probable explanation is that it would allow the newly ordained nun to obtain robes at the Pravāraṇā Ceremony.

421 This is a conjectural translation. The words for horoscope are sudṛṣṭi and durḍṛṣṭi. Drṣṭi in the Buddhist context most commonly associates with doctrine, but that cannot be the meaning here. It could also mean appearance, but that seems irrelevant. A horoscope is relevant because it might reveal, through configuration of asterisms, a date of birth.

422 yā esā kumāribhūtā ākāṅkṣati tathāgatapravedite dhammavinaye upasampadaṃ sā dānī samanugrahitavyā / kadā tvam jātā | atha na jānāti janmapadhikā niśāmayitavyā | janmapadhikā na bhavanti mātāpitarau prcchitavyau | atha dānī te pi na jānanti prcchitavyā | katarasminī rājye jātā | kettiṃkā vā tadā tvam abhūsi | sudṛṣṭir durṛṣṭir vā | prcchitavyā | na uddhikasya vā citrikasya vā vaśena gantarvam | atha khu hastapādā niśāmetavyāḥ | Roth, Bhikṣuni-Vinaya, 239–240.
children, much like an army press ganging young men into work. In the early days of the monastic order, the Buddha received many complaints from the laity because young men and women were being ordained without their parents’ consent. This led the Buddha to promulgate a clear rule that parents must be asked permission, and ideally should be supportive of the ordination. Clear lines of communication with the parents were necessary to maintain good relations with the laity. Rules surrounding ordination age ensured an ordered process, and reinforced shared expectations of time. Young men and women should not be discouraged from ordination, but ordaining monks and nuns must not be hasty, not lie, and exercise due diligence and protect the faith of householders.

**How Long is “Now”?**

When the Buddha insists on ordaining his young son immediately, he does allow his family a little time to perform the basic ritual ceremonies of boyhood, such as taking a horoscope, braiding of the hair, and piercing the ears. So, his insistence on ordaining him “now” does not mean this very second. He allows his family seven days to complete the various tasks and present Rāhula to Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana for ordination as a novice. This space of a week is significant and consistent. It seems to be the acceptable length of now. That is, one can delay renunciation up to a week, but no more. This same length of time appears in the Mahāgovinda Sūtra in the *Mahāvastu*. This sūtra, which has the form (if not in

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423 These terms are not obscure, but the ceremonies are not entirely clear. They correspond generally with the *samskāras* of the Hindu traditions. Jones states some possibilities, but concludes that “there is no evidence for a ceremonial occasion of this nature to support either interpretation.” Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 3.252, fn 2.
label) of a jātaka, depicts a past life of the Buddha when he was a man named Mahāgovinda.

This story is narrated right before the ordination of Rāhula, during the Buddha’s return visit to Kapilavastu, so the connection of the two stories is revealed in their juxtaposition. The occasion that provokes the narration is a declaration of the monastic audience to the Buddha:

“Behold, Lord, how, when the Exalted One went forth to the religious life, he was accompanied by a large multitude of people [i.e. the Śākyas].” The Exalted One said, “That was not the first time, monks, that a large multitude of people went with me when I went forth to the religious life.” The monks asked, “Was there another occasion, Lord?” The Exalted One replied, “Yes, monks.”

The Mahāgovinda Sūtra is then narrated by the Buddha, as the other occasion. Mahāgovinda is the prime minister of a federation of kingdoms. He manages all affairs of the ruling houses. He is an excellent and ethical manager, and everyone profits by his methods. One day he receives a vision of the great god Brahmā, and asks him a question:

I ask great Brahmā, the Eternal Youth, I that doubt ask thee that doubest not concerning acts of worship. How acting, what performing, and what course pursuing can a mortal man attain Brahmā’s immortal world?

Brahmā replies:

He among men who abandons thought of “me,” is intent of mind, compassionate and aloof, is free from reeking odours and innocent of fornication, he, O brāhman, though a mortal, attains the immortal world of Brahmā.

\[\text{Jones, } \text{The Mahāvastu, } 3.193. \text{ paśya bhagavan kathaṃ bhagavatā pravrajitena mahānto janakāyo anupavrajito // bhagavāṇ āha // na bhikṣavo etarāhim eva mayā pravrajantena mahājanakāyo anupavrajito // bhikṣū āhāṃsuḥ // anyadāpi bhagavaṃ // bhagavāṇ āha // anyadāpi bhikṣavo // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, } 3.197.\]

\[\text{Jones, } \text{The Mahāvastu, } 3.207–208. \text{ prṛcchāmi brahmāṇaṃ sanatkumāraṃ kāṃkṣi akāṃkṣaṃ paricāriyeṣu / kathāṃkara kintikaro kimācaraṃ prāpnoti manujo ’mrtam brahmalokāṃ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, } 3.212.\]

\[\text{Jones, } \text{The Mahāvastu, } 3.208. \text{ hitvā mamatvam manujeṣu brahma ekotibhūto karuṇo vivikta / nirāmagandho virato maithunāto prāpnoti manujo ’mṛtam brahmalokaṃ // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, } 3.212.\]
Brahmā’s reply is a close approximation of the Buddha’s dharma, with the important difference that the goal here is to attain rebirth in Brahmā’s heavenly realm, which is not the ultimate goal according to the Buddha. The diagnosis of the problem of human life, however, is basically the same. The practitioner must overcome the ego, become compassionate, and rid himself of sexual desires. Mahāgovinda asks a follow-up question about the phrase “reeking odors,” which he does not immediately comprehend. Brahmā clarifies that he is referring to the household life, echoing the idea that one cannot live the pure life of celibacy while remaining a householder. Mahāgovinda’s concludes:

Now I know what my lord Great Brahmā means when he talks of ‘reeking odors’. But then it is not possible for me while I stay at home to live the wholly bright, the wholly blameless, the wholly pure and wholly clean brahma-life. Life is a brief affair. We must go on to the world beyond, for there is no avoiding death for one who has been born.427

The significant phrase in the current discussion is “life is a brief affair” (alpi kaṃ jīvitaṃ). After hearing the teaching of Brahmā, Mahāgovinda feels the press of death and the urgency to renounce. Having made a decision to renounce immediately, Mahāgovinda informs his noble bosses that he is retiring from his position. They are understandably surprised and worried about this decision. Their affairs had been handled with perfect care and profitability by Mahāgovinda and they are loathe to part with their prized minister. The decision also seems very sudden, since there was no indication of his leaning toward renunciation before he

attained this vision of Brahmā. They, like the Buddha’s father, attempt to entice and bribe Mahāgovinda to stay, offering him wealth and sexually available women. He dismisses them all, repeating the phrase about the shortness of life and the necessity of religious practice using language that directly recalls, verbatim, the advice of Maudgalyāyana after he described the tortures of hell to a monastic audience (quoted above in Chapter Two):

Therefore we must seek knowledge, gain it, wake up, do good and live the brahma-life, and commit no sin in this world.  

The repetition of these phrases, not only here but throughout the Mahāvastu, in different narrative contexts, reinforces their paradigmatic truth.

In the story, Mahāgovinda’s bosses are finally convinced and agree to join Mahāgovinda in his renunciation because they have such esteem and affection for their minister. However, they want Mahāgovinda to delay their renunciations to get their affairs in order. The kings first propose that they all wait seven years before renouncing, but Mahāgovinda rejects that as far too long a time. He feels the urgency of renunciation; anything could happen in seven years. The two parties then enter an interesting game of negotiation, also present in the Gaṅgapāla Jātaka narrated not long after the Mahāgovinda Sūtra. The kings propose a series of increasingly fewer years—six years, five, four, three, two, one—and then months—seven months, six, five, four, three, two, one—and then the same for weeks. Each category begins


429 There is thus a complex motive, which is not unique. Both their understanding of what Mahāgovinda is saying about death and their intense loyalty to him combine to motivate their renunciations. The same is true for the Śākyan clansmen, who follow the Buddha into renunciation in the frame narrative. Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.170–174; Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.176–178.
with the number seven and decreases by one down to one. After each, Mahāgovinda says it is too long a time and repeats his insight about reeking odors, so this passage is repeated a great number of times (perhaps that is the point of the game, to force the reader to make this into a repetitive chant). When the number reaches one week, however, Mahāgovinda acquiesces:

Then did the brāhman Mahāgovinda reply to the six kings and say, “Well, gentlemen, your week is short enough. Let it be then as you wish.”

After the week passes, they all renounce the householder life and Mahāgovinda becomes their teacher. He teaches them the dharma, and they form a successful band of ascetics. Each of them reaches the goal of rebirth in Brahmā’s heavenly realm. The story shows that what the Buddha was able to accomplish with the Śākya clan, gathering a large following, is a repetition of past events. In both cases—the cases of the renunciation of Mahāgovinda and the ordination of Rāhula—the period of a single week expresses the limits of urgency, the time within which one can reasonably delay renunciation.

The Rarity of the Present Opportunity to Renounce

The sense of urgency is also expressed in another manner. In the ordination liturgy in the Commentary on the Rules for Nuns, the following verse is recited after the ceremony:

Pursuing awakening, do not become impassioned. Rare indeed is the occasion for ordination.

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430 The number seven could be significant for any number of reasons. Mahāgovinda and the six kings also equals seven.


432 ārāgayitvā na virāgayasi / durlabhā kṣanasaṃpadā / Roth, Bhikṣunī-Vinaya, 42.
The verse states that it is rare to have the opportunity to ordain. This rarity is motivation to renounce now and make the best of it through dedication to monastic discipline. Urgency is produced here by noting the relationship between the present moment and the vastness of time. In the endless series of rebirths, in the countless eons that have passed and will continue to pass into an endless future, the number of years during which ordination under a perfectly awakened teacher is possible is exceedingly small. One should take hold of the present opportunity since no one knows when it will come around again.

Among the goals of the monastic rules examined in Chapter Three, one repeated throughout was to ensure that the Buddha’s teaching will endure long into the future. This was a concern because it did not always happen. The story of the promulgation of the rules in Chapter Two showed that the dispensations of some buddhas did not last long. The lesson here, for the monastic audience, is that the continuation of the Buddha’s teachings and community into the future is not guaranteed. It takes the active work of all monastics to keep it alive, and like all existing phenomena, the Buddha’s dispensation will one day come to an end.

In the Commentary on the Rules for Nuns, the Buddha states explicitly that his teachings will last only five hundred years. By the time the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda vinaya texts were composed, this time had already passed, or nearly so. This situation creates, or is meant to create, a sense of urgency to seize the day and renounce before it is too late.

\[ \text{kāmaṃ pañcāpi me varṣaśatāni saddharmo sthāsyati} \]
\[ \text{Roth, Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya, 16.} \]
This argument is buttressed by the rarity of a Buddha arising in the world, which is expressed early and often in the *Mahāvastu*.\textsuperscript{434} In one of the beginning narratives, Maudgalyāyana visits some of the gods. One deity, apparently in a fit of excitement, spontaneously recites this verse to Maudgalyāyana about the rarity of a Buddha:

“Strange is it,” said he, “wonderful is it, O noble Maudgalyāyana, that it is so hard to attain the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment. For it takes a hundred thousand kalpas to do so.”\textsuperscript{435}

This is a tremendous amount of time. A *kalpa* is equivalent to a billion years (the exact number is less significant than the hyperbole), so the god is here saying that it takes one hundred thousand billion years for a bodhisattva to become awakened. It is thus very rare and, consequently, amazing (āścarya) and wonderful (adbhūta). Maudgalyāyana returns to the human world and reports this to the Buddha. The latter disagrees with the god’s statement. He states that this amount is far too short, that the true amount of time is incalculable. Again, such vast amounts of time can only provoke wonder and lead to the reasonable conclusion that one should seize this extremely rare opportunity and renounce now because the next opportunity will not come for a very long time. It is inevitable that during the interval between this buddha and the next, one will be reborn in all sorts of unfortunate circumstances. The tortures of hell were described in the *Mahāvastu* just before the quoted dialog, so the order of the stories seems to reinforce the key message: now is the time!

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An understanding of this rarity is the primary argument used by Mahāprajāpatī to argue for the ordination of women in the introductory story of the *Commentary of the Rules for Nuns*. Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī is the Buddha’s aunt and foster mother. She raised the Buddha after his mother’s death. For many years, the Buddha only ordained men and seemed to have no intention of ordaining women. Mahāprajāpatī approaches the Buddha and argues for the inclusion of women in the monastic community. Her argument is that this opportunity is rare, turning the Buddha’s argument back against him. She says to the Buddha:

The appearance of a Buddha is rare, the teaching of the true dharma is rare. Yet here and now a Buddha...has appeared in the world teaching the dharma, leading to tranquility and ultimate release, fully known by the Blessed One, which leads one to obtain the deathless and realize nirvāṇa. It would be good, therefore, if the Blessed One allowed women too to renounce, ordain, and become nuns in the dharma and vinaya preached by a Tathāgata. Initially, the Buddha denies the request, not because of any perceived inability on the part of women or a denial of the argument from rarity. He admits that women have the capability, and all past buddhas have had female monastics. He denies the request out of deference to worldly custom, worrying that the ordination of women will hasten the demise of the monastic community (again showing attention to time and future generations). However, he quickly abandons that stance once Mahāprajāpatī and her female companions agree to a set of additional rules governing their inclusion in the monastic community. This set of rules, known

436 durlabho bhagavan buddhotpādo durlabhā saddharmadeśanā | bhagavāms caitaṛhi loke utpanno tathāgato 'ṛhan samyaksambuddho dharma ca deśayati aupasamiko pārinivāniko sugata-pravedito amṛtasya prāptaye nirvāṇasya sākṣātkriyāya samvartati | sādhu bhagavan mātṛgrāmo pi labheya tathāgatapraivedite dharmavinaye pravrajyām upasampadāṃ bhikṣunībhāvam | Roth, Bhikṣunī-Vinaya, 5.

437 The regularity of the invocation of “all buddhas” in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *Vinayapitaka* might be a defining trait, since this is not found, at least with the same consistency, in the Theravāda *Vinayapitaka*. This topic requires further research to reach a definite conclusion.
as the Guru Dharmas, becomes a condition of ordination on the same level as the pārājika rules. Mahāprajāpatī is duly ordained and so in turn are many other women. The rarity of the moment expressed by Mahāprajāpatī then became a part of the ordination ceremony for all women (as the quote above demonstrates). Although for Mahāprajāpatī the urgency of the moment was a precondition for her request for ordination, for other women it becomes a teaching and training. It is an attitude to cultivate and pass on to others, such as when a nun meets a young woman who expresses an interest in the Buddha’s teachings, a situation examined above.

This chapter has examined several ways that the disciplinary rules conform and respond to the forms of time as experienced by human beings in this world, from days to weeks to years. Disciplinary practices are set within calendrical time and are timed. There is a rhythm to disciplinary life that helps inculcate habits necessary for progress along the path. Attention to time also ensures that the monastic community is a comfortable and easy place to live, and that the wider lay society places their trust in the community, not only supporting it with material donations, but also entrusting their young children to their care. Ordination of the young is both an expression of and response to the urgency of renunciation that a proper understanding of reality should evoke. Not only is one’s life fleeting, but the opportunity to become a monastic in the community of a buddha is rare. Feeling this urgency is not only a precondition for ordination, but something to be cultivated throughout one’s life as a monastic.
CHAPTER SIX: HUMAN DIFFERENCE, CASTE, AND HIERARCHY

This chapter discusses the topics of caste and hierarchy, two forms of human difference that are important considerations in the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda Vinayapiṭaka.

Buddhism emerged and developed in a social situation in which caste was an important defining feature of social status and hierarchy. Caste was a conceptual framework through which ideas of ethics and justice were articulated. Even if caste as it emerges in classical brahmanical texts does not reflect social history accurately, it was still a powerful means by which theologies and philosophies of the good life were framed and enacted.438

Buddhist texts and monastic communities reacted to caste variously. It would be a mistake to attempt to define a single Buddhist position in relation to caste, whether rejection or complicity. Texts took on the concept of caste in different ways, as befitted their purpose and audience. The actions and reactions of monastic communities to caste depended on their social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, there remains a predominant trend in scholarship on caste in relation to Buddhism, as Greg Bailey argues:

Scholarly interest in Buddhism and caste stems from two interrelated motivations. The first being to investigate that the Buddha somehow criticized caste as an institution; and, the second, that in the 20th century many low-caste Hindus, under the influence of Ambedkarite teachings rediscovered and converted to Buddhism in order to escape caste discrimination. The mass

conversion associated with the second event has led scholars and activists to trace anti-caste attitudes back to the earliest Buddhist literature.\textsuperscript{439}

This reading back of anti-caste attitudes has led to the common belief that the Buddha was anti-caste. In a recent article, Krishan articulates this scholarly bias:

It is a common and widespread belief among scholars that the Buddha had taught that all men were equal, that social superiority based on varṇa (colour, race) and jāti (birth) was untenable. The implication is that the Buddha and Buddhism were opposed to the Brahmanical hierarchically graded castes which were endogamous, non-commensal and governed by a discriminatory legal system with unequal rights and obligations. \textit{A priori}, in a Buddhist society, there is also no justification for untouchables outside the caste group.\textsuperscript{440}

Krishan goes on to argue and demonstrate in his short study that such a belief is unfounded:

\textit{A critical examination of the Buddha suttas which deal with varṇa, and jāti and the related social features, kula and gotra, indicates that the lay Buddhists accepted the caste system and never challenged it and the discriminatory laws.}\textsuperscript{441}

Krishan and Bailey highlight the two predominant responses to caste that scholars have argued characterizes Buddhism in South Asia. The first argues that the Buddha rejected caste and caste distinctions, as seen in many classic teachings, while the second argues that whatever the Buddha’s teachings, Buddhist communities accommodated and even advocated caste throughout their histories. Underlying these two conclusions is a difference in source material, with the first relying on classical texts of the monastic tradition, and the latter on the social histories of Buddhist cultures. A synthesis could be articulated that claims that although the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{441}{Krishan, “Buddhism and Caste,” 41.}
\end{footnotes}
Buddha rejected caste, his later followers, especially the laity, became complicit with that social system.

This chapter problematizes these conclusions by showing that in the *vinaya* texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda a more nuanced attitude toward caste is displayed. It can be summarized as a version of the synthesis above: a rejection of caste within the monastic community, but an accommodation to the realities of caste among wider society. This accommodation was not, however, either a surrender to caste or wholesale acceptance of it. The *vinaya* texts articulate a mode of engagement with caste that overcomes caste distinctions through disciplined practice and cultivation of inner virtues. This itself can cause a transformation in wider society that acts as an intervention, if not against the idea of caste, at least against actions of hatred based on caste distinctions. Although the *vinaya* texts might show acquiescence to caste as an individual or group identity, it does not countenance any form of social violence associated with caste distinctions.

**The Evolution of Caste Distinctions**

In the story of cosmogenesis examined in Chapter Two, an explanation is given for the emergence of differences among sentient beings as they evolved into humans. At the beginning of their evolution, all sentient beings were essentially the same. It is not until one sentient being (Yaśika in a past life) dips his finger into the primordial earth, and out of greed eats it, that differences begin to emerge among this undifferentiated class of sentient beings. Following the example of this first sentient being, others begin to eat the primordial earth:

On another occasion, monks, that being ate a whole mouthful of this essence of earth as ordinary food. Other beings, also, when they saw him, began to follow his example, and ate whole mouthfuls of this essence of earth as ordinary food. Now, monks, from the time that
these beings began to eat whole mouthfuls of the essence of earth as food, their bodies became heavy, rough and hard, and they lost the qualities of being self-luminous, [and so on].

As the eating of earth became a constant habit widespread among sentient beings, they began to evolve human bodies. This process continues in stages since both sentient beings and the terrestrial planet evolve in response to one another. Significant to the present discussion, the evolution of the bodies of sentient beings is unequal because their consumption is unequal: Those who took much of it for food became ugly; those who ate little became comely. And those who were comely scoffed at the ugly saying, “We are comely; they are ugly.” But while they thus lived on, proud of their beauty, vain and conceited, this essence of earth vanished.

During each stage of evolution, those who ate more became ugly, and those who ate less became beautiful. This causes social dissension based on appearance. Eventually “the distinguishing characteristics of male and female appeared among them,” causing sexual passions to evolve. “Looking on one another with passion in their hearts...inflamed with passion they violated one another.” This violent action of rape causes others to physically abuse the violator by throwing sticks and clods of earth. This is compared by the Buddha in his

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narration with a bride in the present world being forcibly carried away from a village. Those
who violate others in this way are shunned by the rest of the sentient beings:

Now, monks, those beings, because of their immortality, got into trouble, and they were
shunned by their fellows. So they left their houses for one day, for two days, for three, four or
five, for a fortnight or for a month, in order to conceal their immorality, and during this time had
their housework done by others.⁴⁴⁶

Eventually, the other evils arise and evolve, and the first king is elected to set laws and punish
transgressions.

Two points about this story are relevant to this discussion on caste. First is the fact that
social divisions are based on what is translated as “appearance.” The Sanskrit word is varṇa,
the same word used to indicate caste. Those who are ugly are literally those “with a bad varṇa”
(durvarṇa). Those who are beautiful are literally those “endowed with varṇa” (varṇavant). This
word choice is highly significant for an intended audience of monastics in classical India. No
one would fail to make the connection between this story and the idea of caste, especially since
the formulaic passage about ugly and beautiful people is repeated three times.

It was not only based on Brahmanical learning and lore that the idea of varṇa as caste
would be understood. Buddhist texts of many types contain the same idea of the four castes,
whatever the text’s evaluation of them might be. In relation to the Theravāda Canon, Krishan
states, “The Madhura sutta (84), the Kaṇṇakaṭṭhala sutta (90) and the Assalāyana sutta (93) of
the Majjhima-nikāya, the Cullavagga ix.1.4 of the Vinayapiṭaka, etc. all recognize the existence

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⁴⁴⁶ Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.289. aṭha khalu bhikṣavas te satvā tena adharmeṇa artiyantā vijjiguptā ekāhaṃ pi
vpravasensu dvyaḥam pi vpravasensu tryaḥam pi vpravasensu caturahaṃ pi vpravasensu pāmcāhaṃ pi pokaṃ
pi māsaṃ pi vpravasensu grhakarmāntā pi kārayensu yāvad eva tasyaiva adharmasya pracchadanārtham //
of four castes: *Cattāro vaṇṇā, Kṣatriya, Brāhmaṇa, Vaiśya and Śūdra.* ⁴⁴⁷ The same is true for the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda *Vinayapitaka*. In the section of the *Mahāvastu* known as *The Five Dreams of Śuddhodana*, the Buddha states the same:

There are four *varṇa*, O Monks. What four? The *kṣatriya, brāhmaṇa, vaiśya, and śūdra*. ⁴⁴⁸

In the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, instructions are given for how a monastic should approach an assembly of *kṣatriyas* and an assembly of *brāhmaṇas*. The monastic is instructed to greet the assembly by saying “Indeed you are, O *kṣatriyas/brāhmaṇas*, the best *varṇa*, the highest *varṇa*. ⁴⁴⁹ He is then to remind the assembly that buddhas are only born in a *kṣatriya* or *brāhmaṇa* family. The *Lineage of Kings* section of the *Mahāvastu* (to which the story of cosmogenesis belongs) shows that the Buddha’s family descends directly from the first king. It thus demonstrates that the Buddha Śākyamuni was born into a *kṣatriya* family with an impeccable lineage. Clearly, the notion of caste was operative within the *vinaya* texts, and the story of cosmogenesis connects directly with that overall discourse.

As an introduction to the *vinaya* generally, the story of cosmogenesis provides an explanation for the social fact of caste in the world. It does not repudiate caste as something entirely unfounded, but it does displace rival stories of cosmogenesis promoted in brahmanical texts, where caste is a necessary part of the intentional creation of this world and a division

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⁴⁴⁸ *catvārime bhikṣavaḥ varṇāḥ katame catvāraḥ kṣatriyā brāhmaṇā vaiśyā śūdrāḥ* / Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 2.139.

⁴⁴⁹ *atha khalu vaktavyāḥ / kṣatriyā nāma yūyam agro varṇo jyeṣṭho varṇo dvīhī kulehi tathāgataḥ arhantaḥ samyaksaṃbuddhāḥ / utpadanti / kṣatriyakule vā brāhmaṇakule vā* / Karashima, *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, 274 & 277 (with *brāhmaṇa* replacing *kṣatriya* at each instance in the latter).
that must be maintained as part of ethical action. In the Mahāvastu’s story of cosmogenesis, caste is not an intentional creation of an omniscient being. It is simply a result of the vagaries of cosmic evolution; not an accident, but certainly not a moral principle that should guide ethical action. It is a fact of life, like sexual desire, and not a moral good. Just as sexual desire must be removed by monastics through discipline, so too was caste a distinction that should be removed within the monastic community.

The second significant point derived from the mythical narrative of cosmogenesis is that caste distinctions tend to perpetuate hatred, one of the roots of harm. Those who are “endowed with varṇa” look down on and criticize those who “have bad varṇa.” This is a simple statement without any explanation, but it most likely stands for and symbolizes the ways that social distinctions based on appearance lead humans to engage in violent and discriminatory actions. The reference to rape, the stealing of brides, shunning, and menial work (“housework done by others”) might also connect to inter-caste divisions, but that is unclear. What is clear is that such evils evolved alongside social divisions based on varṇa and gender, even if not causally.

Violence based on caste is shown in other stories, so the connection is not just implied in the mythical narrative of cosmogenesis. In the story of Ghaṭikāra in the Mahāvastu, for example, there is clear depiction of caste violence and the overcoming of this within the

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monastic community. The two main characters in this story are from different castes.

Ghaṭikāra is, as his name states, a potter, or kumbhakāra, an artisanal occupation (jāti) included in the śūdra caste. Ghaṭikāra’s best friend is a brāhmaṇa named Jyotipāla, “the son of a brāhman of good birth.” These two young men live during the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa, and Ghaṭikāra is one of his most devoted followers. Jyotipāla does not have faith in the Buddha Kāśyapa, and this causes Ghaṭikāra distress since he desperately wants his friend to take heed of the Buddha Kāśyapa’s teachings. Ghaṭikāra tries various means to lure Jyotipāla to the wood where the Buddha Kāśyapa is staying, but Jyotipāla has nothing but contempt for “these shaveling ascetics.” Finally, seeing no other means, Ghaṭikāra grabs Jyotipāla by the hair and drags him to see the Buddha Kāśyapa. Jyotipāla is understandably surprised since this action is a violation of caste boundaries. He reflects:

> It cannot be without reason that Ghaṭikāra the potter should seize me by the hair as I come from washing my head, although I resist him, and although he is of low birth.

Jyotipāla calls Ghaṭikāra of low birth, or hīnā jāti. The term jāti refers to the fact that one’s occupational status is determined by birth. Ghaṭikāra is of low birth because he was born a śūdra potter. The fact that Ghaṭikāra acted in such a manner, in full knowledge of the caste implications, causes Jyotipāla to take his actions seriously. So, he agrees to listen to the Buddha

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453 Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 1.268. The word for “shaveling” he called them is *muṇḍa*, a derogatory word for an ascetic that implies a lowly person, perhaps from association with barbers. Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, 1.320.

Kāśyapa, though he still has no faith in him. However, after hearing him preach the dharma, Jyotipāla is converted and decides to become a lay follower, which means taking a vow to uphold the five precepts. Before that happens, however, he has some unfinished business, as he states to the Buddha Kāśyapa:

Lord, I am not yet prepared to be initiated in all the five precepts, for there is a troublesome and ill-tempered man whom I must put to death.

Jyotipāla wishes to delay taking the precepts because the first precept is not to kill a human being. Not wishing to break his vows immediately after taking them, he wants to complete this execution beforehand. The Buddha Kāśyapa asks him who this person is. Jyotipāla replies:

Lord, it is this Ghaṭikāra the potter here. He seized me by the hair just as I was coming from bathing my head.

Unfortunately, there is a lacuna just after this sentence in manuscripts consulted by Senart, but from the previous passages (and the fact that this story, like others in the Mahāvastu, favors repetition of previous material), it can be assumed that the reason for putting Ghaṭikāra to death is the fact that he is of low birth. Jyotipāla is a brāhmaṇa, the highest caste, and he had just washed his hair, an action of ritual purification connected to his caste status. The actions of Ghaṭikāra, seizing him by the hair, polluted him and violated his caste honor. Recompense for this violation is, in Jyotipāla’s eyes, death. This even though he himself claims to be best

455 The five precepts are vows of restraint against (1) killing of a human, (2) theft, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) falsehood, and (5) drinking alcohol in excess. Roth, Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya, 15.


457 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.270. ayaṁ bhagavam ghaṭikāro kumbhakāro yo me tadb evaṁ śīrṣasātām mūrdhni keśehi parāmrṣati // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.322.
friends with Ghaṭikāra. Fortunately for all involved, Jyotipāla is mollified by the Buddha Kāśyapa (how is unclear as this section is missing), and Jyotipāla takes the five precepts without engaging in any violence toward Ghaṭikāra. Such is the power of caste distinctions to foment hatred and murder, even in the case of a friend toward a friend. The Buddha Kāśyapa’s teachings are able to overcome this, at least in the case of Jyotipāla.

What the Buddha Kāśyapa might have told Jyotipāla is that caste distinctions based on birth are not what makes a man virtuous and honorable. Rather, it is their actions and spiritual accomplishments. In dialog between Sabhika the Ascetic Wanderer and the Buddha Śākyamuni, for example, the Buddha explains that what makes one a brāhmaṇa and a bather (snāṭaka, another name for a ritually-observant brāhmaṇa) are internally developed virtues and discipline:

He who has kept away from all sins, who is stainless, well-composed and steadfast; he who has passed beyond the whole round of recurrent life, who has lived his life, and is no longer liable to rebirth—he is a brāhman.

He who has washed away all his sins, within, without, in all the world; who does not again come to the world of time among devas and men who are subject to time—he is “one who has bathed.”

The Buddha Śākyamuni redefines these two caste-based terms, and shows that a true brāhmaṇa and true snāṭaka are those who have attained internal virtues that align with the Buddhist understanding of dharma and vinaya. They have nothing to do with either birth or ritual purification. Before his conversion, Jyotipāla would not qualify as either a brāhmaṇa or

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snātaka under these definitions. He was contemptuous toward “shueling ascetics” and wished death on his best friend. He was not “well-composed” and “steadfast,” nor had he “washed away all his sins.” Ironically, it was his conversion to Buddhism and ordination that made him a true brāhmaṇa, which was precisely the action that took away his caste identity as a birth brāhmaṇa. The fact that Jyotipāla was the Buddha Śākyamuni in a past life makes this connection even more significant. In his response to Sabhika, the Buddha Śākyamuni is passing on the wisdom he learned from the Buddha Kāśyapa when he was the brāhmaṇa named Jyotipāla.

There is no doubt that the Buddha Kāśyapa had a similar understanding of who is truly virtuous and worthy of praise. At the end of the story of Ghaṭikāra, the Buddha Kāśyapa comes to the court of the king of Kāśī and the latter showers him with gold and luxurious material objects. When the king asks the Buddha Kāśyapa who his most prized devotee is (assuming he will say it was him, the king), the Buddha Kāśyapa replies that his greatest devotee is Ghaṭikāra the potter. He states that the king is “an imperfect servant of mine.”

The term servant is a translation of upasthāyaka, an alternative term for the more common upāsaka, which designates a committed layperson who has taken a formal role of support for the monastic community.


460 See Buswell and Lopez, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 941, s.v. “upāsaka” and 942, s.v. “upāsikā.”
Kāśyapa, that he should be the perfect servant. The Buddha Kāśyapa replies in way that again displaces the traditional criteria of external markers of worth onto internal ones:

Your majesty, Ghaṭikāra the potter has all his life abstained from murder; all his life he has abstained from theft; all his life he has abstained from sex; all his life he has abstained from false speech; all his life he has abstained from intoxication by strong spirits, rum and wine; all his life he has abstained from dance, music and son; all his life he has abstained from the use of scents, garlands, and cosmetics; all his life he has abstained from lying on high and large beds; all his life he has abstained from taking food at the wrong time; all his life he has abstained from hoarding gold and silver.

Ghaṭikāra the potter, your majesty, does not dig up earth himself. But wherever there are heaps of earth thrown up by mice or washed down or scooped out by water, it is there that he takes his earth and makes it into pots. These he sets down on the cross-roads, and those people who want pots pay for them by putting down in their place a measure of kidney-beans, or beans, or rice. They take the pots with them without more ado, and go on their way.

Such, your majesty, is the wealth of Ghaṭikāra the potter wherewith he serves the Tathāgata and his community.

The “wealth” of Ghaṭikāra is his commitment to the vows of the Ten Precepts and his dedication to living a life of non-violence and non-materiality. The Ten Precepts (daśa śīla) are vows taken by novices on their ordination into the monastic community. Ghaṭikāra follows these precepts even though he is not formally ordained. Elsewhere in the story, Ghaṭikāra explains that he does not take ordination because he must care for his old and blind parents, who have no one else on whom to rely. So, even his lack of ordination is virtuous. Ghaṭikāra

461 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 1.274. ghaṭikāro mahārāja kumbhakāro yāvajjīvam prāṇātipātāto pratirāto yāvajjīvam adattadānāto pratirāto yāvajjīvam abrahmacaryāto pratirāto yāvajjīvam mṛśāvādāt pratirāto yāvajjīvam surāmaireyamodyapramadasthānāto pratirāto yāvajjīvam nṛtyagītavādāt pratirāto yāvajjīvam gandhamālyavarnakadāraṇāt pratirāto yāvajjīvam uccāsāyanāt mahāsāyanāt pratirāto yāvajjīvam vikārabhojanāt pratirāto yāvajjīvam jāṭarūpasamratrātiprājanāt pratirāto // na khalu mahārāja ghaṭikāro kumbhakāro sāmaṃ prthīvīṃ khanāti iti / atha khalu ye te bhavanti mūṣotkirā vā vārīparopitā vā vārūchinnā vā mṛtykkā tato mṛtykkām ādāya bhājanakānā kṛtvā caturmahāpathe niksipati // ye tehi bhājanēhi arthikā bhavantē te tāni bhājanēni mudgāprabhinnāṃ vā māsaprabhinnaṃ vā tāṇḍulaprabhinnaṃ vā pūretvā utkiritvā bhājanakānēni ādāya anapekṣā yeva prakramanti // evamrūpe mahārāja ghaṭikārasya kumbhakārasya bhogāh yehi tathāgataś ca upaṣṭhito samghoś ca // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 1.326–327.

462 See Buswell and Lopez, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 821, s.v. “śīla.”
makes his living by simple barter, a form of maintenance that approximates the monastic practice of begging as much as possible. He makes pots, but does no injury to living beings by digging clay from the earth, thus following the monastic habit of right livelihood (\textit{samayagjīvita}).

As the prior narrative clarifies, he brings new members into the monastic community and spreads the Buddha’s teachings whenever he is able, thus following the monastic habit of keeping good company (\textit{sugocara}). Such a man, says the Buddha Kāśyapa, is a perfect servant. The Buddha Kāśyapa overturns caste standards within the monastic community, but does not necessarily seek to eradicate them in wider society. The latter action would not align with the monastic goals of refraining from social judgment and maintaining positive relations with householders of all types. It is by making the monastic community attractive that buddhas, and all monastics, persuade laypeople to give up their adherence to caste distinctions and realize that a person’s true worth is based on their commitment to vows, their dedicated practice, and their inner virtues. They transform the world through example, not direct intervention.

\textbf{The Ordination of Upāli the Barber}

Tension between the monastic community and lay society on the matter of caste is brought to attention in the mythical narrative of the ordination of Upāli by the Buddha. Along with Mahākāśyapa, Śāriputra, and Maudgalyāyana, Upāli was one of the Buddha’s Great Disciples, who were instrumental in shaping and leading the early community. Upāli is remembered as the monk who was foremost in his knowledge of the \textit{vinaya}. It was Upāli who recited all the \textit{prātimokṣa} rules and \textit{vinaya} narratives during the First Council, when the Buddha’s teachings were collected and organized for future generations. The story of Upāli’s
ordination forms part of the Return to Kapilavastu section, which also contained the stories of Rāhula and Mahāgovinda examined in the previous chapter. The story of Upāli is articulated along a theme of overcoming caste pride. It expresses this theme because Upāli was a member of the barber jāti, which has very low caste status. The Śākyans, being of the kṣatriya caste, treated him as their social inferior, but because of his ordination by the Buddha, he was accorded high status, and the Śākyans had to overcome their caste pride.

The story of Upāli begins as the Buddha is just coming to Kapilavastu, before he has had a chance to ordain any of the Śākyan young men. When he arrives, he needs a haircut and Upāli is called to do the job. While Upāli is cutting the Buddha’s hair, something happens to transform Upāli into a spiritually advanced state. As was the case with Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Rāhula, Upāli has had a long causal history that has prepared him for this moment of transformation:

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\text{[He] had acquired the roots of virtue under previous Buddhas, had retained the impressions of his former life, had broken his bonds, was not liable to rebirth, enjoyed Āryan states in his last existence and was master of the meditations and the super-knowledges.}
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This is the first clue that Upāli’s low caste status does not define his inner virtue. Although the Śākyan nobles might not consider him an āryan by birth—āryan is a term used in Vedic and Brahmanical texts to designate members of the higher castes—he is truly an āryan due to his practices in previous lives. It is due to this past pattern of practice (habitual causality) that in this life and in the presence of the Buddha Śākyamuni an amazing transformation will occur.

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As he is cutting the Buddha’s hair, Upāli’s mother stands close by to ensure that her son, who is still just a barber’s assistant, is doing a good job, since the Buddha is the former crown prince. Upāli’s mother asks the Buddha, “Lord, does Upāli cut hair satisfactorily?” The Buddha replies that yes, he does, “but he comes rather too close to the Tathāgata.” From this seemingly mundane phrase, Upāli enters the first meditation (referring to the standard four levels of dhyāna). Upāli’s mother asks again as to Upāli’s performance, and the Buddha replies, yes, “but he oils the razor too much.” From this mundane phrase, Upāli enters the second meditation. Then from the phrase “his breathing annoys the Tathāgata,” Upāli enters the third and fourth meditations. At this point, the razor drops from Upāli’s hand and the monks catch it.

That Upāli was able to enter all four levels of meditation is a sign of his impending awakening and an indication that he, like Rāhula, is not meant for the world of a householder. Similar to the unmasking of reality discussed in Chapter Four, the narrative shows that there is a hidden world behind these seemingly mundane actions. To the casual observer, the interaction between Upāli and the Buddha was a mundane affair. Like many people when they


467 See Buswell and Lopez, Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, 256, s.v. “dhyāna.”


go to the barber, the Buddha was simply giving the barber commands, as befits a noble
speaking to a servant, and he even seemed a little annoyed, but behind the mundane was a
supramundane process of spiritual transformation that considered the true state of Upāli as an
āryan, a spiritually advanced being. The Buddha, of course, saw this the entire time. His
comments were directed perfectly toward affecting Upāli’s entrance into the four meditations,
forcing him to realize that he should renounce right away.

Afterwards, when a group of five hundred Śākyan boys tells Upāli that they will
renounce and join the Buddha’s monastic community, Upāli decides that he will also. Upāli
does not tell his Śākyan companions of his intention. While the latter hurry home to make
preparations, Upāli goes directly to the Buddha and requests ordination. He is duly ordained by
the formula of Come, Monk!. The order of ordination here is significant for the main theme of
the story—overcoming the pride of the Śākyans—because Upāli becomes senior to those
Śākyan boys, seniority being determined by the time at which one was ordained, not by
biological age or any other factors determined by birth. The Mahāvastu tells it this way:

So while the five hundred Śākyan princes were bidding farewell to their parents, friends, relatives
and kindred, Upāli took up the religious life ahead of them all. Then the five hundred Śākyan
princes went to the Exalted One, bowed at his feet, and each said to him, “Let the Lord admit me
to the religious life. [They are ordained...].

The Exalted One then addressed them saying, “The monk Upāli is senior to you. Therefore bow
at his feet and stand in due order. He who will first bow at the feet of the Tathāgata and Upāli
and stand in due order will come next in seniority.” So all the hundreds of monks bowed at the
feet of the Exalted One and Upāli and stood in their proper order. This became known and the
great crowd of people cried, “The Śākyans have overcome pride and anger; they have put down
pride and arrogance.”

470 Jones, The Mahāvastu, 3.176–177. yenāntarena paṃca śākyakumāraśatā mātāpitṛṇam mitrajñātisālohitānāṃ
caprasammodenti tenāntarena upāli prathamātaram pravrajito // atha khalu paṃca śākyakumāraśatā yena
bhagavāṃs tenopasamkramitvā bhagavataḥ pādau śirasā vandūtvā bhagavantam etat uvāca // pravrajetu me
All of the Śākyan boys, who were proud and arrogant of their high social status by birth, overcome their attachment to that status. Yesterday, Upāli might have bowed before all the Śākyans, as a member of the low-caste barber jāti, but today, they bow before him, as a senior monk. Upāli is now older than his siblings in the monastic family of Śākyamuni. This seniority is displayed by who bows to whom and the order of monks when they process in a line. This performance makes seniority visible because it cannot be determined from appearance or birth.

The change in status that Upāli experiences within the monastic community also applies to his relationship with the laity. Generally, all monastics are senior to all laypeople, in the sense of deserving the worship of laypeople. Ideally, this not only reflects the formal status of the monastic, but also represents recognition of their dedicated practice and inner virtue. As the Liturgy of Rules for Monks states, “One who is intent upon good habits is worthy of worship by men and gods.” The faith of householders, discussed in Chapter Three, comes from the trust that monastics are holding to their vows and acting appropriately, even behind closed doors. So, all monastics are (or should be) accorded due respect by householders. However,

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bhagavāṁ upasampādetu me sugato // ...te dāni bhagavatā vuccanti // upāli bhikṣu yuṣmākaṁ vṛddhatarako etasya pāḍāṁ vanditvā sarve paṭipāṭikāye tiṣṭhata / yo ca prathamataram tathāgatasya upālīsa ca pāḍāṁ vanditvā paṭipāṭikāye sthāsyati so vṛddhatarako bhaviṣyati // te dāni bhagavato upālīsa ca pāḍāṁ vanditvā sarve bhikṣuṣatā paṭipāṭikāye sthītā // api hi jītaṁ mahājanakāyo evam āha // jītamānakrodha śākyā nihatamānadarpā śākyā ti // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.180–181.

471 The term “family” is not out of place here. All monks and nuns had the right to call themselves “sons of Śākya” (śākyaputra) and “daughters of Śākya” (śākyaduhitā). For an interesting study of this appellation, see Richard S. Cohen, “Kinsmen of the Son: Śākyabhikṣu and the Institutionalization of the Bodhisattva Ideal,” History of Religions 40 (2000): 1–31.

472 śīlena yukto naradevapūjyo / Tatia, Prātimokṣasūtram, 7; cf. Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 42.
this can cause tensions in a society with strong caste divisions, especially with those who are not faithful adherents to the Buddha’s teachings. Continuation of the story of Upāli displays this tension. When King Śuddhodana, the Buddha’s father, comes to visit the Buddha after the ordination of Upāli and the five hundred Śākyan boys, Upāli greets the king familiarly, as befits his status as a monk. King Śuddhodana gladly bows before this former low caste barber and accepts Upāli’s new status. The king’s men, however, are incensed: “How can it be that the lowly born Upāli the barber uses the words ‘King Śuddhodana’ in addressing him?” Here, the king’s men invoke Upāli’s previous status as barber. To them, nothing has changed, except perhaps Upāli is wearing different clothes and has a shaved head. To King Śuddhodana, however, Upāli is now fundamentally different. He rebukes his men:

Gentlemen, do not speak of the Āryan Upāli as a lowly born man. His former birth and his royal power as a recluse are two different things. He must no more be said to be of lowly birth.

King Śuddhodana puts the issue well. First, Upāli has cut off any lineage connection to his former barber jāti. He is now in the lineage of āryans. Although King Śuddhodana might not know this, this is also recognition of his advanced spiritual status, which had already been indicated to the reader. He is also said to have royal power (rājāṃśuddhodanaṃ ātmanā ābhāṣṭaṃ vibhāvyensuḥ // kathaṃ nāma upālikalpako hīnajātyo rājāṃ śuddhodanena bhāṣati // Senart, Le Mahāvastu, 3.181.


king will even bow to him as a senior, to say nothing of his royal men. Far from being a low caste barber, Upāli has been ennobled in both a spiritual and secular sense by his ordination. The pride of the king’s men is duly crushed and they are put in their place.

As mentioned above, a significant aspect of seniority is the fact that it is not outwardly visible. Nothing about Upāli’s appearance indicates that he is a non-returner or junior only to the Buddha himself. In fact, knowledge of Upāli’s spiritual state can only be known by the Buddha and other awakened beings. This makes the performance of seniority, through the relation of bodies, more important in disciplinary practices. The order of the bodies of monks, from senior to junior, is the visible manifestation of seniority. A disciplined monastic is constantly on alert to ensure that seniority is performed correctly.475

In the Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct, instructions are given to this effect in relation to a number of group practices. When monastics attend a meal at the house of a layperson, for example, they enter the house in order of seniority. They sit down and take food in order of seniority. The word used to express this is paṭipāṭikāya, or in due order, the same term used in the Mahāvastu. The senior end of the line of ordered monks is called the vrddhānta, or senior’s end, while the other end of the line is called navakānta, or junior’s

475 In a recent book about female renunciants in contemporary Sri Lanka, Nirmala Salgado narrates a humorous anecdote about her taking a group photo of a group of nuns. Salgado attempted several times to have them line up in order of height for a good picture, but they insisted on standing in order of seniority. See Salgado, Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice, 153ff.
end. Similarly, the instruction for begging for food is expressed as, “the begging for alms should be done by everyone according to seniority.”

There are occasions when this order is not followed, and these exceptions show a necessary flexibility of the rules in cases in which harm could result from an overly strict adherence to discipline. Discussed in Chapter Five, an exception to the rule of seniority is given in the case of sick monastics. If the strict observance of seniority would endanger the sick, then it can be disregarded. There was also the special obligation of novices and junior monks to pay special attention to their teachers and preceptors. In Chapter Five, a long quote was given that outlines the duties of a novice toward his teacher or preceptor in the morning. This is a special case of seniority. The novice only owes this special duty toward his teacher or preceptor, not toward any senior monastic.

This shows that contrary to the common belief of scholars articulated by Krishan, the Buddha did not teach that all men are equal. There were distinctions of hierarchy and seniority within the monastery, based on both ordination age and spiritual accomplishment. The sick also deserved special treatment. The Buddha rejected caste distinctions based on birth, but he did recognize that some humans were born with spiritual dispositions more advanced than others. Mahākāśyapa, for example, did not need a rule to keep him from having sex, but Yaśika did. The reason for this is based on their past life experiences, and determined by birth. So,

476 See Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 492 and 314–315, respectively (index entry listing all occurrences).

477 sarvehi paṭipāṭikāya pindāya caritavyaṃ / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 53.
distinctions do matter, but those distinctions should be understood through the framework of Buddhist ideas about how temporal causality works in complex ways.

**Observing Caste Purity: The Example of Washing One’s Feet**

The observance of purity was important for those within the brahmanical caste hierarchy. The story of Ghaṭikāra showed that Jyotipāla, an observant brahman, considered the purity of his hair to be so important that he was willing to execute his friend Ghaṭikāra for polluting it by his touch. As just discussed, the Buddha’s teaching attempted to replace emphasis on ritual purity with one on inner virtue and the observance of disciplinary vows. However, this does not mean that the monastic community disregarded purity. In one of the most fascinating sections in the *Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct*, the importance of maintaining some degree of ritual purity is demonstrated. This section gives instructions for how to wash one’s feet, whose seemingly mundane importance makes this section more remarkable. Washing one’s feet is presented initially as a practical matter. At the entrance to the monastery, there is a wash basin in which monks are meant to wash their feet before entering the monastery grounds. Following the familiar pattern, a story is given in which someone does it wrong:

The Lord was staying in Śrāvastī. Now the Venerable Nandana and Upanandana and the group of six monks washed their feet in the water basin, but they splashed all the water out, turned the basin upside down, and put on sandals with wet feet. They removed neither mud nor dirt. They then took a long walk leaving mud and dirt in their trail.

Other monks came to wash their feet. They said to each other, “You should wash with sufficient [water], Venerable one. The Lord has spoken of using the correct measure of water, as in all the material means of life.”
Now the monks saw that the water basin was empty. They became annoyed. “Why is the water basin upside down?” They told this matter to the Lord.\textsuperscript{478}

The Buddha summons the naughty monks to reprimand them and give them proper instructions on how to wash their feet. Instead of giving the instructions in the normal, straightforward manner, he says, “You should wash your feet like the Elder Śāriputra.”\textsuperscript{479} He then proceeds to tell the monks a story. The presence of this story in the \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct} is significant. Although in the \textit{Mahāvastu} and \textit{Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns} it is normal to tell stories of the Great Disciples and their past lives, in the \textit{Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct} it is rare. The instructions are usually short and to the point, without embellishment. The story of Śāriputra is relatively long and rich from a narrative viewpoint. It brings to light not only the proper manner for washing one’s feet, but places it in the context of brahmanical standards of ritual purity. The point of the story is to show that washing one’s feet not only has the practical purpose of avoiding a messy monastery and preventing the annoyance of other monastics, but also generating trust among those in society who uphold ritual purity. It thus expands the scope of concern in just the manner of the goals of the monastic life examined in Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{478} nandanopanandanā sadvarggikā ca pādadhōmvanikāyāṁ jhallajhallāṁ pādāṁ dhoviyāṇaṁ sarvvaṁ udakām sthā(ccho)riya pādadhovanikāṁ omuddhikām kariya ā(r)drapādakām upanāhāhi praksiya naiva karddamaṁ parihorantai na pāmsu karddamaṁ marddentā pāmsu marddentā dirghacāmkrān academy kramanti / bhikṣu āgacchanti pādadhovanāya / te dāni āhamsuṁ / mātrāye yūyam āyuśmaṁ pādāṁ dhovatha / udake pi khalu [mātr]ā uktā bhagavatā tathaiva sarvvehi bāhirakehi jivitaparīkārehi te dāni bhikṣu paśyanti / tāṁ pādadhovanikāṁ rktāṁ te dāni odhyāyanti / kiṁ dāni ayaṁ pādadhovanikā omuddhikṛtā etaṁ prakaraṇam bhikṣu bhagavato ārocayemṣuṁ / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 323.

\textsuperscript{479} evaṁ bhikṣavo pādāṁ dhovatha / yathā Śāriputro sthaviro / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 324.
The Story of Śāriputra and the Angry Brahman

The story begins with Śāriputra staying in the city of Vaiśāli. One morning he gets up early, dresses himself, and enters the city to beg for alms in the standard fashion. While he is begging for alms, he is seen by a brahman, who is for some reason angry at the monastic community and out to cause trouble. Since there is no published English translation of this story, the incident is given here in full:

The elder was seen by a certain brahman. That brahman thought, “Here is one of those sons of bitches! He will pay careful attention to his comportment in the village, but when he leaves he will give it up. Then I will let him have it!”

But the elder acted with the same careful comportment while he was in the village begging for alms as when he returned to the monastery. In the monastery, the elder put away his bowl, washed his hands, beat out his outer robe, folded it in half, and hung it on the clothes line. He filled the water-basin with water, prepared a seat, brought a foot-washing bowl, brought sandals, brought a towel for the sandals, and washed his feet.

The elder sprinkled water with his right hand. With his left hand he washed his feet. The elder then washed his left ankle, washed his right ankle, washed his left foot, washed his right foot.

Taking the sandal wipe he placed the two sandals together and wiped first one strap and then the other, he wiped the sole of one and then the other.

After laying down the sandals, he poured water from the water basin with his left forearm and with his right hand washed the sandal wipe. He then laid it out in the sun to dry. With his forearm he poured water to wash his hands. After washing his hands he washed the water basin, threw out the remaining water and set the bowl in the sun to dry.

Then that brahman, seeing his correct behavior, was very pleased. With faith [prasāda] he says, “How careful is the honorable Śāriputra with the water basin! Even the water jug of the brahmans is not so pure. One could even drink the water from it!” Then the elder taught the four noble truths to the faithful brahman, namely, the truth of suffering, the truth of the arising of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. Then that brahman, as he stood then and there, realized the fruit of a stream-enterer.
This story demonstrates the fact that washing one’s feet has more than a merely practical purpose, as the introductory narrative seems to indicate. At the beginning of the story, the brahman is searching for a way to denounce Śāriputra and his monastic community. He is convinced that they act one way in public but another in private. This is precisely the issue that Buddhaghosa brought to attention in his commentary on the monastic goal of generating faith in the faithless. Faith depends on trust that the monastic community is not hypocritical, that it lives up to its disciplinary commitments whether in public or private. The angry brahman is clearly among the faithless, but his observation of Śāriputra’s actions in the privacy of the monastery shows him that he deserves his faith. His faith leads him to listen to a teaching of the dharma from Śāriputra, and results in his attaining the first level of spiritual attainment, that of stream-entry.
For this brahman, after seeing Śāriputra’s discipline, there is no difference between his standards of ritual purity and those of Śāriputra. The brahman does not cease to be a brahman due to his conversion to Buddhism. He trusts the monastic community as a brahman. The two states are compatible, and the monastic community is shown to respect his standards of ritual purity. The brahman even states that the foot-washing basin is purer than a brahman’s drinking vessel. The reason for this is that Śāriputra always keeps his right hand pure and never allows pollution to touch the water-basin itself. This requires a slightly complicated process with some difficult maneuvers, especially holding the basin with the forearm to clean the hands. This is a far more careful manner of cleaning one’s feet than what was done by Nandana and Upanandana, who splashed water all about and did not even manage to get their feet clean of mud and dirt.

Although the instruction on washing one’s feet has been given, the narrative is not finished. The Buddha goes on to tell a past life story that further explains why this interaction between Śāriputra and the brahman took place in this fashion. The past life narrative is introduced in precisely the same way as those in the Mahāvastu and the Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns. This is significant because it shows the commonality of treatment of narrative across vinaya texts. In Chapter One, previous theories about the Mahāvastu’s character and origin were discussed. One of these was that the addition of past life stories fundamentally changed the character of the text so that it was no longer properly vinaya. The presence of a past life story in the Topics Pertaining to Correct Conduct, which is the driest of the vinaya texts in terms of being almost completely composed of direct disciplinary instructions, shows that the inclusion of past life stories is not unique to the Mahāvastu, nor is
it a sign of its development away from being a *vinaya* text. The inclusion of the two stories of Śāriputra enriches the disciplinary message by expanding its scope beyond a personal practice.

Washing one’s feet properly was also a practice aimed at cultivating faith among the faithless. The story is not a narrative digression or tangent; it is itself the instruction, and the narrative allows that expanded scope of concern to come to light in a way that direct statement might not have accomplished. The fact that the past life story is introduced with the exact same formula as in the *Mahāvastu* and *Commentary on the Rules for Monks/Nuns* shows that this was a textual practice specific to the Mahāsāṃghika. 482

**The Past Life Story of Śāriputra and the Brahman: The Compassionate Thief**

Returning to the narrative, on completion of the story of Śāriputra, the assembled monastic audience asks the Buddha a question:

> The monks then asked the Lord, “For what reason, Lord, was this brahman pleased by the behavior of the elder?” The Lord replied, “Not only now, but in the past as well he was pleased by his behavior.” “There was another time, Lord?” “There was another time, Monks.”483

In a past life, Śāriputra was the son of a wealthy couple and lived in a magnificent mansion. There was a thief in town who was casing the house, but he could not find an opportunity to break in; the house was too well-guarded. One day, the son’s parents were called away to a relative’s house and the young boy was put in charge. The thief saw his chance. He and his men gained entry into the house and began ransacking it. They placed the young boy in the

482 The past life stories in the collections of other monastic orders do not use this formulaic phrase, though it is not unknown. This topic requires further research for a definite conclusion.

kitchen and held him there while they searched for hidden caches of gold, planning to put him to death. While the men searched, the chief thief sat in the kitchen with the young boy. He asked the young boy for a glass of water. The young boy proceeds to get a glass of water with careful consideration and grace. He washes his hands, washes the glass, dries it with a pure cloth, pours the water with his right hand, and presents the water to the chief thief. He says to the chief thief:

Chief of thieves, the water was prepared with careful consideration. There is no grass or insect there that would cause the chief of thieves discomfort.  

The thief is extremely impressed by the composure and deliberate care taken by the young boy, even in the face of his impending death. He thinks to himself, “How could it be that this boy has such regard for our welfare, we who are killers, cheats, and rogues!” He then decides that he will not only let the young boy live, but that he is going to return all the gold and valuables and leave the house untouched. The thief and his men bid the young boy a fond farewell and leave. A god then speaks a set of verses, more to the implied audience of the text than to anyone in the story:

Those young students who are endowed with proper conduct; they will obtain great benefits, like the son who gave water.

Learning proper conduct is best, and abjuring improper conduct; one who has been seized by bandits will be freed by the performance of proper conduct.

One who is to be killed will not be killed if they learn proper conduct and vinaya; They will gain lordship wherever they are, those who stay true to proper conduct.

484 senāpati pāṇīyaṁ pratyaveksitum, / mā atra pāṇīyasmiṁ tṛṇo vā bhave prāṇako vā tena senāpatisya aphāsu bhāveya / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 334.

485 mā tāvā mā tāvā asmākaṁ tāva eṣo vadhakānāṁ prayarthikānāṁ prayamitrānāṁ arthakāmo hitakāmo / Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 334.
One who is to be murdered will not be murdered, if they learn proper conduct and *vinaya*; therefore strive to be a man who upholds proper conduct.

Fierce, blood-thirsty bandits will be pleased, like those ones here; by proper conduct a non-āryan becomes an āryan and overcomes their birth.  

In these verses, the importance of correct conduct (ācāra, the same term as the title of the text) and *vinaya* are extolled in the highest fashion. Maintaining correct conduct and personal discipline is a form of self-transformation towards āryan states, overcoming one’s birth status. It is also a public performance. It causes pleasure in others to such an extent that it allows one to escape the clutches of bandits and avoid being put to death. Although these statements are hyperbolic, they might reflect a real danger of living a renunciant life in classical India. Bandits and murderers stalked the wild stretches of forest that a monastic was expected to treat as home. It was reasonable to think that a monk might find himself in the clutches of thieves and murderers. There are many such stories in the teachings of the Buddha. Recall that goal number five of the Five Goals in the *Commentary on the Rules for Monks* was to allow a monastic “to wander the directions unobstructed.” A monastic who adheres to correct conduct should have no fear wandering the forest or countryside.

Beyond this reflection of social reality, however, more significant is the means by which such a thing would take place. A monastic’s proper conduct causes such confidence and pleasure in other people that any thoughts of hatred directed toward a monk cannot be

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\text{ācāraguṇasampannāḥ / ye bhavanti tu mānavāḥ / labhanti vipulāṁ arthaṁ yathā pāṇiyadāyakaḥ / ācāraṁ śikṣitam śreya anācāraṁ na śikṣitam / corehi grhito samto mukto ācāraṅkāraṇāt // ghṛtyā bhavanty aghṛtyācāraṁ śikṣyāṇam vinayaṁ ca sthāneṣu ca aśīvayaṁ labhanti ācāragunayuktāḥ // vadhyaḥ bhavanty avadhyaḥ ācāraṁ śikṣyāṇam vinayaṁ ca / tasmān nareṇa satataṁ ācāraṅuṇena bhavitavyaṁ / raudrā lohitapāṇī caurā tusyanti tadṛśā santā / ācāreṇa anāryā āryā jātāvakraṅtāḥ //} \\
\text{Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 336.}
\]
sustained, and one cannot murder another without a state of mind rooted in hatred
(doṣa/dveṣa). Correct conduct and discipline are a means to put an end to those thoughts of
hate, in others and in oneself, and generate their opposite, loving kindness. The brahman in
the story of Śāriputra changed his mind from one full of hate to one of faith, not because of a
philosophical argument, but from witnessing a performance of ritual care. The chief bandit
changed his mind from one full of hate and greed to one of love and generosity from witnessing
a performance of ritual care. These transformations were caused by the personal discipline of
the object of those states of mind. Correct conduct and discipline can transform the state of
minds of those who perceive such actions. The monastic community can transform the world
without directly intervening or seeking to eradicate notions of caste. It can maintain the
attitude of non-judgment and non-harm expressed in this verse, examined in another chapter:

As a bee, not harming the scent or the color of a
flower, flies away, taking [only] the nectar;
so should a sage enter a village.
[One should not contemplate] the faults of others,
or what is done and not done by others;
but one should contemplate things done and not done
concerning himself. 487

At first glance, this verse appears to advocate an attitude of world-renunciation and non-care
for society. But the narratives examined in this chapter show that personal discipline—
“contemplating things done and not done concerning oneself”—has a transformative effect on
others and the world. By becoming an object for others’ perception and consumption on the
basis of which no thoughts of greed, hatred, or delusion are possible, the disciplined monastic

487 Prebish, Buddhist Monastic Discipline, 110.
creates the conditions for others to cultivate roots of health and eliminate roots of harm. As the monastic disciples the self, he disciples others. He becomes in that sense like the Buddha, who leads others to states of spiritual attainment.

At the end of the instructions on washing one’s feet, the Buddha recites a dharmapada, or couplet on dharma. Dharmapada form an important and enduring collection of teachings that are prized for their wisdom even today. This couplet, as Karashima amply documents, is found in all major collections of dharmapada. This couplet is especially appropriate at the end of this story about an angry brahman:

—one should not strike a brahman, but neither should a brahman become angry with the striker; Fie on the striker of brahmans, and fie on him who becomes angry with the striker.

This couplet expresses the idea that generating a hateful mind is never appropriate, no matter what provokes it. In the brahmanical codes of conduct (dharmaśāstra), the striking or killing of a brahman was considered a heinous offense, for which death might be an appropriate and just response. Jyotipāla was ready to put Ghaṭikāra to death for seizing him by the hair. This couplet states that such a reaction should be avoided and condemned. It echoes a verse examined in Chapter Five, in the stock verses recited during the ordination ceremony, where

488 Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 337 (Übersetzung).

489 na brāhmaṇasya prahareya nāśya mumceya brāhmaṇo / dhig brāhmaṇasya hantāram tam pi dhik yo sya mumcati // Karashima, Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ, 337.

490 The Manusmrṭi states, “If a man of a lower class deliberately torments Brahmins, the king should kill him using graphic modes of execution that strike terror into men.” Patrick Olivelle, The Law Code of Manu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 173. The Arthasāstra is less severe, but no less brutal: “When a Śūdra uses a particular limb to injure a Brāhmaṇa, he should have that limb of his cut off.” Patrick Olivelle, King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya’s Arthasāstra (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 219.
the fundamental qualities of a monastic were expressed. After going through the stories of this chapter, these verses take on enhanced meaning:

Do not return anger with anger, nor irritation with irritation;
Do not return derision with derision, nor blow with blow.

Renunciation is for she who is faithful, ordination is for she who is completely pure;
It has been proclaimed by the perfect Buddha, who verily is truth, who really knows.

Ordination, for the skilled, results in the destruction of all evil deeds;
The taming of the mind – this is the Buddha’s teaching.\(^{491}\)

The first verse expresses the same sentiment as the *dharmapada* verse: one should not return anger with anger. The second verse juxtaposes two concepts that were central to this chapter’s discussion: faith and purity. The third couplet speaks of the “destruction of all evil deeds.” On first reading, it appears that that statement is made about the individual woman being ordained, that ordination leads to the destruction of all of her evil deeds. In light of the material presented in this chapter, it could be expanded to include the evil deeds of others. For the skillful, ordination results in the destruction of both one’s own evil deeds and those of others. In relation to those who adhere to correct conduct and discipline, those who would kill them can no longer be murderers. Those who would steal from them can no longer be thieves. This might only function in relation to the disciplined monastic—that is, the murderer might still go on to murder others—but that one instance of turning away from murder plants roots of health that will eventually mature into a greater and more sustained spiritual transformation. As the past life stories examined throughout this study have shown, it takes the slow and steady building up of a habit of good practice over many, many lifetimes for the ultimate

\(^{491}\) Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, 51–52.
attainments to reach fruition. One never knows the significance of a seemingly insignificant action. The decision of the chief thief to let the young boy live created the conditions for him to gain the spiritual attainment of stream-entry in the presence of Śāriputra. Disciplinary actions have effects that transcend the self and transcend this life, transforming the world without active or violent intervention.

It should be clear that the attitude toward caste in the vinaya texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda cannot be reduced to either for or against. There is rejection of caste distinctions based on birth, but not rejection of all distinctions of birth. There is rejection of hatred and violence based on caste, but the intervention of monastic discipline seeks to eradicate this non-violently and non-judgmentally. It is the personal discipline of each monastic that transforms the world, a long-term process that transcends a specific society or lifetime. For those who seek to eradicate caste now, such as Ambedkar and his followers, this might not be fast or good enough, and there can be a reasoned debate on those issues. Whatever one concludes about the justice of the stance taken by these texts, it should at least be recognized that it is an approach consistent with itself and the overall goals of eliminating the roots of harm and generating roots of health for oneself, the monastic community, and the entire world with its gods.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined at length the narrative material within the *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda monastic order. The argument is that this material, which has traditionally not been the focus of studies of the *vinaya*, is important for understanding Buddhist monastic discipline and how the *Vinayapiṭaka* functions as canon. These two factors have been shown to interrelate. As a process and habit, monastic discipline is revealed most poignantly through narrative because the latter shows connections over time and the complex forms of causality that underlie disciplinary activity. Narrative prefigures and refigures practitioners’ narrative understanding of themselves, their past, and their future trajectory. Narratives not only convey information, but attempt to summon forth and shape sentiments of monastic practitioners, sentiments that construct the monastic self and community. The mythical narrative of cosmogenesis and articulation of the goals of monastic life provide narrative bookends for construction of a narrative understanding of practice. Cosmogenesis reveals the origins of the world and self, the stuff out of which and with which discipline works. The goals of monastic life provide targets of practice, not only for the self, but for the monastic community in relation to wider society. It provides the future horizon toward which all practice is meant to progress.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six examine themes of sexual desire, time, and caste. Sexual desire is a feature of the self with which all monastic practitioners must grapple, whatever their gender or sexuality. The narratives of the Buddha and his Great Disciples articulate a mode of practice—guarding the senses—that provides practitioners with a positive means to counteract
sexual desire while living in society. Constant repetition of such stories is itself a form of training the mind and one’s aesthetic reaction to aid one when such desires arise in the real world in ways that cannot be predicted by disciplinary texts, but can be prefigured by them. The monastic practitioner should react to beauty with detached abhorrence, not in a manner that leads to rejection or hatred of the world, but in a way that cuts off the perceptual mechanisms that lead to desire and harmful actions.

Chapter Five shows how discipline always takes place in time and is timed. Again, this brings discipline into contact with the real world of practice, and gives the practitioner a means to deliberate and juggle multiple goals of monastic discipline. Without periodicity and routine, disciplinary practice would be difficult if not impossible to put into practice, not only in relation to personal practice, but more importantly to communal and societal others. The monastic community must organize and execute collective rituals. It must recruit new members and inspire trust in those families from which new members come. All this depends on time and timing, and the subjective states that arise from a consideration of time, such as the urgency to renounce. The latter is a vital sentiment out of which the monastic ethos takes form.

Chapter Six moves to consideration of human difference and caste. This is an essential question when studying Buddhism in classical India. Although Buddhism became ascendant within Indian society at various times, the caste system never disappeared and continues to this day. How Buddhist monastic communities responded (and continue to respond) to the challenges of caste will remain a central topic of concern, not only for scholars, but those who live within such societies. The *vinaya* texts of the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda articulate a way of overcoming caste while maintaining an attitude of non-judgmental care for the world, of
transforming others without imposing discipline on them. This is not only interesting in itself as a contribution for thinking about caste in classical India, but offers an intriguing vision for the future.

The ways in which these vinaya texts cohere as a functional canon has been shown by the intertextual relationships that made the argument of this study possible. Although at times one text might have dominated discussion—the Mahāvastu above all—the arguments in each chapter show how the individual texts were speaking to common concerns that cut across individual sections or texts. The vinaya texts form a canon because they articulate a consistent vision for monastic discipline. They articulate a form of life and a way of living with and for others that requires different types of textual discourse, from rule to narrative to normative poetry. The rules would be incomplete without the narratives, and the narratives without the rules. They make sense of one another. Even if they were written at different times and by different hands, the strength of the monastic ethos holds them together. Whether we call that common ethos the intentionality of the Buddha or agree with Dutt that that is just a pious theory, it shows the power of the monastic imagination of the Buddha and his early community. In different times and places, the words of the Buddha and his disciples recreated a community in communion with its past, and this is the purpose of the vinaya texts—to recreate the monastic community and ensure the long endurance of the Buddha’s teaching into the future.


## Appendix One: Structure and Contents of the Mahāvastu

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