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Guidelines for Contributors

The *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* (JOCBS) is now inviting submissions for Volume 23 of the journal to be issued in November 2023.

The JOCBS is a peer-review and online journal, found at: http://jocbs.org/index.php/jocbs.

The JOCBS accepts articles, notes, review articles and book reviews in any area of Buddhist studies. The editorial board especially encourages submissions pertaining to Pali and Southeast Asian Buddhism on a broad range of disciplinary interests.

To submit your article, please write to chief editor, Dr Alexander Wynne: alexwynne@outlook.com.

We ask that articles be submitted according to the guidelines stipulated below:

- Articles should be between 3,000 (minimum) and 15,000 words (maximum).
- Please submit your articles (written in English) in MS-Word (*.doc, *.docx).
- Because this journal is an online publication, authors may include hyperlinks, images, videos, graphics, and so forth, as necessary and without limitation (with proper captions and credit lines).
- Abstracts in English should accompany all article submissions and consist of fewer than 200 words. Please also provide a list of 3 to 7 keywords for articles.
- Please follow the *New Oxford Style Manual* (*New Hart's Rule*) or similar volumes readily available online. British spelling and style preferred.
- We use a mixture of in-text citation following the author/date system (e.g., Gombrich 1978: 78–80) and footnotes, usually reserved for longer citations or additional information that would disrupt the flow of the main text.

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Bernon, Olivier de (2000). *Le manuel des maîtres de kammaṭṭhān. Étude et présentation des rituels de méditation dans la tradition du bouddhisme khmer*. PhD Dissertation. Institut national des langues orientales, Paris.

Bizot, François (1976). *Le figuier à cinq branches*. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient.

—— (1980). La grotte de la naissance. Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer II. *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 67: 222–273.

Cousins, Lance S. (1997). Aspects of Southern Esoteric Buddhism. In P. Connolly & S. Hamilton, eds., *Indian Insights: Buddhism, Brahmanism and Bhakti. Papers from the Annual Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions*. London: Luzac Oriental, pp. 185–207.

Li Rongxi, trans. (2000). *Buddhist Monastic Traditions of Southern Asia: A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home from the South Seas by Śramaṇa Yijing*. Berkeley, CA: Numata Centre for Buddhist Translation and Research.

Phra Thep Nyanawisit (พระเทพญาณวิศิษฏ์) (2558 BE/2015 CE). ตำราพระกัมมัฏฐานโบราณ *Tamra Phra Kammatthan Boran* [*Treatise on Traditional Meditation*]. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakut University.

Revire, Nicolas & Stephen A. Murphy, eds. (2014). *Before Siam: Essays in Art and Archaeology*. Bangkok: River Books & The Siam Society.

Ruiz-Falqués, Aleix (2017). The Role of Pāli Grammar in Burmese Buddhism. *Journal of Burma Studies* 21(1): 1–96.

Skilling, Peter. 1997a. The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland South-East Asia. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20(1): 93–107.

——. 1997b. New Pali Inscriptions from Southeast Asia. *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 23: 123–157.

Wynne, Alexander (2007). *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*. London: Routledge.

- References to Pali texts are made to Pali Text Society publications for the most part, in which case publication details are not included in the list of references. All Pali references have been assigned abbreviations by the *Critical Pali Dictionary*, which is recognised and adopted internationally. See: https://cpd.uni-koeln.de/intro/vol1_epileg_abbrev_texts.
- Diacritical marks should be used accordingly for foreign and Indic words, in italics, except in the following cases: Bodhisattva/Bodhisatta, Buddha, Dharma/Dhamma, karma/kamma, nirvana/nibbana, stupa/thupa, yoga, and other Sanskrit and Pali words that have passed into common English usage.
- If you are not a native speaker of English, please have your article proofread by a scholar who is a native speaker before submission.

All non-solicited articles will undergo a thorough review and evaluation by at least two members of the editorial board or other academic peers in the field, with readers' comments made available upon completion of the review for potential revisions.

The decision to accept or reject the articles for publication is made by the editorial board and is final.

Submissions will be accepted until June 1, 2023, to be given full consideration for the next issue.

EDITORIAL:
Suicide in Buddhism

Alexander Wynne

On Friday April 22, 2022, Wynn Bruce of Boulder, Colorado, committed suicide by setting himself on fire in front of the American Supreme Court in Washington DC. According to a *New York Times* article of April 24,[1] Mr Bruce was a climate activist and his death was an "Earth Day" protest against climate change. Apart from environmental activism, however, Wynn Bruce's suicide was apparently also motivated by Buddhism. In a tweet of April 24, Dr Kritee Kanko, a friend of Mr Bruce who is a climate scientist and Zen Buddhist priest, stated that:

> This guy was my friend. He meditated with our Sangha. This act is not suicide. This is a deeply fearless act of compassion to bring attention to climate crisis. We are piecing together info but he had been planning it for at least one year.[2]

In response to those who replied that Mr Bruce's death was indeed suicide, Dr Kanko posted a link to an old letter from the late venerable Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022) to Martin Luther King, which attempts to justify the self-immolation in Vietnamese Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh also claimed that such acts should not be regarded as suicide:

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[1] See: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/us/politics/climate-activist-self-immolation-supreme-court.html (last accessed on November 24, 2022).

[2] See: https://twitter.com/kriteekanko/status/1518102124713938948 (last accessed on November 27, 2022).

> The self-burning of Vietnamese Buddhist monks in 1963 is somehow difficult for the Western Christian conscience to understand. The Press spoke then of suicide, but in essence, it is not. It is not even a protest. What the monks said in the letters they left before burning themselves aimed only at alarming, at moving the hearts of the oppressors and at calling the attention of the world to the suffering endured then by the Vietnamese. To burn oneself by fire is to prove that what one is saying is of the utmost importance. There is nothing more painful than burning oneself. To say something while experiencing this kind of pain is to say it with the utmost of courage, frankness, determination and sincerity.[3]

This letter refers to the famous suicide of Thich Quang Duc, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who burnt himself to death on June 11, 1963 in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) [**Figs. 1-2**]. No matter how one views the self-immolations of Thich Quang Duc and Wynn Bruce, and despite Thich Nhat Hanh's arguments, these deaths can hardly be regarded as anything other than suicide. But in what sense might they be considered Buddhist? And is the fact that they were committed by Buddhists sufficient for them to be regarded as "Buddhist", even if protesting about political problems?

[3] See: https://www.aavw.org/special_features/letters_thich_abstract02.html. This webpage gives the following reference to Thich Nhat Hanh's letter as follows: "In Search of the Enemy of Man (addressed to [the Rev.] Martin Luther King)". In *Dialogue: Thich Nhat Hanh, Ho Huu Tuong, Tam Ich, Bui Giang, Pham Cong Thien addressing to Martin Luther King, Jean Paul Sartre, André Malraux, René Char, Henry Miller*. Saigon: La Boi, 1965, pp. 11–20.

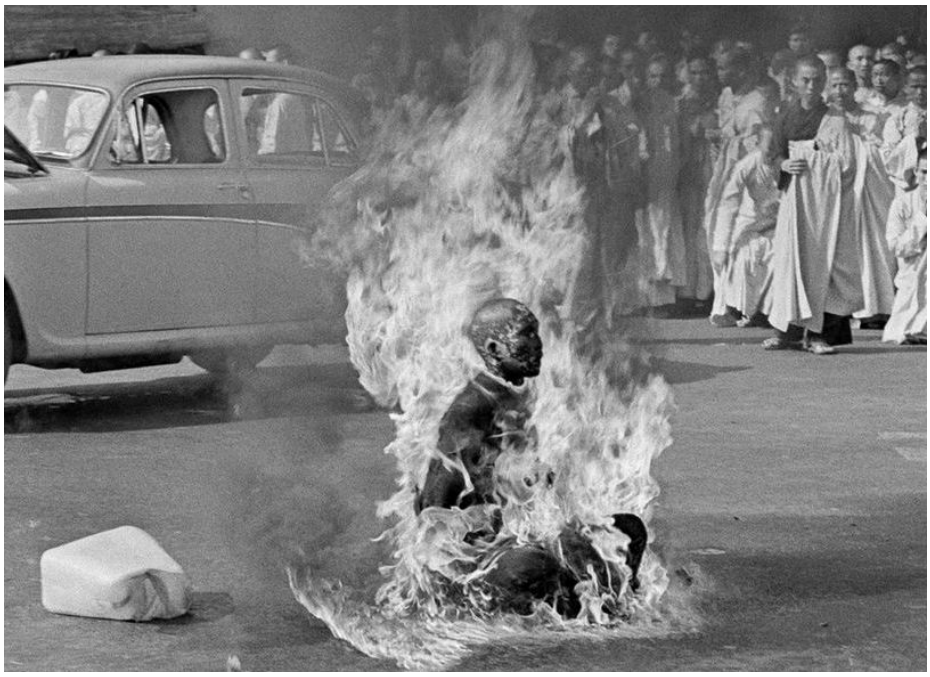

Figure 1: *Malcom Browne's photograph of Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation in 1963 (Photo © Public Domain)*

Figure 2: *Commemorative statue built in honour of Thich Quang Duc's suicide, Ho Chi Minh City (Photo © Brian Victoria)*

There would seem to be little room for the violent act of suicide in any Buddhist motivated response to climate change. Non-violence (Skt.-P., *avihiṃsā*) is a fundamental Buddhist virtue, and canonical Pali texts such as the *Kandaraka Sutta* (MN 51) decry three types of suffering: that inflicted on oneself, on others, and on both oneself and others. There is also nothing obviously Buddhist about Thich Nhat Hanh's justification of Thich Quang Duc's suicide. In short, although one could argue that the Buddhist way of calm, compassion and insight will be an immensely useful resource to help us think clearly and act effectively in order to reduce any sufferings brought about by climate change or war, suicide would not seem to be an appropriate Buddhist response to these problems.

On the other hand, the ideas of self-immolation, the burning of bodily parts and abandoning one's body have a deep textual history, in Jātakas, Avadānas and Mahayana Sūtras.[4] Self-immolation is found as early as the *Udāna* account of the spontaneous combustion of Dabba Mallaputta in the Pali Vinaya, at the time of his final Nirvana.[5] How can we explain the apparent contradiction between Buddhist precept and practice? Perhaps one could say that suicide and self-immolation were developed in the first place as figurative motifs in narrative Buddhist literature. Although not meant to be taken literally they were taken as such in East Asia, where a rich Mahayana tradition of suicide through self-immolation has existed from the early medieval period down to the suicide of Thich Quang Duc in 1963.

It is doubtful that Ven. Duc's suicide, and that of Wynn Bruce, herald the emergence of a modern Buddhist ideology that rivals the rich array of immolatory and suicidal practices that helped define new forms of Mahayana in medieval China. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see the suicides of Thich Quang Duc and Wynn Bruce, as well as of Tibetan Buddhist nuns protesting against Chinese rule,[6] as emblematic of the general transformation of traditional Buddhist values into a more politically motivated mode of Buddhist expression in the modern age.

[4] See Chapter 1 of James A. Benn, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

[5] Ud VIII 9 (Ee pp. 92–93).

[6] See: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15571017 (last accessed on November 27, 2022).

Two articles in the present issue of JOCBS consider the problem of suicide in early Buddhism from different perspectives. Bhikkhu Sujato's article is a response to an article by Georgios T. Halkias in JOCBS 8 (2015), which argues that the Indian ascetic Kalanos, who travelled with Alexander the Great and committed suicide via self-immolation, was not a Buddhist monk. My own article analyses three important Pali Suttas on suicide and their Chinese parallels. It argues that although the texts condone an act of suicide committed by an arahant, this was not a normative position. That is to say, the position came about not so much through a process of ethical/spiritual deliberation and debate, but more likely was an unintended consequence of doctrinal debates about the nature of Nirvana. The combined impact of both studies is that although suicide by arahants is found in canonical Buddhist texts, self-immolation was not a practice of early Buddhism.

The *Sahassavatthupakaraṇa* II

Peter Masefield[†]

ABSTRACT—The *Sahassavatthupakaraṇa*, "An Anthology of Amusing Tales", was composed by a certain Raṭṭhapāla of the Guttavaṅka monastery in Sri Lanka, probably some time between 900–1250 CE. Its oldest surviving manuscripts date to the 16th century; this is the second installment of these short translated stories. For Part I, see JOCBS 21: 82–103.

KEYWORDS: Post-canonical Pali, narrative literature, medieval Sri Lanka, Theravada

6. āvāṭe tiṇṇaṃ janānaṃ nipātavatthumhi atthuppatti

ekasmim araññāyatane mahānidāghasamaye suriyasantāpena nadīkandaranijjharasoṇḍikādīsu udake parikkhīṇe nidāghavegena gacchatiṇagumbādīsu ativiya milāyantesu sakuṇakesu eko suvapotako pānīyapipāsito **[10]** pānīyaṃ gavesanto ekasmiṃ saṭṭhiratananarakapapāte pānīyagandhaṃ ghāyitvā pānīyaṃ pivituṃ paviṭṭho. so tattha patitvā tato uggantuṃ nāsakkhi. eko sappo pi evam eva tasmiṃ patito yeva eko manusso pi tasmiṃ patito yeva ete tayo pi tato uggantum asamattā aññamaññam aviheṭhetvā mettacittā hutvā maraṇabhayena tajjitā tayo pi janā ekato hutvā tasmiṃ yeva vasiṃsu.

atha aparo manusso pānīyatthāya taṃ vanaṃ patto te tayo disvā vallim āharitvā tattha pasibbakaṃ katvā āvāṭamukhaṃ pappoṭhetvā pasibbakam otāretvā te tayo pi tato uddhari. te tayo pi iminā purisena amhākaṃ jīvitaṃ dinnan ti somanassā hutvā attano attano vasanaṭṭhānāni tassa ācikkhiṃsu. tato suvapotako Bārāṇasīnagare dakkhiṇadvāre mahantaṃ nigrodham atthi tattha ahaṃ vasāmi. tava kicce uppanne mama santikam āgacchāhī ti vatvā pakkāmi. sappo pi tasseva nigrodhādhassa avidūre mahantam ekaṃ vammikam atthi tatthāhaṃ vasāmi. tava kicce uppanne mama santikam āgantvā dīghā ti vatvā pakkosāhī ti vatvā pakkāmi. manusso pi Bārāṇasīnagare dakkhiṇadvārasamīpe asukavīthiyaṃ nāma asukagehe vasāmi. tava kicce uppanne mama santikam āgacchahī ti vatvā pakkāmi.

Amusing Tales, Part II
Translation

6. The matter-arising as regards the story of three folk falling into a pit

In a certain forest tract, during a great drought, when the water in the rivers, ravines, cascades and rock-holes and so on had become exhausted through the sun's heat, and when the shrubs, grasses and bushes and so forth were withering in the extreme through the onslaught of that drought, a young parrot amidst the birds, parched for want of water, **[10]** in seeking water, detected the scent of the same (as he flew) over the precipice of a sixty-*ratana*[1] pit, which he then entered in order to drink the water. After falling therein he was unable to get out. A snake also fell therein in exactly the same way, as did a human-being. These three, all being incapable of getting out therefrom, renounced harming one another and became friends. Spurred on by the fear of dying, the three dwelled then together right there as one.

Then another human-being reached that grove in search of water. Upon seeing the three, he fetched a creeper, made a bag there, pounded on the edge of the hole, lowered the bag and brought the three up therefrom.

The three became elated, thinking: "We have been given life by this man", and informed him of their several dwelling-places. Of these, the young parrot said: "In the city of Benares, at the southern gate, there is a great banyan—I dwell therein. When you have some need, you should come to me", and then departed. The snake, too, said: "There is, not far from that same banyan, a large termite-hill—I dwell therein. When you have some need, you should approach and then summon me, saying 'Dīgha!'", and then departed. The human-being also said: "I dwell in such and such a house, in such and such a street, in the city of Benares, in the vicinity of the southern gate. When you have some need, you should come to me", and then departed.

[1] *ratana*, "a linear measure (which Abhp p. 23 gives as equal to 12 *angula*, or 7 *ratana*s = 1 *yaṭṭhi*)", PED, sv.

dakkhiṇadvāre nigrodhamūle ṭhatvā suvapotakassa saddam akāsi. suvapotako taṃ saddaṃ sutvā vegena gantvā tena saddhiṃ paṭisammoditvā kim atthāya āgatosī ti āha. jīvitum asakkonto dārake ñātakānaṃ paṭiyādetvā tava santikam **[11]** āgato 'mhī ti āha. suvapotako tena hi tiṭṭhāhī ti vatvā tassa jīvitūpāyaṃ pariyesanto pakkāmi.

tasmiṃ kāle Bārāṇasīrājā susajjitauyyāne kīḷitvā majjhantikasamaye pañcapadumasañchannaṃ madhurodakasampuṇṇaṃ sītalaṃ sugandhaṃ manoramaṃ maṅgalapokkharaṇiṃ disvā nahāyitukāmo hutvā sabbābharāṇāni omuñcitvā rājapurise patitthāpetvā nahāyituṃ paviṭṭho. tadā suvapotako taṃ khaṇam uppattitvā sākhantare nilīyitvā rājapurisānaṃ pamādakkhaṇe raññho muttāhāraṃ gahetvā ākāsaṃ pakkhanditvā sīghaṃ vegena gantvā muttāhāraṃ tassa purisassa datvā appamatto imaṃ valañjāhī ti āha.

so puriso muttāhāraṃ gahetvā antonagare āvāṭato nīhaṭassa attano sahāyakamanussassa santikaṃ gantvā imaṃ muttāhāraṃ mama sahāyasuvapotakena dinnaṃ imaṃ dhanaṃ sādhukaṃ rakkhāhī ti vatvā tassa adāsi.

tasmiṃ kāle rājā sīsaṃ nahāyitvā alaṅkaronto muttāhāram adisvā nagare bheriñ carāpesi yo muttahāraṃ passati tassa rājā mahantaṃ sakkārasammānaṃ karissatī ti.

Then, later on, when the human-being who had helped them had some need, he thought he would approach his friends. Having approached them and stationed himself at the foot of the banyan tree at the southern gate in Benares, he made the sound of a young parrot. The young parrot, upon hearing that sound, hastily went, exchanged friendly greetings with him and then asked for what purpose he had come. He said that he had approached him since, being unable to subsist, he had handed over his children to his relatives. **[11]** At that, the parrot said: "Well, in that case, please wait", and then departed seeking some means by which that man might live.

At that time, the king of Benares, having sported in his nicely appointed pleasure grove, saw, during the middle of the day, a cool, fragrant, and enchanting auspicious lotus pond that was covered with the five varieties of lotus and filled with honey-sweet water. Then, desiring to bathe, he took off all his ornaments, had these entrusted to the king's men, and then entered the pond to bathe. At that moment, the young parrot flew up and hid between the branches. When there was a moment the king's men were not paying attention, he seized the king's pearl necklace, sprang up into the sky, went quickly and hastily, and then gave the pearl necklace to the man, saying: "Use this diligently".

The man took the pearl necklace into the midst of the city and approached the human friend he had rescued from the pit, and then said: "This pearl necklace was given to me by my friend, the young parrot; please guard this wealth with due care", and then gave it to him.

Then, as the king was adorning himself, after bathing his head, he failed to see the pearl necklace, whereupon he had it announced by beat of drum within the city: "Whoever beholds the pearl necklace will be accorded great honour and respect by the king".

so mittadūbhī puriso bheriyā āṇaṃ sutvā imaṃ purisañ ca muttāhārañ ca raññho dassetvā sukhena jīvissāmī ti attano katam upakāram asallakkhetvā tassa purisassa muttāhāram attano santikaṃ ṭhapitabhāvaṃ kathesi. rājapurisā taṃ purisañ ca muttāhāraṃ ca gahetvā raññho dassesuṃ. rājā tena gahitabhāvaṃ sutvā imaṃ dakkhiṇadvāre jīvasūle uttāsethā ti payojesi.

taṃ gahetvā māretum agamaṃsu. so māretuṃ nīyamāno vammikasantikaṃ gatakāle nāgarājassa saddam akāsi. taṃ sutvā va nikkhamitvā taṃ pavattiṃ ñatvā etam assāsetvā muhuttaṃ na mārethā ti vatvā sīghaṃ gantvā raññho aggamahesiyā **[12]** ḍasitvā sakalasarīre visavegam uṭṭhāpetvā attānaṃ vijahitvā tassa manussassa sahāyakassa muñcako hutvā rājānam etad avoca. mahārāja eso māretuṃ payuttakapuriso visavijjaṃ jānāti. so taṃ khaṇañ ñeva imam uṭṭhāpessatī ti. rājā tam āharāpetvā etaṃ tikicchāhī ti āha.

nāgarājā tassa manussassa ākārena jānāpesi. so taṃ jānitvā nāgarājassa guṇam āvajjitvā udakena paharitvā deviyā tikiccham akāsi. sā sukhitā ārogā vuṭṭhāsi. taṃ disvā tassa purisassa gāmanigamayānavāhanādīni datvā mahantaṃ sakkārasammānam akāsi. so puriso mama gehaṃ nigrodharukkhassa ca vammikassa ca antare karethā ti āha. rājā tattha gehaṃ katvā mahantaṃ sakkārasammānaṃ katvā tattha vāsesi. te tayo yāvajīvaṃ mettaṃ abhinditvā sukhena vasitvā āyupariyosāne yathākammaṃ gatā.

tiracchānagatā evaṃ kataññū katavedino |

bhavanti manussā ca kho akataññū dubuddhino ti ||

āvāṭato nīhaṭavatthu chaṭṭhaṃ.

Upon hearing of that order by way of the drum, the treacherous man[2] thought that he could live in ease if he pointed out that man and the pearl necklace to the king. So, he talked of the fact of that man's having placed the pearl necklace in his presence, quite overlooking the help he had done him. The king's men seized the man and the pearl necklace and presented them before the king. Upon hearing of the fact that it had been taken by him, the king engaged (his men), saying: "Have this one impaled on a stake at the southern gate".[3]

They seized him and went to execute him. As he was being led to be executed, he made the sound of the king of snakes, upon reaching the vicinity of the anthill. As soon as he heard this, the snake emerged and, upon coming to know of what was happening, he consoled him and said: "Do not execute him for the moment". He then went quickly, **[12]** bit the king's chief consort and let the force of the poison rise throughout her body. He then, abandoning his person,[4] became that human friend's liberator, saying the following to the king: "Great king, the man who is about to be executed has knowledge of poisons. He can resurrect her this very same moment".

The king had him brought and then said: "Please cure her". The king of snakes revealed himself to the human by way of a gesture. When he came to know of this, he turned his mind to the snake-king's virtue, splashed her with water and effected the queen's cure. She got up, hale and hearty. Upon seeing that human, she accorded him great honour and respect, granting him villages, market towns, vehicles and draught-animals and so on. The man said: "Please construct a house for me between the banyan tree and the anthill". The king constructed the house there, accorded him great honour and respect, and had him dwell there. The three dwelled there happily, maintaining their friendship as long as life lasted, and then, at the conclusion of their lifespan, went on in accordance with their deeds.

> Those gone to the animal world therefore are grateful and mindful of what has been done, whereas humans are ungrateful and treacherous.

The story of the rescue from the pit is sixth.

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[2] *mittadubhī*, lit "one who harms his friends". Presumably the man who had been rescued from the pit.

[3] *jīvasūla*, lit. "life-stake", a stake for execution. Executions were traditionally conducted outside the southern gate, an inauspicious place associated with death—cp Pv–a 4.

[4] *attānaṃ vijahitvā*, lit. "abandoning himself". Possibly we should read instead *attabhāvaṃ vijahitvā*, that is, that he abandoned his snake-appearance (in favour of some human one).

7. Buddheniyā vatthumhi atthuppatti

Pāṭaliputtanagare ekā seṭṭhidhītā Buddheninā̃makā dānābhiratā buddhe mamāyikā sīlācāraguṇūpetā dhammacāriṇī ca hoti. sā ito ekatiṃsakappamatthake Sikhī nāma Sammāsambuddhe cittaṃ pasādetvā cavitvā devaloke nibbattitvā ekatiṃsakappe duggatiyam anibbattitvā sugatiyaṃ yeva devamanussasampattim anubhavantī imasmiṃ Buddhuppāde Pāṭaliputtanagare seṭṭhidhītā ahosi.

tassā guṇakathā Jambudīpatale patthari. atha aparabhāge rājā mātāpitūnaṃ santike dūtaṃ pāhesi. **[13]** sā pana yadā mamantarāyo uppajjissati tadā mama saraṇaṃ bhavissatī ti ekam assasindhavaṃ posesi. mātāpitaro punappunaṃ dhītaraṃ yāciṃsu. sā buddhe niyyāditattā kāmānam ādinavabhūtattā ca taṃ kiriyaṃ na icchi. rājā pana etāya ācārasampanne dānasīlabhāvanārambhe mettābalena cintesi: imāhaṃ nissāya Buddhasāsane dānaṃ datvā sīlaṃ rakkhitvā uposatham upavasitvā devaloke nibbattissāmī ti.

tato rājā kena nu kho upāyena etam ānemī ti rājapurise payojeti. rañño payojitapurisā corakammena imam ānessāmā ti cintentā Pāṭaliputtanagaram āgamiṃsu. seṭṭhidhītā tasmiṃ kāle dhammarakkhitattheraṃ kiṃ karomī ti āha. rañño payojitapurisā corā nagarāsanne Pucimandavane aṭṭhaṃsu.

7. The matter-arising as regards the story of Buddheni

There was in the city of Pāṭaliputta a daughter of a wealthy merchant named Buddheni who delighted in almsgiving, held the Buddha to be her own, was furnished with the quality of virtuous conduct, and behaved rightly.[5]

She, atop of thirty-one aeons before now, rendered her heart devout with respect to the Perfectly Self-enlightened One named Sikhin and, upon falling from there, came into being in the *devaloka*. Thereafter, for thirty-one aeons, she continued to experience successful birth solely in a happy destiny as a *deva* or a human, without coming into being in a miserable destiny, prior to becoming, in this Buddha-age,[6] the daughter of the wealthy merchant in the city of Pāṭaliputta.

Talk of her good qualities spread over the surface of Jambudīpa. Then, later on, the king sent a messenger to her mother and father (for the sake of her hand in marriage). **[13]** She, however, looked after a Sindh horse, believing that, whenever any obstacle should arrive for her, he would be her refuge. Her mother and father begged their daughter repeatedly. But she did not wish to do so, on account of her dedication to the Buddha and on account of the peril in sense-desires. The king thought that, as she was endowed with good conduct and had undertaken almsgiving, morality and meditation, he might, with her support, through the power of her loving-kindness, give alms to the Buddhasāsana, keep the precepts, celebrate the Uposatha, and then come into being in the *devaloka*.

Therefore, the king, wondering by what means he might fetch her, engaged the king's men. The men who had been engaged by the king, thinking they would fetch her by way of kidnapping her, came to the city of Pāṭaliputta. At that moment, the daughter of the wealthy merchant asked the elder Dhammarakkhita what she should do. The kidnappers who had been engaged by the king stationed themselves in the Pucimanda Grove nearby the city.

[5] *dhammacāriṇī*, lit. "one who acts according to the Dhamma".
[6] *imasmiṃ buddhuppāde*, lit. "during this appearance of a buddha".

Dhammarakkhitatthero imissā mālaṃ pūjetvā gamanakāle tuyhaṃ gamanamaggena Mahāpucimandavanaṃ sampattakāle vegena gacchāhī ti āha. sā gacchantī Pucimandavanaṃ sampattakāle gāmadārikā assassa paṇhisaññaṃ datvā assaṃ ākāsaṃ laṅghāpesi. corā samantato dhāvitvā vegena anubandhiṃsu. asso vegaṃ janetvā dhāvati.

corā etaṃ disvā vegena dhāviṃsu. tato pi laṅghi. sā assapiṭṭhito patitvā assam evam āha. tāta ettakaṃ kālaṃ posentī evarūpe ṭhane uppanne bhaye mama paṭisaranaṃ bhavissatī ti taṃ posesi tvaṃ kin nāma putta evaṃ karosī ti? so taṃ sutvā vivattitvā oloketvā vegena āgantvā piṭṭhiyaṃ nisīdāpetvā ākāsena gantvā sakaṭṭhāne yeva patiṭṭhāpesi. sā sattāsītikoṭidhanaṃ buddhasāsane dānaṃ datvā cavitvā devaloke nibbattī ti.

Buddheniyyāmakavatthu sattamaṃ.

The elder Dhammarakkhita honoured her with a garland as it was time for her to go and then told her that as soon as she reached the Great Pucimanda Grove along her route, she should go with haste. When, as she was going along, she reached the Pucimanda Grove, some village-girl gave the horse the sign of the heel, causing the horse to leap into the sky. The kidnappers ran off in all directions in hasty pursuit. The horse summoned up haste and bolted.

Upon seeing this, the kidnappers ran in haste. Thereupon too, the horse lept up. She fell from the horse's back and then said the following to the horse: "My dear, whilst I was looking after you for all that time, when fear had arisen on such an occasion, I thought: 'He will be my protector', and protected you. Why did you do this, my son?". When he heard this, he turned, looked down, came back hastily, had her re-seated on his back, went through the sky and established her in her own place. She gave alms with respect to the Buddhasāsana costing eighty-seven *koṭi*s and, upon falling from there, came into being in the *devaloka.*

The story of the one named Buddheniyyā is seventh.

8. Āraññikamahā abhayattherassa vatthumhi atthuppatti

[14] Mahāvāḷikavihāravāsī Āraññikamahāabhayatthero nāma. so ekassa nagarassa āsannaṭṭhāne vāsaṃ kappeti. tam eko kulaputto theraṃ dvādasavassāni paṭijaggi. so therassa cīvarasāṭakam adāsi. upāsakassa dinnaṃ dinnaṃ sāṭakam imass' eva antarabhittigehe. arati nāma eko coro dinnaṃ sabbaṃ vatthaṃ rattiyaṃ gantvā āharati.

ath' ekadivasaṃ kulaputto therassa cīvarasāṭakaṃ datvā evaṃ cintesi: iminā saddhiṃ sattavāre imassa therassa cīvarasāṭakam adāsiṃ so tena cīvaraṃ katvā na nivāseti aññassa dānaṃ pi na paññāyati imaṃ kāranaṃ jānissāmī ti. puna therassa cīvarasāṭakaṃ datvā rattibhāge āvudhaṃ gahetvā maggaṃ rakkhanto aṭṭhāsi.

puna coro tassa rakkhanabhāvam ajānitvā gantvā therassa dinnaṃ cīvarasāṭakaṃ gahetvā ten'eva maggena āgacchati. upāsako coraṃ disvā vegena āgantvā coraṃ cūḷe gahetvā ettakaṃ kālaṃ mayā dinnaṃ cīvarasāṭakaṃ gaṇhāsī ti āha. evaṃ sāmī ettakaṃ kālaṃ aham eva sabbaṃ gaṇhāmī ti āha.

upāsako tassa hatthato cīvarasāṭakaṃ gahetvā anekappakārena koṭṭetvā dubbalaṃ katvā āmakasusānaṃ gantvā aññaṃ matakamanussaṃ hatthato hatthaṃ pādato pādaṃ piṭṭhito piṭṭhim āmocanaṃ katvā tassa piṭṭhiyaṃ daḷhaṃ bandhitvā taṃ vissajjetvā purimataram attano gāmaṃ gantvā bho gāmavāsino tumhe jānātha ajjarattim eko amanusso āgacchissati so tumhākaṃ vināsaṃ karissati tumhe gehadvārāni pidhāya tena saddhim abhaṇitvā dvāram avivaritvā appamattā hothā ti ugghosesi.

8. The matter-arising as regards the story of the elder Āraññikamahā-abhaya

[14] The elder Āraññikamahā-abhaya was a resident of the Mahāvāḷikavihāra. He made his abode at a place near some city. A son of good family looked after that elder for twelve years. He gave the elder cloth for robes. Cloth was repeatedly donated by the layfollower (and left) at this (elder's) house before its inner wall.[7] A robber by the name of Arati would go by night and make off with all the clothing that had been given.

Then one day, the son of good family, after giving the elder cloth for robes, thought as follows: "This is now the seventh occasion upon which I have given cloth for robes to this elder, but after he has made the robe with it, he does not wear it. There is no evidence of him giving it to another. I must know the reason for this". He once more gave cloth for robes to the elder and then, during the night, took a weapon and stood guarding the path.

Once again, the robber, unaware that it was being guarded, went, took the cloth for robes that had been given to the elder, and then came along that same path. The layfollower saw the robber, came with haste, grabbed the robber by his topknot, and said: "You are the one who has been taking the cloth for robes that I been giving all this time". He said: "Yes, master, I alone have been taking everything for so long a time".

The layfollower took the cloth for robes from his hand, and beat him in countless ways, rendering him weak. He then went to the charnel ground, bound some other dead human firmly onto his back, tying them hand to hand, foot to foot, back to back, and then sent him off. He then went to his own village very early, and proclaimed:

"Good residents of the village, you should be aware that this same night, a non-human will be coming. He will bring about your destruction. You should close the doors to your houses, not speak with him, nor open the door; please be diligent".

[7] *antarabhittigehe*, lit. "in the house with an inner wall". The sense here is that the elder's house had an outer wall surrounding his property and an inner wall protecting his living quarters.

gāmavāsino tathā akaṃsu. so coro mata **[15]** manussena saddhim ekābaddho hutvā attano gehadvāraṃ gantvā bhariyam āmantetvā anekappakārena yācitvā pi dvāraṃ vīvarāpetum asakkonto mātāpitūnaṃ pi sabbesaṃ ñātakānaṃ pi gehadvāraṃ gantvā avivaritvā sahāyassa pi gehadvāraṃ gato gatagatageh' eva yakkho āgato ti saññāya dvāraṃ na vivariṃsu.

so sakalagāme āhiṇḍitvā aññattha paṭisaranam alabhanto therass'eva paṭisaraṇaṃ katvā therassa santikaṃ gantvā imā dukkhā mocetvā maṃ sukhiṃ karothā ti āha. thero taṃ disvā karuṇāya kampamāno matamanussaṃ mocetvā dūre ṭhapetvā tam uṇhodakena nahāpetvā telanāḷikena sakalasarīre telam abbhañjitvā tassa ākoṭitaṭṭhānaṃ sambāhanto nisīdi. so mahāupāsako coro kahaṃ gato ti vicinanto therassa santikaṃ gantvā therena tassa paṭijagganākāraṃ disvā bhante evarūpassa mittadubbhino kasmā evaṃ karothā ti *āha.[8] thero mahāupāsaka imassa mittadubbhino tava cittaṃ mudukaṃ karohī ti* vatvā imaṃ gātham āha:

udabindunipātena udakumbho pi pūrati |
pūrati bālo pāpassa thokathokaṃ pi ācinan ti ||

ovaditvā taṃ pesesi. coro therass'eva santike pabbajitvā vipassanaṃ vaḍḍhetvā arahattaṃ patto ti.

corabhāvaṃ jahitvāna uppanne pi ca paccaye |
appicchāguṇasampanno sāsane hoti corako ti ||

abhayattherassa vatthu aṭṭhamaṃ.

[8] The text **āha* [...] *karohī ti** has been restored from the Sinhalese edition of the text.

The residents of the village acted accordantly. The robber, **[15]** still inseparably bound together with the dead human, went to the door of his own house, addressed his wife and, even though begging her in countless ways, was unable to have her open the door. He went to the door of his mother and father's house, as well as that of all his relatives, but they would not open the same; he even went to the door of his friend's house, yet to each house that he went, none would open the door, perceiving it to be the *yakkha* that had come.

He wandered about the entire village, but finding no shelter elsewhere, he made that same elder his shelter, approached the elder, and then said: "Please release me from all this suffering; please set me at ease". Upon seeing him, the elder, moved with compassion, released the dead human, setting it far away. He had the robber bathed with hot water, anointed his whole body with a tube[9] of oil, and then sat down, massaging the place where he had been struck. The great layfollower, investigating where the robber had gone, approached the elder, saw the way in which he was being taken care of by the elder and then said: "Bhante, why do you act in this way for such a one so treacherous to his friends?" The elder replied, "Great layfollower, you should soften your heart to one who is treacherous to his friends", and then uttered this verse:

> Through the dropping of a drop of water, even a waterpot is filled;
> through the accumulation of evil, even little by little, the fool is
> filled (Dhp 121).

Having exhorted him, he sent him on his way. And then the robber went forth in the presence of that same elder, developed insight, and reached arahantship.

> After abandoning robbery, when the condition has arisen, in the
> Sāsana even a robber can become one endowed with the quality
> of wanting little.[10]

The story of the elder Abhaya is eighth.

[9] *nāḷi*, lit. "a hollow stalk".
[10] Seemingly a verse but, if so, untraced.

9. Micchādiṭṭhikassa vatthumhi atthuppatti

[16] Kassapasammāsambuddhassa parinibbutakāle dhātuṃ nidhetvā mahantaṃ pūjāsakkāram akaṃsu. tadā eko ahiguṇṭhiko sappaṃ kīḷapetvā āhiṇḍamāno ekasmiṃ gāme rattibhāge nivāsaṃ gahetvā khādanīyabhojaniyādīhi santappito ekasmiṃ ṭhāne nisīdi. gāmavāsī manussā rattibhāge sayanakāle namo Buddhassa namo Dhammassa namo Saṅghassā ti vatvā sajjhāyiṃsu.

so ahiguṇṭhiko tiṇṇaṃ ratanānaṃ guṇam ajānanabhāvena gāmavāsīnaṃ kathaṃ sutvā sayaṃ pi namo Buddhassā ti parihāsakeḷiṃ katvā kathesi. punadivase attano kīḷāpanasappam olokento ekaṃ nāgarājaṃ Kassapabuddhassa thūpe pūjaṃ katvā āgantvā vammikaṃ pavisitvā nipannam ahiguṇṭhiko disvā mantaṃ parivattesi. so nāgarājā mantaṃ sutvā kuddho nikkhamitvā taṃ māretukāmo hutvā anubandhi. so ahiguṇṭhiko maraṇabhayena palāyanto ekasmiṃ pāsāṇe pakkhalitvā bhūmiyaṃ patamāno sayaṇhakāle gāmavāsīhi namo Buddhassā ti vuttavacanam anussaranto paṭisevanena namo Buddhassā ti āha.

nāgarājā imassa kathaṃ sutvā tiṇṇaṃ ratanānaṃ garuṃ katvā taṃ namitvā tiṇṇaṃ ratanānaṃ guṇaṃ tayo suvaṇṇamālena pūjetum assa adāsi. tesu ekaṃ pupphaṃ mayhaṃ puññatthāya pūjehi ekaṃ tava puññatthāya pūjehi ekaṃ vikkiṇitvā sukhena jīvahī ti āha. so mālā gahetvā cetiyassa santikaṃ gantvā attano ca nāgarājassa ca atthāya thūpe dve pūjesi. ekaṃ vikkiṇitvā satasahassaṃ labhitvā kapaṇaddhikavaṇibbakānaṃ dānaṃ dadanto ahiguṇṭhikakammaṃ pahāya kusalakammaṃ pūretvā saggagāmī ahosi.

tiracchānānaṃ hadayaṃ mudukaṃ ratanattaye |
gunaṃ pi so vijānāti manussānaṃ hi kā kathā ti ||

micchādiṭṭhikassa vatthu navamaṃ.

9. The matter-arising as regards the story of the one of wrong view

[16] When the Perfectly Self-enlightened One Kassapa attained *parinibbāna*, the laity installed the relic and then performed great worship and reverence. Then a snake-charmer, who was roaming about after training a serpent, took shelter for the night in some village and, after satisfying himself with foods both hard and soft and so on, seated himself at some spot. When they lay down to sleep for the night, the people who were residents of that village did so after saying: "Homage to the Buddha, homage to the Dhamma, homage to the Sangha".

The snake-charmer, on account of his being unaware of the qualities of the Three Jewels, upon hearing the utterances of the village-residents, himself uttered: "Homage to the Buddha", jokingly mocking them. On the following day, the snake-charmer, whilst examining the snake he was training, saw a king of snakes that had come after paying worship at the stupa of the Buddha Kassapa, and which was laying down after entering an anthill. When the snake-charmer recited a *mantra*, the king of snakes heard it and became angry; he emerged and followed him, desiring to kill him. The snake-charmer, running off for fear of dying, tripped on a rock; as he fell to the ground, he recollected the "Homage to the Buddha" the residents of the village had uttered at evening time, and uttered: "Homage to the Buddha" in imitation thereof.[11]

The king of snakes, upon hearing this utterance of his, paid reverence to the Three Jewels, saluted him, and then gave him three golden garlands[12] to worship the Three Jewels, saying: "Please use one of these flower(-garlands) to pay worship for the sake of my merit, one to pay worship for the sake of your own merit, and sell one so that you can live in comfort". He took the garlands, went into the vicinity of the shrine and then used two to pay worship at the stupa for the sake of himself and the king of snakes. Then he sold one, gained a hundred thousand and, as he gave alms to indigents, tramps and wayfarers, he abandoned the work of the snake-charmer, replenished his sound deeds, and became destined for heaven.

> The heart of animals is tender with respect to the Jewel-triad.
> The snake king discerned even the snake charmer's qualities—but
> what is to be said of humans?[13]

The story of the one of wrong view is ninth.

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[11] *paṭisevanena*.

[12] *tayo suvaṇṇamālena*; the text is seemingly corrupt at this point.

[13] Seemingly a verse but, if so, untraced.

10. Saraṇattheravatthumhi atthuppatti

[17] Sāvatthiyā mahānagare Sumanaseṭṭhi nāma ahosi. tassa mātugāmo Sujampati nāma ahosi. tesaṃ eko putto ekā dhītā ca ahesum. etesaṃ pana mātāpitaro kālaṃ karonto kaṇiṭṭhabhaginiṃ jeṭṭhabhātuhatthe ṭhapetvā kālam akaṃsu. tato kālantarena bhātā paṭhamaṃ kaṇiṭṭhikāya āvāhaṃ katvā pacchā sayaṃ pi āvāham akāsi. so kulaputto mātupilandhanapasādhanaṃ sabbaṃ bhaginiyā va ruciyā bhogaṃ dāsadāsiṃ niyyādesi.

sā na cirasseva gabbhinī hutvā attano sāmikaṃ āmantetvā sāmi mama bhātikassa santike vasissāmī ti nānappakārena sāmikaṃ yāci. sāmiko nipīḷito nivāretum asakkonto upakaraṇāni sajjetvā mātugāmaṃ yāne nisīdāpetvā bhātikassa gehaṃ gacchanto dvārantare Satthāraṃ nagaraṃ pavisantaṃ disvā Satthāraṃ vandiṃsu. Satthā tesaṃ upanissayaṃ disvā saraṇesu patiṭṭhāpetvā pañcasīlaṃ datvā tumhākaṃ dukkhassa uppannakāle mam anussareyyāthā ti āha.

sāmiko bhariyam ādāya bhātu santikaṃ gantvā bhātunā paṭiyādetvā sammā mama bhariyāya jīvitārakkhaṃ karothā ti vatvā sayaṃ attano gehaṃ agamāsi. so bhaginiyā pādaparicārikaṃ pariyesanto aññam adisvā bhariyaṃ pakkosāpetvā bhadde amma bhaginiyā veyyāvaccaṃ karohī ti vatvā niyyādesi. etassa pana bhariyā tassa kaṇiṭṭhikāya veyyāvaccaṃ karontī etissā alaṅkārapasādhanaṃ disvā lobham uppādetvā āhārūpacchedaṃ katvā gilānā viya sayi. tassā sāmiko kiṃ tuyhaṃ sarīre aphāsukaṃ? kiṃ kātuṃ yuttan ti? paṭipucchi. tava kaṇiṭṭhikāya pilandhane āsaṃ katvā pañcamadhuramaṃsaṃ patthemī ti āha.

tassā sāmiko attano kaṇiṭṭhikāya pañcamadhuramaṃsaṃ attano bhariyāya adātukāmo hutvā attano bhariyam āha bhadde manussamāraṇaṃ nāma bhariyan ti vatvā **[18]** anekapariyāyena taṃ tato nivattetuṃ nāsakkhi.

10. The matter-arising as regards the story of the elder Saraṇa

[17] There was in the great city of Sāvatthi a wealthy merchant named Sumana. His wife was named Sujampati. They had one son and one daughter. When their parents were about to finish their time, they entrusted the younger sister into the hand of her elder brother, and then finished their time. After some interval of time, the brother arranged the marriage of his younger sister, and later on arranged his own marriage. That son of good family handed over to his sister all their mother's ornaments and parure that she wanted, her possessions and male and female slaves.

Shortly afterwards, she became pregnant, and addressed her husband, saying: "Master, I wish to dwell in my brother's presence", begging her husband in many ways. Being unable to deter her, her husband, under duress, provided her with provisions, had the womenfolk seated in a vehicle and then, as he was going to her brother's house, saw the Teacher entering the city through the gate, whereupon they saluted the Teacher. The Teacher, upon seeing their potential, established them in the refuges, gave them the five precepts and then said that they should recollect him whenever *dukkha* should arise on their part.

The husband took his wife and approached her brother, handed her over to her brother, saying: "Please have my wife's life properly protected", and then went back to his own home. The brother, not finding any other whilst seeking out a handmaiden for his sister, had his wife summoned and gave her into her charge, asking her to serve his sister. Whilst the wife was serving the younger sister of her husband, she saw her adornments and parure, gave rise to greed, and then began to fast, lying down as though she were sick. Her husband asked: "Do you have some bodily discomfort? What should be done?" "I would like the five sorts of sweet meats, prepared in your younger sister's parure", she replied.

Her husband, not wanting to give the five sorts of sweet meats of his younger sister to his wife, said to his wife: "My dear one, a wife is indeed deadly for a man", **[18]** but was unable to dissuade her therefrom, despite various attempts.

so attano mātugāmassa antare kāmena bandhitvā attano kaṇiṭṭhikaṃ māretukāmo hutvā ehi ubho pi mātāpitūnaṃ dinnaṃ iṇaṃ gaṇhāma tuyhañ ca mayhañ ca passitvā iṇāyikā iṇaṃ dassantī ti taṃ sukhayānake nisīdāpetvā nagarāsanne dūraṃ gantvā yānaṃ maggato okkamāpetvā vanagahanaṃ pavisitvā kaṇiṭṭhikaṃ jīvantam eva makule gahetvā sīsaṃ bhinditvā māressāmī ti cintetvā māretukāmo hutvā bhūmiyaṃ pātesi.

tasmiṃ samaye kammajavātā caliṃsu. sā bhātaraṃ yācantī tam apanetuṃ asakkontī bhātaraṃ mama puttassa mukham oloketvā tava bhāgiṇeyyassa sinehena pi maṃ mā mārehī ti yācantiyā pi makule gahetvā ākaddhanto avidūre ṭhāne nigrodhamūle sīsaṃ ṭhapetvā sīsaṃ bhinditum ārabhi. sā cintesi sacāhaṃ saddaṃ muñceyyaṃ attano saddena aññho āgantvā mama bhātuno ayaṃ coro ti vatvā anayaṃ karissatī ti cintetvā mama jīvitañ cajitvā mama bhātuno anayaṃ na karomī ti cintetvā attanā gahitasaraṇam āvajjamānā avissajjetvā nipajji.

tassā evaṃ sayitvā bhātuno antare attano mettānubhāvena tasmiṃ nigrodhe adhivatthā devatā evarūpe mātugāme imasmiṃ rukkhamūle mārite devasamāgamaṃ pavisituṃ na labhissāmī ti cintetvā etāya sāmiko viyā hutvā taṃ tajjetvā palāpetvā taṃ yāne nisīdāpetvā dārakena saddhiṃ taṃ divasam eva Sāvatthiṃ gantvā antonagare ekissāya sālāya taṃ nipajjāpetvā sayam antaradhāyi.

Internally bound by his desire for his wife, he became desirous of killing his younger sister. Saying: "Come, we will both collect that loan that was given to our mother and father. When they behold both you and me, the lenders will hand over that loan". He then had her seated in a comfortable vehicle, went far away from the city outskirts, where he had the vehicle come off the path; he entered the dense jungle and then, thinking he would kill his still living younger sister by grasping her by her bun and splitting her head, he caused her to fall to the ground.

At that moment, the winds born of *kamma* became agitated. She begged her brother, but was unable to prevent him; he grasped her bun as she was still begging him not to kill her out of the affection he would have for his nephew, once he had seen her son's face, but then he dragged her to a nearby spot, set her head at the foot of a banyan tree and began to split her head.

She thought that if she were to scream, some other might come as a result of that scream, take her brother to be a robber, and cause her brother problems; then, thinking that she should renounce her life, rather than cause her brother problems, she lay down without releasing that scream, adverting to the refuge she had taken.

As she was lying down in that way, owing to the majesty of her loving-kindness for her brother, the *devatā* who resided in that banyan thought: "I will not be able to gain entry into the *devatā* community if a woman of such a kind is murdered at the foot of this tree". Taking on the appearance of her husband, he frightened (the brother), putting him to flight; then he had her seated in the vehicle, together with her (unborn) son, went that same day to Sāvatthi, had her lain down in some hall inside the city and then disappeared.

etissā pana sāmiko nagarato nikkhamanto etaṃ disvā tvaṃ kena saddhim āgatāsī ti paṭipucchi. sā tvayā saddhim āgatāmhī ti āha. so tuyhaṃ diṭṭhakālam upādāya ajja cattāro māsā atikkantā ettakaṃ kālaṃ mayā tvaṃ na diṭṭhapubbā tayā saddhiṃ nagarato **[19]** nāgatomhī ti āha. sā etassa kathaṃ sutvā tena hi imaṃ kāraṇaṃ mātāpitūnañ ca aññesañ ca mā kathehi appamatto hohī ti vatvā sabbaṃ attano pavattiṃ sāmikassa ārocesi.

sāmiko taṃ kathaṃ sutvā bhayapatto hutvā taṃ gahetvā attano gehaṃ gantvā punadivase Satthāraṃ nimantetvā mahādānaṃ datvā Satthu santike gahitasaraṇanubhāvena jīvitassa laddhabhāvaṃ kathetvā dārakassa saraṇo ti nāmam akaṃsu. Satthā tesaṃ ajjhāsayaṃ ñatvā dhammaṃ desesi. ubho pi sotāpannā ahesuṃ. putto pi vīsativassakāle Buddhāsasane pabbajitvā vipassanaṃ vaḍḍhetvā arahaṭṭaṃ patto Saraṇatthero nāma ahosī ti.

saraṇattheravatthu dasamaṃ vaggo paṭhamo.

As her husband was leaving the city, he saw her and asked whom she had come with. She said: "I came with you". He said: "Today, four months have gone by since I last saw you. I have not seen you for all that time until now. I did not come to the city[14] with you **[19].** When she heard what he had to say, she said: "Well, in that case, make sure you do not talk of the reason for this to (your) parents[15] or anyone else", and then informed her husband of the whole incident.

When her husband heard what she had to say, he became filled with fear, took her and went to his own house and, on the following day, invited the Teacher, gave a great almsgiving and then related the fact that she had retained her life through the majesty of the refuge she had taken, and that they had named their son Saraṇa (refuge). The Teacher, upon coming to know of their dispositions, taught Dhamma. Both became *sotāpanna*s. The son went forth in the Buddhasāsana when he was twenty years of age, developed insight and reached arahantship, his name being the elder Saraṇa.

The story of the elder Saraṇa is tenth.

References & Abbreviations

References and abbreviations to Pali texts follow the system adopted by the *Critical Pali Dictionary*. Volume and page references are to Pali Text Society editions.

This translation is based on the edition of Ver Eecke-Filliozat, Jacqueline & Filliozat, Jean (2003). *Sahassavatthupakaraṇaṃ*, published by the Sangha Assembly of Region III as a contribution to the royal cremation ceremonies of Phra Thammarajanuwat (Kamon Kovido Pali VI), Wat Thepsirin, Bangkok (A computerised version can be consulted on EFEO DATA FILLIOZAT folder 512).

PED = *Pali-English Dictionary* (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921–1925).

[14] *nagarato*; seemingly in error for *nagaraṃ*.

[15] Since the parents of the brother and sister are said to have died at the beginning of the story, *mātāpitūnañ* perhaps refers to the parents of the sister's husband.

The Syntax of Disagreement

Ole Holten Pind[†]

Abstract—The Pali grammarians claim that certain types of genitive or locative absolute constructions express disagreement (*anādara*). The purpose of this short note is therefore to examine if the claim of the various Pali grammarians is intrinsically supported by the evidence of the Pali Canon.

Keywords: Pali grammar, absolute clauses, Kaccāyana, *Rūpasiddhi*

The famous Pali grammarian Kaccāyana (approximately sixth century CE) formulates a rule about the use of the genitive and locative absolute that signifies disagreement.

The relevant *Kaccāyanasutta* reads:

|| *anādare ca* || 307 ||

The commentary, the *Kaccāyanavutti*, explains:

anādare chaṭṭhī vibhatti hoti sattamī ca || *rudato dārakassa pabbaji* |

rudantasmiṃ dārake pabbaji ||

This example of disagreement states that in spite of the fact that the boy was crying, (his father) left (the family) to become a monk (*rudato dārakassa pabbaji*). The example is formulated in the genitive absolute, and it is followed by a similar example in the locative absolute (*rudantasmiṃ dārake pabbaji*) to show that similar genitive and locative phrases constructed with the same noun, and with a present participle in the genitive or locative, are used with the same intention. The two examples are, however, not traceable in the Pali Canon.

The question is whether it is possible to find examples in the Tipiṭaka of similar genitive or locative constructions that express disagreement. The central Pali grammar, the *Rūpasiddhi*, which is based on Kaccāyana and its commentary, solves the question. The grammar states in *sutta* 308:

> *anādare gamyamāne bhāvavatā liṅgamhā chaṭṭhīvibhatti hoti, sattamī ca.*
>
> If lack of respect is understood, the sixth case morpheme or the seventh are inserted after the *liṅga* (that is, the grammatical gender) of the noun together with the (verbal) action.

The Sutta is followed by an example that illustrates the intended type of syntax. It reads:

> *akāmakānaṃ mātāpitunnaṃ rudantānaṃ pabbaji,* or *mātāpitusu rudantesu pabbaji.*

The genitive and locative examples state that in spite of the fact that his mother and father were crying as they did not wish it, he went forth. The example is derived from the well-known description when the Bhagavat left his parents' home to become a monk. The narrative is recorded at D I 115 and 131:

> *samaṇo khalu bho gotamo akāmakānaṃ mātāpitunnaṃ* (Be *-ūnaṃ*) *assumukhānaṃ rudantānaṃ kesamassuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajito.*

In addition, the *Rūpasiddhi* quotes a verse from Ja VI 548 10 that illustrates the use of the genitive absolute:

> *ākoṭayanto so neti, sivirājassa pekkhato.*
>
> While being cast to the ground he is carried away, in spite of the fact that Sivirāja is watching.

The Jātaka quotation is followed by a verse line from *Nāmarūpapariccheda* 1210 c-d:

> *maccu gacchati ādāya, pekkhamāne mahājane.*
>
> Death goes away with (the dead) even though a large group of people is watching.

The commentator Buddhaghosa explains in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (Sv I 284 17–20) and *Papañcasūdanī* (Ps II 170–171) that the genitive expression of the *Dīghanikāya* passage (*akāmakānaṃ* which means *anicchamānānaṃ*) is used in the sense of disagreement (*anādaratthe*). And he continues explaining that the sense of *assumukhānaṃ* is that their faces were covered in tears (*assūhi kilinnamukhānan ti attho. rudantānan ti kanditvā rodamānānaṃ*).

The use of the locative to express disagreement is found in the passage in the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* which records Ānanda's inability to understand the many signs that the dying Bhagavat gave him, as a result of which he failed to ask him to stay on for a *kappa* for the benefit of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the full benefit and pleasure (*sukha*) of gods and humans. The interesting locative readings of the *suttanta* are, as indicated below, recurrent:

> *so ākaṅkhamāno, ānanda, tathāgato kappaṃ vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvasesaṃ vā ti evam pi kho āyasmā ānando bhagavatā oḷārike nimitte kayiramāne oḷārike obhāse kayiramāne nāsakkhi paṭivijjhituṃ; na bhagavantaṃ yāci tiṭṭhatu, bhante, bhagavā kappaṃ, tiṭṭhatu sugato kappaṃ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānan ti, yathā taṃ mārena pariyuṭṭhitacitto* (D II 103; 115, 117, 118; 135ff).

Thus it is obvious that the evidence adduced by the Pali grammarians supports the idea that the same type of expressions are found in canonical Pali. All of them quote text from the Pali Canon that illustrates the use of the genitive and locative absolute to express disagreement.

The important grammarian Moggallāna presents a careful summary of the previous grammarians' presentation of the syntax of disagreement.

Moggalāna's argument occurs at Mogg II 37:

> *chaṭṭhī vānādare.*
>
> Or the genitive is for expressing disagreement.
>
> *yassa bhāvo bhāvantarassa lakkhaṇaṃ bhavati, tato chaṭṭhī bhavati sattamī vānādare gamyamāne.*
>
> Whenever an action characterises another action, then the sixth case-form or the seventh is introduced if disagreement is understood.
>
> *ākoṭayanto so neti sivirājassa pekkhato* (Ja VI 548 10*),
>
> *maccu gacchati ādāya pekkhamāne mahājane* (*Nāmarūpapariccheda* 1210 c–d).

Thus Moggallāna supports the evidence of the Pali Canon and the other Pali grammarians' statements.

References & Abbreviations

References and abbreviations to Pali texts follow the system adopted by the *Critical Pali Dictionary*. Volume and page references are to Pali Text Society editions.

All translations are the author's own. By the same author, see also *Kaccāyana and Kaccāyanavutti*. Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2013.

Suicide by Fire: How the Indian Ascetic Kalanos Was Mistaken for a Buddhist

Bhikkhu Sujato

Abstract—Suicide by fire is well documented in later Buddhist texts, especially from China, but it is not attested in South Asian sources for early Buddhism. Greek sources tell us that the Indian ascetic Kalanos committed suicide by fire while travelling with Alexander the Great. In a recent edition of this journal (JOCBS 8, 2015), Georgias Halkias argued that Kalanos may have been a Buddhist monk. However, the evidence he adduces does not establish this. On the contrary, the Greeks described Kalanos in a way that is very much unlike that of a Buddhist renunciant. It remains the case that suicide by fire is not an early Buddhist practice.

Keywords: Indian asceticism, Indo-greeks, Pali Suttas, suicide

The gymnosophist Kalanos (Καλανὸς, c. 398–323 BCE)—an Indian ascetic who travelled in the entourage of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE)—committed suicide by fire in c. 323 BCE in Susa, near the modern Iran/Iraq border. Although he is not known from Indian sources, Kalanos made quite an impression on ancient Greek writers, several of whom recorded or recounted details of his life and fiery death.

JOCBS 22: 27–45 ©2022 Bhikkhu Sujato

A 2015 article by Georgios T. Halkias posits that Kalanos was in fact a Buddhist monk. If Halkias is correct, this would advance by many centuries the date at which the practice of suicide by fire was recorded in the Buddhist community, bringing the practice to a century or two after the Buddha, within the scope of what is considered "early Buddhism". Kalanos preceded by three centuries the Indian ascetic Zarmanochegas (Ζαρμανοχηγάς, c. 1st c. BCE) who burned himself to death in Athens in 19 BCE, and who is sometimes identified as Buddhist, though with little reason.[1] The first reliably attested suicide by fire by a Buddhist was the monk Fayu 法羽 (d. 396) in China.

I do not believe Halkias makes his case. The supporting arguments are merely general background context, while the specific descriptions of Kalanos and his actions do not sound like those of a Buddhist monk. Halkias repeatedly mentions these details without noting that they are not what we would expect from a fully ordained monk (Skt., *bhikṣu*; P., *bhikkhu*).

This is especially relevant given that some of those who consider themselves Buddhists are still burning themselves to death today. These horrific acts are undertaken within a religious context which, drawing on certain later texts and historical practices in Buddhism, treats suicide by fire as a noble sign of spiritual fortitude, and grants a special significance to the "message" that they send. I want to show that there is no evidence for the practice of suicide by fire in early Buddhism.

For the purpose of this article, I am taking "early Buddhism" as the Buddha's life and a couple of centuries afterwards, during which period the portions of the Canon known as "early Buddhist texts" were compiled. As a Pali specialist, I refer primarily to Pali texts and to Chinese and other parallels where relevant, in the understanding that, for the most part, these texts were held in common among the early Buddhist community.

Halkias uses the word "self-immolation", which stems from the Latin *immolo*, after the practice of sprinkling a sacrificial beast with salted flour. From the beginning until today, it carries a sense of the sacred. It is a word whose purpose is to dignify, and hence it prejudices the discussion. In this article, I will avoid using this term, preferring literal descriptions such as "suicide by fire" or "burn oneself to death".

[1] Halkias cites Banerjee (2009: 23) who reconstructs his name as **śramana-ācārya*, which he says is "a Buddhist teacher". However, this is not clear to me at all. While both the Sanskrit words *śramaṇa* and *ācārya* are indeed used in Buddhism, as they are in other Indian traditions, I am not aware of their use in such a compound. An internet search for the term only gives results for Halkias' article.

Monastic suicide in the early Buddhist texts

First, I need to discuss the cases that speak of monks deliberately taking their own life, so as to show that they differ from the case of Kalanos. The first precept of Buddhist ethics prohibits the taking of any life, so it comes as a surprise to see a number of cases where suicide was considered to be "blameless". The texts discussing monastic suicide in the early Buddhist tradition are well known, and a cursory survey is sufficient for our purposes.

The relevant cases have been studied in the light of their Chinese parallels in a series of articles by Bhikkhu Anālayo (2010, 2011, 2012). These studies confirm that the accounts given in the Chinese sources are generally similar to the Pali ones. There are few differences relevant to our current topic, except that they tend to confirm that the suicides were carried out only by those who were already considered arahants.[2]

Monastic suicide may happen either by "using the knife" or by a mental determination. The Pali commentaries explain "using the knife" as slitting the jugular vein.

In the first category, we find the case of venerable Channa, who was afflicted with such a severe illness that he wished to take his own life.[3] Sāriputta tried to stop him, offering any support he might need. Channa told Sāriputta that he would use the knife "blamelessly" (*anupavajjaṁ channo bhikkhu satthaṁ āharissati*). When he had done so, the Buddha affirmed that at the time of death, Channa would not be reborn, signifying that he was already an arahant or perfected one.

The case of venerable Vakkali is similar.[4] Again, in the throes of an agonising terminal illness, he used the knife and the Buddha declared that his consciousness was not established anywhere, for he had already attained *nibbāna*.

The story of venerable Godhika is somewhat different.[5] Godhika is frustrated with his meditation: he repeatedly reaches a temporary liberation of mind (i.e., *jhāna*), then falls away from it. In despair, he contemplates suicide, and eventually inflicts the knife. Again, the Buddha declares that his consciousness

[2] But see Wynne 2022, in this issue of the journal.

[3] MN 144 (M III 263ff), SN 35.87 (S IV 56ff); cf. SĀ 1266.

[4] SN 22.87 (S III 120ff); cf. SĀ 1265, EĀ 26.10.

[5] SN 4.23 (S I 121ff); cf. SĀ 1091, SĀ² 30, Derge Kangyur 4094.

has not been established. The Sutta does not say why he kept falling away from meditation, or why it was so frustrating for him. The commentary, however, says that he was chronically ill (*therassa kira vātapittasemhavasena anusāyiko ābādho atthi*), and this seems like a reasonable explanation.

Godhika's case can be compared with that of venerable Sappadāsa, who contemplated suicide after twenty-five years of monastic life, having failed to achieve even a moment's peace of mind.[6] In his case, however, in the extremity of despair, he realised the Dhamma and continued to live.

In addition, there are a few other cases where an arahant appeared to know when their life was drawing to an end and made a dignified exit by a purely mental volition. It is not explained how exactly they knew that it was time to die, but presumably it was a form of meditative insight.

The most spectacular such case was venerable Dabba Mallaputta, who informed the Buddha that it was time for him to become fully extinguished. He then sat in meditation, flew into the air, and self-combusted, leaving no trace behind. The Pali text takes pains to point out that this was a function of his meditative practice of the "fire element" and was not a conventional flame or funeral pyre.[7] It is, therefore, quite different from the practice of burning oneself to death on a funeral pyre.

Anālayo (2012: 162) notes that the verse portion, which is the core of these texts, does not mention Dabba's astonishing demise, but rather uses the going out of a flame as a metaphor for *nibbāna*. It is common in Buddhist texts for a prose narrative to develop around an earlier verse, providing a dramatic and literal envisaging of the metaphor. Anālayo suggests that such may be the case here. In another article, he points out that the few mentions of "attaining the fire element" in the Pali Canon stem from later passages in the Nikāyas or the Vinaya (Anālayo 2015: 29ff). So while the story of Dabba's spectacular demise belongs in the scope of what is considered to be the early Buddhist texts, it appears to be from a late stratum within such texts, potentially dating a century or so after the Buddha.

The Buddha's own death is a more complex case.[8] The lengthy narrative of the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (DN 16) speaks both of the Buddha mindfully relinquishing the "life force", and also of him suffering a severe illness. He

[6] Thag 6.6 (p. 44).

[7] Ud 8.9f (pp. 92–93); cf. SĀ 1076.

[8] See the recent discussion of the Buddha's last meal in Masefield & Revire 2021.

did not use any physical means to die, nor is there a clear and deliberate meditative display such as in the case of Dabba. Nonetheless, it does seem as if there was a degree of intentionality in that, recognising that his time was finished, he decided to go with dignity.

Halkias adduces the Buddha's death in support of his argument, saying that he "is reported by some influential recounting to have ended his own life by auto-cremation" (2015: 178). But the early sources are clear that the Buddha's body was burned in a pyre after his death. For most of us, the distinction between burning a body *before* or *after* death is crucial. The vagueness of his allusion leaves open the possibility that he is referring to later developments in China, as Anālayo suggests (2015: 29, n. 7), but in that case it is clearly not pertinent to a discussion of early Buddhism.

All the cases of "blameless" suicide found in early Buddhist litterature, then, appear to share two features in common. The person is at the end of their natural term of life; and they have reached the state of an arahant, one who has completed the path and has no prospect for further spiritual progress.

It is the latter point that explains the oddly permissive attitude of early Buddhism in these few cases of monastic suicide. One of the reasons that Buddhism holds human life so precious is that it allows us to make good choices and progress on a spiritual path from suffering to peace. An arahant has already completed this process, so for them, the value of life lies not in their own further development, but in the good they can do for others. Merely lying on a deathbed in agony does no good for anyone.

The mishandling of Buddhist sources

If Kalanos were a Buddhist monk who lived a hundred years or so after the Buddha, then he would have been familiar with the teachings in the early Buddhist texts. That is what he would have studied, and how he would have framed his practice. Yet while Halkias quotes liberally and directly from the Greek sources, he rarely refers to early texts, and when he does so it is often through secondary sources.

For example, he alludes to "references in the Pali scriptures to 'an ill-defined category of ascetics (*yogin*s, *yogāvacara*s, later *yogācāra*s)'" (2015: 171), citing an article by Jonathan Silk (2000), who in turn was citing Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1869–1938). Rather than relying on the report of a report, a simple search of the Pali Canon would have shown him the references. It turns out these are of interest for his thesis, for the terms occur in the *Milindapañha*, the only canonical record of a dialogue between an Indian Buddhist monk and a Greek king.

A similar vagueness in sources appears when he speaks (2015: 171) of how the *Visuddhimagga* mentions certain ascetic *bhikkhu*s who were "rag-robe wearers" (*paṁsukūlika*s) or "open-air dwellers" (*abbhokāsika*s). I will not list all the citations from the Pali Canon here, as the term *paṁsukūlika* occurs over a hundred times, and *abbhokāsika* over twenty. Were he truly a Buddhist monk, Kalanos would certainly have known of these practices from their canonical sources. Yet Halkias prefers to cite from a text that stems from a later school (i.e., the Theravada), and, being composed by Buddhaghosa approximately in the 5th century CE in Sri Lanka, dates several centuries later and is 4,000 kilometres distant.

These details may be trivial in themselves, but they point to a larger problem. The article by Halkias demonstrates a lack of familiarity with actual Buddhist monastic practices in early South Asia.

The case for Kalanos as a Buddhist monk

Halkias' argument rests on a pattern of association and plausibility, rather than any specific evidence. His article is discursive, and while the material he covers is interesting, I find it hard to discern exactly the exact reasons he has for positing Kalanos as a Buddhist monk.

So far as I can tell, the substance of Halkias' argument is as follows.

- Alexander encountered the Indian ascetic Kalanos following his unsuccessful invasion of the Indian subcontinent, which was halted at the Beas River in modern Himachal Pradesh.
- Archaeological records confirm the presence of Buddhists in the area close to this time.
- The ancient Greeks were aware of the Indian categories of the *śramaṇa*s and *brahmaṇa*s, who they called gymnosophists.
- Kalanos is identified as a *śramaṇa*, as were the *bhikṣu*s/*bhikkhu*s.
- Some gymnosophists might have been been *bhikṣu*s/*bhikkhu*s.
- Some *bhikṣu*s/*bhikkhu*s undertook severe ascetic practices.
- Some *bhikṣu*s/*bhikkhu*s in the canonical texts apparently committed suicide.

- Those *bhikṣu*s/*bhikkhu*s displayed fortitude in the face of death, as did Kalanos.
- Suicide by fire is attested in later forms of Buddhism, especially in China.

In all this there seem to be no direct evidence, or compelling inference, from which to conclude that Kalanos was indeed a Buddhist monk.

Halkias's point about ascetic practices is particularly unclear to me. I think he wants to suggest that since we can see a general undertaking of ascetic practices within the Buddhist community, it is no great stretch to extend this to suicide by fire.

But this would be an extraordinary leap. The ascetic practices of a Buddhist monk are for the most part fairly mild. The rag-robe practice does not mean that you just wear a robe like a loin-cloth. It means that you gather discarded cloth from various sources, and as Halkias cites from the *Visuddhimagga*, "throw away the weak parts, and then wash the sound parts and make up a robe" (2015: 171). What results is just a robe made up of patches from different sources. As for living in the open air, speaking as someone who has actually done this as a monk, it is basically a camping trip. It is fun as long as the weather is fine, which is why it is forbidden during the rainy season. Nowhere in the early Buddhist texts is setting oneself on fire, or anything vaguely like it, regarded as an "ascetic practice".

Even in such general matters, Halkias (2015: 170) over-interprets his evidence in his search for support for his thesis. He notes a Greek report of some ascetics who:

> were naked or nearly so, living mainly out in the open air, and women could practise with them without intimate cohabitation (*Strab.* 15.1.70).

He apparently takes this as a reference to Buddhist monks, pointing out in passing that there were already women in the early Buddhist Sangha. This is true, but it is also true of several other ascetic orders, including the Jains and Ājīvikas. It is certainly misleading to cite as authority a later Greek source (composed by Strabo in the 1st century BCE) to the effect that the Brahmins "did not communicate the knowledge of philosophy to their wives" (Halkias 2015: 171), for there are numerous Upaniṣadic dialogues between Brahmin men and women, such as the discussion on matters of deepest wisdom between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.1ff), or the philosophical debate between Yājñavalkya and Gargī (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.6.1ff).

The other descriptions are equally unpersuasive. Buddhist monastics are not "naked or nearly so" but are required to be "well-covered" (P. *suppaṭicchanna*) in public (Vinaya, *Sekhiya* 3). While it is equally true that *bhikkhu*s sometimes lived in the open air, this was a special and limited ascetic practice. They lived "mainly" in monasteries.

This shows the manner of argumentation that Halkias employs. He adduces bits and pieces of vaguely-related information about Buddhism, while not acknowledging that the details of his Greek sources do not sound Buddhist at all. At best, they describe behaviours commonly found in many ascetic communities in South Asia at the time, such as the simplicity of possessions.

What kind of person was Kalanos?

As to the character of Kalanos, the main account is from Strabo (Στράβων; 64 or 63 BCE–c. 24 CE), who sourced it ultimately from Nearchos (Νέαρχος; c. 360–300 BCE), who was the admiral of Alexander the Great and, according to Halkias, a "reliable historian" (2015: 172). It is apparently Nearchos who said that Kalanos was a sycophant for Alexander, lacking self-control, a "slave to his table" who followed Alexander seeking benefits for himself and his family.

Halkias, however, rejects the account of this reliable direct witness, arguing that these are "hardly the aspirations we would expect of a professional renunciant who had completed no less than 40 years of asceticism" (2015: 173). Actually, longstanding "professional renunciants" do this kind of thing all the time. The only reason to reject Nearchos' description, therefore, would seem to be because it does not fit the narrative. We are told that Alexander bestowed gifts on Kalanos' children before departing Taxila. Halkias says this was a regular custom, quoting a remark by Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE, *de Abst.* 4.17) to the effect that in ancient India the king provides for the children of ascetics, while relatives take care of the wife. But it is not a practice that I am familiar with, and I do not believe it is attested in any Buddhist texts of the period. Generally speaking, a king would have a duty to honour and respect ascetics, but not specifically to give gifts to them or their children. Most likely, Alexander simply gave an endowment to Kalanos' children as a personal favour. This is far from the only case where the Greeks describe Kalanos in terms that sound unlike that of a Buddhist renunciant.

Let us begin with the obvious: an army is no place for a monk. It is a confessable offence for a *bhikkhu* as we know it from the extant Pali Vinaya

tradition to even go and see an army without good reason (*Pācittiya* 48). Even if they have a reason, they must not stay with the army more than two or three days (*Pācittiya* 49), within which time they must not go to any troop review or battle formation (*Pācittiya* 50).[9] If Kalanos was truly a Buddhist monk, he would have seemingly broken all these rules continually.

Further, it is said that Kalanos gave his horse to the Macedonian general Lysimachos (Λυσίμαχος; c. 360–281 BCE) before his suicide (Halkias 2015: 164, n. 5). Again, at least in the Pali tradition, Buddhist monks are prohibited from owning animals including horses,[10] and from riding cattle and by implication other animals.[11] There is also the case of the monk Usabha who went for alms round on an elephant but later felt ashamed of his actions.[12]

As another example of behaviour improper for a Buddhist monk, while Kalanos was staying with the king "he changed his dress and altered his way of life" (Halkias 2015: 173). However, monks generally keep the same number of robes for the season no matter what the circumstances are. It is not clear what "altered his way of life" means, but it seems to imply that he no longer behaved in a manner befitting an ascetic.

In justification for this, Kalanos explained he had completed the forty years of observance he had vowed. This is not an authentic Buddhist practice; monastic vows were generally taken for life in the ancient period. This was a distinctive difference between Buddhist renunciants and non-Buddhist ascetics, as pointed out by King Pasenadi in the *Majjhimanikāya*:

> It happens, sir, that I see some ascetics and Brahmins leading the spiritual life only for a limited period: ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years. Some time later—nicely bathed and anointed, with hair and beard dressed—they amuse themselves, supplied and provided with the five kinds of sensual stimulation. But here I see the mendicants leading the spiritual life entirely full and pure as long as they live, to their last breath.[13]

[9] *Pācittiya* 48–50 (Vin IV 105ff).
[10] DN 2. 45.13 (D I 64).
[11] *Khandhaka* 5. 9.3.4 (Vin I 191).
[12] *Theragāthā* 2.39 (p. 25).
[13] MN 89. 10.3–5 (M II 121).

Kalanos is thus clearly following the practice of non-Buddhist ascetics. For a Buddhist male or female renunciant, vows may be renounced anytime, but there is no established practice of undertaking them for a set period (at least, not at such an early date).

In yet another odd detail, before ascending the pyre, Kalanos is said to have cast his hair on the fire before his students (Halkias 2015: 173). Buddhist monastics shave their hair, and they do not ascribe any spiritual significance to it. This is more suggestive of an order that grew matted hair or some other style that bore spiritual significance, else why make such a public show?

Speaking of which, if Kalanos did have monastic students, he is certainly not fulfilling his teacher's duty towards them. A teacher is supposed to set a good example, not renounce his oaths, seek favours from a king, and set himself on fire.

As to why Kalanos was travelling with the Greeks in the first place, Halkias says that it was by request of Alexander himself, who was impressed with the fortitude of the *śramaṇa*s (Halkias 2015: 172). Public shows of extreme endurance (*tapa*s) were a characteristic of non-Buddhist ascetic orders such as the Jains, who practiced the kinds of superficially impressive feats of endurance that the Buddha himself dismissed as "self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and pointless".[14]

Halkias says that Kalanos attained psychic power (*siddhi*) of foreknowledge through such practices. But foreknowledge is not among the standard psychic abilities of early Buddhism. Foreknowledge was, rather, associated with the Ājīvikas, who held a doctrine of hard determinism (*niyati*), where all things were fixed and predestined. The Buddha rejected such fixed notions of the future, emphasising that the time to come is shaped by the choices people make.

The Buddha could hardly have been clearer about his opinion of ascetics who used psychic abilities for worldly ends.[15] This, as we know from the *Dhammapada* commentary, was occasioned by a contest in Rājagaha (modern Rajgir), where various ascetics competed for the prize of a sandalwood bowl by flying in the air.[16] Unwilling to let non-Buddhists win, the monk Piṇḍola

[14] SN 56.11. 2.3.

[15] *Khandhaka* 15. 8.2.17ff (Vin II 111ff).

[16] One of the other contestants, according to later Pali sources, was Pūraṇa Kassapa, a leader of the Ājīvikas. Following his humiliation at the contest, he committed suicide by tying a pot around his neck and drowning himself (Dhp–a III 208f; see Burlingame 1921: 42).

Bhāradvāja proceeded to fly up and get it, following which he did three victory laps of Rājagaha. The Buddha was not shy to make his feelings known.

> How on earth can you, Bhāradvāja, exhibit a demonstration of superhuman powers to layfolk for the sake of a miserable wooden bowl? It is like a woman who exhibits her private parts for the sake of a miserable coin. [...] Whoever should do so has an offence of wrong conduct.[17]

Thus, according to our sources, Kalanos used non-Buddhist practices to achieve a power for non-Buddhist ends.

In addition, Kalanos is recorded as bidding farewell to his students, but not to Alexander. Instead, he enigmatically promised to "meet him in Babylon in a year" (Halkias 2015: 174). This is understood as a prophecy of Alexander's death, which did indeed follow a year later in Babylon. Students of history will be familiar with such "predictions". They usually turn out to be a sign that the text was written or revised later to insert the prophecy after the events had taken place. Historians do not naively accept such accounts as evidence of psychic abilities.

More to the point, what kind of Buddhist monk would say such a thing? He could not have been an arahant, for an arahant is not reborn anywhere. From a Buddhist perspective, Alexander was an aggressive warlord directly responsible for countless deaths and unending suffering in pursuit of purely worldly goals. Wherever he is going in the next life, it is not somewhere a Buddhist would want to be.

Kalanos' final words sound even less like a Buddhist monk. When approaching death, the Buddha and other Buddhist renunciants would reflect that all things, not just oneself, were impermanent, and their passing was a natural process that must be accepted. Kalanos, on the other hand, boasted of a glorious death like Herakles, "for when this mortal frame is burned the soul will find the light" (Halkias 2015: 175).

Herakles (Ἡρακλῆς) was a Greek demi-god who, according to some mythical sources, died by voluntarily ascending a funeral pyre so that his mortal portion could be burned away and the immortal portion ascend to heaven. Halkias points out the implausibility of Kalanos comparing himself

[17] Vin II 112.

to Herakles (2015: n. 32). He passes over, however, the equally unlikely idea that a Buddhist monk would believe that a funeral pyre would provide release for the soul. Let us be generous and assume that the reference to a "soul" is a misunderstanding by Greeks unfamiliar with the Buddhist concept of not-self (Skt., *anātman*; P., *anattā*; Halkias 2015: 177, n. 36). It is still in no way a Buddhist idea that liberation is found in fire.

Why did Kalanos kill himself?

This highlights the fundamental problem in considering the extreme act of burning oneself to death as a public spectacle: why? Kalanos' last words indicate that he believed he was going to thereby attain liberation.

This question is discussed in the *Pāyāsisutta* (DN 23). Attempting to prove to the monk Kumāra Kassapa that there is no afterlife, the chieftain Pāyāsi argues:

> I see ascetics and Brahmins who are ethical, of good character, who want to live and do not want to die, who want to be happy and recoil from pain. I think to myself, "If those ascetics and Brahmins knew that things were going to be better for them after death, they'd drink poison, slit their wrists, hang themselves, or throw themselves off a cliff".[18]

To this Kumāra Kassapa replies with the simile of a foolish pregnant woman whose husband died. Desperate to establish the sex of her unborn child in order to secure her inheritance, she took a knife and cut open her belly, which only resulted in the deaths of both herself and her child. He explains:

> Good ascetics and Brahmins do not force what is unripe to ripen; rather, they wait for it to ripen. For the life of clever ascetics and Brahmins is beneficial. So long as they remain, good ascetics and Brahmins make much merit, and act for the welfare and happiness of the people, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans.[19]

[18] DN II 330.

[19] DN II 332.

This is the voice of the Buddha's followers: gentle, reasonable, sensible, always thinking of the greatest good for everyone.

There is another strand to this, for some Greek authors indicate that deteriorating health was the motivation. Kalanos was, it seems, over 70 when he joined with Alexander, and by the time he was 73, "his health became delicate, though he had never before been subject to illness" (*Diod. Lib.* 17.107; cited in Halkias 2015: 174). Remember that by this time, he had been with Alexander for three years, during which time they had travelled the 3,500 kilometres from the Beas River to Susa in modern western Iran.

He told Alexander that he should take his own life lest he "change his former mode of living" (*Arr. Anab.* 7.3.1; cited in Halkias 2015: 174). We have already heard that he had changed his way of living, and the meaning here is as unclear as it was then. Perhaps, as Halkias suggests, he could no longer meditate. Caution is warranted, though, because there seems to be no real evidence that Kalanos was an adept of meditation. There were plenty of ascetic orders that did not meditate, such as those devoted to self-mortification.

Here Halkias draws parallels to the canonical instances of suicide. As usual, he cites from secondary studies rather than primary sources, and ends up being vague and not especially accurate. He speaks of "Buddhist ascetics who didn't wish to fall into disturbing psycho-physical states because of their deteriorating health" (2015: 175). But as we have seen, the cases of "blameless" suicide were already arahants, so psychological distress was not a question.

It is also misleading to equate these cases with Kalanos, a strong and moderately elderly man whose good health was starting to decline. They were at death's door. Kalanos was not; he was merely concerned that his failing health would interrupt his practice.

Halkias quotes a Greek historian who speaks as if burning oneself to death due to declining health was a regular practice among Indian ascetics.

> Onesikritos explains that the gymnosophists regard disease of the body "as most disgraceful, and he who apprehends it, after preparing a pyre, destroys himself by fire; he (previously) anoints himself, and sitting down upon it orders it to be lighted, remaining motionless while he is burning".[20]

[20] *Strab.* 15.1.65; cited in Halkias 2015: 174.

Illness of the body is not regarded as shameful in any way in Buddhism, but rather is a natural and expected part of life. No early Buddhist text suggests that suicide by fire is an appropriate response to getting sick. The Buddha himself fell ill several times. His advice to those of advancing age was simple:

> Though my body is ailing, my mind will be healthy.[21]

If Onesikritos (Ὀνησίκριτος; c. 360–290 BCE) is accurately describing any Indian ascetics, they were not Buddhists.

Kalanos' ascetic prowess

The equanimity and stillness that Kalanos seems to have maintained on the pyre made a deep impression on the Greek witnesses and commentators. Some thought it was glorious, others vainglorious, but all were struck.

It is hard not to compare this with the indelible image of the Vietnamese venerable Thich Quang Duc (釋廣德; 1897–1963) sitting immobile while engulfed in flames as he protested the administration of the then-president Ngo Dinh Diem on June 11, 1963. But it would be a mistake to assume that all monks have such fortitude. In 2013, the young Sri Lankan ultra-right nationalist monk Indarathana set himself on fire in protest against *halal* slaughter and the conversion of Buddhists by non-Buddhist movements in Sri Lanka.[22] Horrifying footage of the event shows him pouring fuel over himself, lighting it, and then lurching about in shock like a burning zombie. There was nothing dignified or spiritual about it. Driven by hateful views, and despite the attempts of others to stop him or save him, he ended his young life pointlessly.

To endure with calm and fortitude in the face of such pain is extraordinary. But we cannot conclude with Halkias (2015: 175, n. 31) that such figures must therefore have mastered deep states of *samādhi*. There were many ascetic orders, such as the Jains, who did not practice *samādhi* in the Buddhist sense, and yet who developed an astonishing ability to withstand pain. Indeed, one of the foundational insights that led to the Buddha's awakening was that extreme self-mortification of the body is an obstacle to *samādhi*.

Halkias rejects the identification of Kalanos as a Jain, arguing that Jains did not light fires, so as to avoid harming insects even inadvertently. This is

[21] SN 22.1 (S III 1).

[22] See: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22677058 (accessed on September 5, 2022).

perfectly reasonable. But if we are to reject his identification as Jain because his actions are unlike those of Jain ascetics, we must also reject his identification as Buddhist because his actions are not like those of Buddhist renunciants.

However, Buddhists and Jains were not the only ascetic orders in ancient India. The Ājīvikas, for example, were at the height of their success around the time of Alexander, and they were well known for their ascetic practices. Many details associated by the Greeks with Kalanos and other ascetics would fit well with what little we know of the Ājīvikas, thanks to A.L. Basham (1951).

- They were a widespread and popular *śramaṇa* movement (p. 145).
- They were influential among kings in the period concerned (pp. 146ff).
- Their practices made them appealing to warriors (p. 132).
- They often, but not always, went naked (pp. 107ff).
- Their practices included self-mortification by fire (p. 110).
- They practiced austerities that impressed the public (pp. 109ff).
- They were sometimes said to be licentious (pp. 124ff).
- Their doctrine of predestination made prophecy a central part of their religion (p. 127).
- They practiced ritual suicide, albeit not by fire (p. 88, pp. 127ff).

Regarding the last point, while I cannot find any reference to Ājīvika suicide by fire, the element of fire does play a role in their ritual suicide. According to the *Bhagavatīsūtra*—a Jain text whose highly polemical and not particularly reliable account dates from perhaps the 5th century CE—one of their leaders, Makkhali Gosāla, became so angry with the Jain leader Mahāvīra that he reduced two of his disciples to ashes with his psychic powers derived from *tapa*s. Turning his power on Mahāvīra himself, it is said to have backfired (literally), and Gosāla became stricken with a delirium, consumed by a fire strong enough to consume all the sixteen nations (Basham 1951: 60ff).[23] The

[23] Similarly violent expressions of psychic power due to hate are recounted of non-Buddhist ascetics in MN 56 (M I 378).

more regular form of ritual suicide consisted of abstaining from drink, until "a mass of fire arises in his body, and he burns up his body with his own heat" (Basham 1951: 128). While these accounts do not depict the literal practice of ascending a funeral pyre, they are no more distant from the account of Kalanos than are the Buddhist canonical references.

As far as I am aware, we do not have direct evidence of Ājīvika presence as far west as modern Punjab at such an early date. Yet their presence is attested in Gujarat during the Mauryan period, so we know that they had spread far to the west by then. Somewhat later, in the Kushan period, an image in the Greco-Indian style from Gandhāra seems to show an Ājīvika ascetic beside a Buddhist monk.[24] The Buddhist site at Harwan in contemporary Kashmir, dating from around the 2nd century CE, contains tiles with what appear to be naked Ājīvika ascetics, perhaps a remnant from a pre-Buddhist use of the site.[25]

Indeed, the Delhi-Topra edict of Aśoka, which mentions the Ājīvikas, is not so very far from the Beas River where Alexander turned back: a scant 250 km, or about a week as the ascetic walks. So it would be no great stretch for a wandering Ājīvika ascetic to have made it far enough to the North-West to have created a stir among the Greeks with his public displays of austerity and prophecy.

I am not trying to prove that Kalanos was an Ājīvika, merely to show that it is easy to form a hypothesis by assembling a bunch of seemingly plausible points of similarity between one ascetic and another. Perhaps Kalanos was simply a Brahmanical wanderer (Skt., *parivrājaka*; P., *paribbājaka*), or belonged to one of the many other, even less well-documented, ascetic orders.[26] Equally, he could have simply been an unaffiliated ascetic or holy man, with no allegiance to any school. In any case, as with all the other details that we have seen, there is nothing in this that proves, or even substantially supports, the hypothesis that Kalanos was a Buddhist renunciant of any kind.

[24] See Jones 2022: fig. 7.5. The relief is kept at the Freer-Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art in Washington DC: https://asia.si.edu/object/F1949.9a-d/ (accessed on November 15, 2022).

[25] See Kaw Kher, Chapter 2, "Spread and Transition: Evidence of Ajivika cult in Kashmir".

[26] Pali Suttas at AN 5.294–302 (A III 276f) list the following ascetic orders, for many of which we know very little but their names: *nigaṇṭho … muṇḍasāvako … jaṭilako … paribbājako … māgaṇḍiko … tedaṇḍiko … āruddhako … gotamako … devadhammiko*.

Other explanations

Now, perhaps I am being too scrupulous. After all, the real lives and behaviours of Buddhist monks do not always mirror the idealised descriptions of the texts. Speaking as a *bhikkhu* myself, few things could be more obvious.

But there must be *some* basis for an argument. If Kalanos clearly said he was a Buddhist monk, I would be inclined to take him at his word. But he does not. Not a single one of the Greek accounts cited by Halkias identifies him directly as a Buddhist, or mentions a single distinctively Buddhist teaching or any feature at all that is uniquely Buddhist.

On the contrary, in virtually every instance where we learn something specific about Kalanos he does not sound like a Buddhist renunciant at all. Even the defining incident of suicide by fire is unlike the canonical sources in almost every respect: Kalanos is no arahant, he is not at death's door, and he kills himself with a physical fire.

Perhaps, then, it is the Greek sources that are confused. We cannot expect them to know all the details of the different ascetic orders. They may have simply described things inaccurately. And to be sure, there are instances where they disagree, several of which are noted by Halkias.

We cannot have our cake and eat it. If the Greek sources are reliable, we should take them seriously and not cherry-pick what suits our narrative. If they are not reliable, then there are no grounds for a novel thesis that would rewrite Buddhist history. And if they are partly reliable and partly unreliable, we need to establish independent grounds for distinguishing which portions to rely on before considering how they affect the argument.

"Luminous encounters"

In modern times, hundreds of Buddhists have burned themselves to death throughout the world. This article was prompted by the latest such tragedy, a protest against climate change. Right now, the next self-immolator is having suicidal thoughts and is considering whether to go ahead. And those who are Buddhists may well do so in the future in the belief that it is a practice of ancient and spiritual meaning. They are, in all likelihood, reading articles and social media posts where people repeat arguments that directly or indirectly pave the way for more suicide.

The fact that some Buddhists commit suicide by fire does not mean it is an established "Buddhist" practice. Buddhists are people and they do all kinds of things, many of them quite stupid. Suicide by fire occurs globally among people of all different backgrounds, and many of them, including Buddhists, look to their own scriptures and traditions for justification.

The modern spectacle of suicide by fire as a political protest has no grounds in early Buddhism. Yet the evolution from there to here is a gradual one. Were it true that Kalanos was a Buddhist monk, it would push the origins of this practice much closer to the time of the Buddha, and potentially, establish it as a genuine practice of early Buddhism.

As we have seen, this is not the case. Rather, while ostensibly building a historical argument, Halkias displays an uncomfortable tendency to romanticise suicide by fire. The title of his article describes the gruesome act of burning oneself to death as a "luminous encounter". One section is headed "An incandescent liberation" (2015: 172), another "Ablaze in honour of the Buddha" (2015: 175). These phrases are not in his sources; he is describing things as he sees them, not as his sources tell him.

Buddhism teaches us that the human state is precious and that no matter what, we always have the chance to do better. Suicide achieves no spiritual end and has no worth or place in any spiritual path. As a political protest, it is rightly ignored and dismissed by decision-makers, who do not and should not make decisions based on such extreme and destructive behaviour.

To burn oneself to death is not a "radical form of self-transcendence" (Halkias 2015: 182). It is an agonising and fruitless display, a waste of a life, and a sign of a disturbed and despairing mind. Let us please stop romanticising suicide by fire.

Abbreviations

Pali Sutta references use primarily the numbering of SuttaCentral: https://suttacentral.net/, followed by the volume and page number of the Pali Text Society editions (in parentheses). Translations from Pali are my own. Pali abbreviations follow the system of the *Critical Pali Dictionary*.

EĀ = *Ekottara-āgama*
SĀ = *Saṃyukta-āgama* (main version)
SĀ² = *Saṃyukta-āgama* (first partial translation)

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The Rehabilitation of a Japanese Buddhist Heretic

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Abstract—This study focuses on the life and death of Uchiyama Gudō (1874–1911), a disrobed Sōtō Zen priest, who had his priestly status posthumously restored to him on April 13, 1993, eighty-two years after his execution by the Japanese government for alleged participation in a plot to assassinate a member of the Imperial family in 1910. This article seeks to answer the questions of how and why this all came about and raises questions about what it means, in Buddhist terminology, to be "defeated" in the holy life and expelled from the Sangha as a result.

Keywords: Japanese Buddhist heretics, socialist Buddhist movement, Uchiyama Gudō, Zen Buddhism

Introduction

Doctrinally speaking, this article describes a phenomenon that could only happen within the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism. That is to say, only the Mahayana tradition allows for the possibility of the restoration of clerical status to someone who was formally deprived of that status for having broken

one or more of the four *pārājika*s (defeats).[1] In the Theravada tradition, should Buddhist *bhikkhu*s break any one of these rules they are automatically "defeated" in the holy life and immediately forfeit membership in the Sangha for the remainder of their lives.

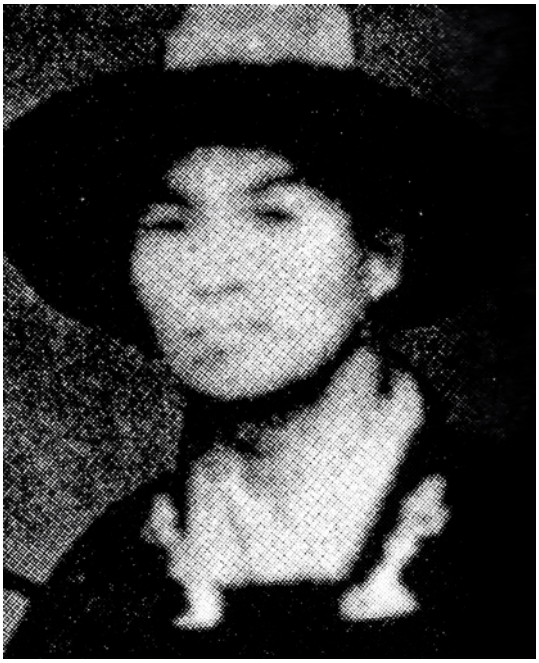

Figure 1: *Portrait of Uchiyama Gudō, 1874–1911 (Photo © https://nmmc.jp/archive-person)*

[1] The four *pārājika*s for male clerics are: 1) sexual intercourse, i.e., engaging in any sexual intercourse; 2) stealing, i.e., the robbery of anything worth more than 1/24 troy ounce of gold as determined by local law; 3) killing, i.e., bringing about the death of a human being—whether by killing the person, arranging for someone to kill the person, inciting the person to die, or describing the advantages of death; 4) lying, i.e., lying to another person that one has attained a superior human state, such as claiming to be an arahant when one knows one is not, or claiming to have attained one of the *jhānas* when one knows one has not.

Although it may be apocryphal, the *Brahmajālasūtra* (J. *Bonmōkyō*) of the Mahayana tradition offers the possibility of redemption. While those who intentionally break the *pārājika*s should still be ousted from the Sangha, as Bernard Faure notes, "the culprit can now rehabilitate himself through his own repentance and through the merits of others".[2] This article deals with one such cleric, a Sōtō Zen priest by the name of Uchiyama Gudō (内山 愚童; 1874–1911), who was expelled from the priesthood in 1909 and subsequently hung to death by the Japanese government on January 24, 1911 [**Fig. 1**]. It was not until April 1993 that the Sōtō Zen sect restored Gudō's clerical status. The Sōtō Zen sect now claims that Gudō "was a victim of the national policy of that day".[3] How did this all come about? Before addressing this question, let me briefly introduce the socio-political and religious background into which Gudō was born. Like all of us, Gudō was both a unique individual as well as a product of his times.

1. Historical background

The arrival in Japan of Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794–1858) and his small fleet of four black steamships on July 8, 1853, set off a chain of events that led to an end to Japan's 220-year-old isolation policy with the opening of Japanese ports to American trade. This in turn led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Western great powers, and, eventually, to the collapse of the ruling Tokugawa shogunate. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 signaled the restoration of political power from the Tokugawa shoguns to the Emperor though, in reality, it was the Emperor's senior advisors who exercised power in the Emperor's name.

Post-restoration Japan faced a multitude of problems as it attempted to centralise political power in the new capital of Tokyo, even while attempting to industrialise as rapidly as possible. This included the creation of a modern military that could protect Japan from the ever-present danger of being colonised by one or another of the Western imperialist powers. With these goals in mind Japan adopted the slogan of "Enrich the country, strengthen the military" (J. *fukoku kyōhei*). Eventually, however, as a newly minted "empire", this slogan was extended to include Japan's actions abroad. Its first acquisition

[2] See Faure 1998: 92.
[3] See Victoria 2006: 47.

through military conquest was the island of Taiwan following victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Japan thereby became the first non-Western nation to join the ranks of the imperialist powers.

Japan's two traditional religions, i.e., Buddhism and Shinto, were deeply influenced by the momentous changes occurring in Japanese society. While major Shinto shrines were given state financial support in exchange for promoting worship of the Emperor and his ancestors, an estimated 40,000 Buddhist temples were destroyed, together with their statuary, as a consequence of a government directive known as *shinbutsu bunri*, the separation of Buddhas from Shinto gods. On the one hand, this set in motion an attempt among Buddhist leaders to reform and otherwise "modernise" their faith while at the same time making them realise how critical it was to their survival to demonstrate their loyalty to the Emperor and state which he embodied. If anything, this was one of the most compelling reasons why Japanese Buddhist leaders went on to become such staunch supporters of both government-sponsored, rapid capitalist development at home and imperialist expansion abroad.

Uchiyama Gudō's childhood

With this background in mind, it's clear that Uchiyama Gudō's birth on May 17, 1874, came just as Japan was in the early years of its headlong rush into modernity. The village of Ojiya where Gudō was born is located in Niigata Prefecture on the Japan Sea coast. On the one hand, this prefecture had long flourished as a major rice producing area and Niigata, its major city, was the first Japanese port on the Sea of Japan to be opened to foreign trade. Nevertheless, Niigata Prefecture's geographical location, with its heavy snowfall, long, cold winters and limited growing season, worked against major industrial development. Added to this was the ever-present danger of flooding and, in the event of poor weather, occasional crop failure and famine.

Gudō's childhood (lay) name was Keikichi. He was the oldest of four children. Gudō's father, Naokichi, was a carpenter initially employed to repair Buddhist temples in the neighborhood, at least before the wholescale repression of Buddhism following the Meiji Restoration. He subsequently made his living as a woodworker and carver, specialising in Buddhist statues, family altars, and associated implements. As a child, Gudō learned this trade from his father, and later, after becoming a priest and temple abbot, carved Buddhist statues that

he gave to his parishioners. Even today these simple yet serene nine-inch-tall (c. 23 cm) carvings of Buddha Śākyamuni are highly valued by the descendants of his parishioners [**Fig. 2**].

Figure 2: *One of the few remaining statues of Buddha Śākyamuni that Uchiyama Gudō carved as gifts for his impoverished parishioners (Photo © Brian Victoria)*

Gudō was an able student, earning an award for academic excellence from the prefectural governor. Equally important, he was introduced at an early age to a social reformer by the name of Sakura Sōgōrō (1605–1653). Something of a legendary figure, Sakura is said to have appealed directly to the feudal lord of Sakura domain (today's Chiba Prefecture) in 1652 when he was serving as a headman of one of the domain's villages. His appeal consisted of a request that the lord ease the peasants' burden of heavy taxes and bad crops. On the one hand, Sakura's appeal was successful but, in those days, direct appeals to feudal lords were forbidden. Hence, Sakura was arrested and believed to have been executed (crucified) in 1653 together with his sons, and possibly his wife. He went on to become a heroic figure through numerous stories and plays about his life, an inspiration and model of self-sacrifice for Gudō and many other rural youths. Thus, discussions of the need for land reform to eliminate rural poverty were an integral part of Gudō's childhood education.

Gudō lost his father at the age of sixteen. In his book *Buddhists Who Sought Reform* (*Henkaku o motometa Bukkyōsha*), Inagaki Masami identifies this early death as a significant factor in Gudō's later decision to enter the Buddhist priesthood.[4] Needless to say, the loss of one or more parents, especially at an early age, has been a classic reason for entering the Buddhist priesthood, though the impoverishment that accompanies such a loss is often a contributing factor.

Life as a Zen priest

Gudō was ordained as a Sōtō Zen priest on April 12, 1897, as a disciple of Sakazume Kōjū, abbot of Hōzōji temple. Over the following seven years, Gudō both studied Buddhism academically and trained as a Zen novice in a number of Sōtō Zen temples, chief among them the monastery of Kaizōji in Kanagawa Prefecture. On October 10, 1901, Gudō was designated as the Dharma successor of Miyagi Jitsumyō, abbot of Rinsenji temple. Three years later, on February 9, 1904, Gudō succeeded his master as Rinsenji's abbot, thus bringing to an end his formal Zen training.

[4] See Inagaki 1974: 110.

Figure 3: *Uchiyama Gudō's temple of Rinsenji as it appears today, with a metal roof instead of the original thatched roof (Photo © Brian Victoria)*

The temple Gudō acceded to was, even by the standards of that day, exceedingly humble. For one thing, it was located in a small village in the Hakone mountains southwest of Tokyo in Kanagawa Prefecture. With little land suitable for cultivation, there were only forty impoverished peasant families available to provide financial support. Aside from a small, thatched-roof Buddha Hall, the temple's main assets were a single persimmon and chestnut tree located on the temple grounds [**Fig. 3**]. Village tradition states that every autumn Gudō invited villagers to the temple to divide the harvest from these trees equally among themselves.

Early social activism and thought

In his discussions with village youths, Gudō once again directed his attention to the problem of rural poverty. He identified the root of the problem as being an unjust economic system, one in which a few individuals owned the bulk of the land and the majority of the rural population were reduced to tenancy.

Gudō thus became an outspoken advocate of land reform, something that would eventually come to pass, but not until many years later, that is to say, only after Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War (WW II) in August 1945. What is significant about Gudō's advocacy of land reform is that he based his position on his understanding of Buddhism. In discussing this period of his life in the minutes of his later pretrial hearing, Gudō stated:

> The year was 1904 [...]. When I reflected on the way in which priests of my sect had undergone religious training in China in former times, I realised how beautiful it had been. Here were two or three hundred persons who, living in one place at one time, shared a communal lifestyle in which they wore the same clothing and ate the same food. I held to the ideal that if this could be applied to one village, one county or one country, what an extremely good system would be created.[5]

The traditional Buddhist organisational structure, i.e., the Sangha, with its communal lifestyle and lack of personal property, was the model from which Gudō drew his inspiration for societal reform. It was also in 1904 that Gudō had his first significant contact with a much broader, secular reform movement, i.e., anarcho-socialism. Gudō appears to have first come into contact with this movement as a reader of a newly established newspaper, the *Heimin Shimbun* or "The Commoner's News". By the early months of 1904 this newspaper had established itself as Tokyo's leading advocate of the socialist cause, and Gudō would later express its impact on him as follows: "When I began reading the *Heimin Shimbun* at that time [1904], I realised that its principles were identical with my own and therefore I became an anarcho-socialist".[6] Gudō was not content, however, to be a mere reader of this newspaper. In its January 17, 1904 edition, he explained why he had become a socialist:

> As a propagator of Buddhism, I teach that "all sentient beings have Buddha-nature" and that "within the Dharma there is equality, with neither superior nor inferior". Furthermore, I teach that "all sentient beings are my children". Having taken these golden words as the basis of my faith, I discovered that they are in complete agreement with the principles of socialism. It was thus that I became a believer in socialism.[7]

[5] See Inagaki 1974: 112–113 (my translation).
[6] See Inagaki 1974: 115 (my translation).
[7] See Kashiwagi 1979: 29 (my translation).

The phrase, "all sentient beings have Buddha-nature" is one of the central themes of the *Lotus Sutra*, as is the phrase, "all sentient beings are my children". The phrase, "within the Dharma there is equality, with neither superior or inferior" comes from the *Diamond Sutra*. Regrettably, this brief statement is the only surviving example of Gudō's understanding of the social implications of the *Buddhadharma*.

Even this brief statement, however, puts Gudō in direct opposition to Meiji Buddhist leaders like Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911). In his 1879 essay entitled "Differentiation [is] Equality" (*Sabetsu Byōdō*), Shimaji maintained that distinctions in social standing, wealth, etc. were as permanent as differences in age, sex, and language. Socialism, in his view, was flawed because it emphasised only social and economic equality. That is to say, socialists failed to understand the basic Buddhist teaching that "differentiation is identical with equality" (*sabetsu soku byōdō*). Or phrased somewhat more philosophically, socialists confused the temporal world of form (*yūkei*) with the transcendent world of formlessness (*mukei*), failing to recognise the underlying unity of the two. It was Shimaji's position that would gain acceptance within institutional Buddhism.

Village priest and social activist

Of the eighty-two persons who eventually expressed their allegiance to socialism in the pages of the *Heimin Shimbun*, only Gudō and one other, Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911), would later become directly implicated in the High Treason Incident (see *infra*). This suggests that Gudō, like Kōtoku, was a leading figure in the nascent socialist movement, but that was not the case. Gudō's relative physical isolation in the Hakone mountains limited the role he was able to play. He might best be described as a rural social activist or reformer who, in his own mind at least, based his thought and actions on his Buddhist faith.

Ironically, it was Gudō's relative physical isolation in the Hakone mountains that would eventually thrust him into the historical limelight. The background to this development was the ever-increasing efforts of the Japanese government and police to suppress the growing socialist movement with its pacifist platform. This suppression took the form of repeatedly banning politically offensive issues of the *Heimin Shimbun*; arresting, fining, and ultimately jailing the newspaper's editors; and forcefully breaking up socialist meetings and rallies. With two of its editors, including Kōtoku Shūsui,

on their way to jail for alleged violations of the press laws, the *Heimin Shimbun* printed its last issue on January 25, 1905. When the newspaper closed down, the urban-centered, socialist anti-war movement within Japan virtually came to an end, thereby enabling the government to prosecute its war with Czarist Russia free of domestic opposition.

In September 1905, the war with Russia came to an end with a Japanese victory. The victory, however, was a costly one, both in terms of the government's expenditure on armaments and the high number of military casualties. When it became general knowledge that the peace terms did not include a war indemnity, riots broke out in Tokyo and martial law was immediately established. In this atmosphere of significant social unrest, the government pursued its suppression of socialism even more relentlessly than before. Thus, on February 22, 1907, the Socialist Party was banned and socialists were harassed, beaten and jailed. By 1908, unable to hold public meetings, or publish either newspapers or magazines, what was left of the socialist movement went underground.

Gudō's "underground press"

Returning to Gudō, the remaining members of the socialist movement found themselves no longer able to advocate socialism openly. Frustrated, the more radical members of the movement began to engage in clandestine actions of various kinds. A few became convinced there was only one avenue left open to them, i.e., taking some form of "direct action" against the Imperial House itself. For his part, Gudō visited Tokyo in September 1908 where he met with Kōtoku Shūsui. This led Gudō to purchase the necessary equipment to set up a secret press within his own temple. The printing equipment was hidden in the storage area located beneath and to the rear of the Buddha altar in the Main Buddha Hall. Gudō used this press to turn out not only popular socialist tracts and pamphlets, but he also wrote and published his own materials, including his best-known work, "In Commemoration of Imprisonment: Anarcho-Communism—Revolution" (*Nyūgoku Kinen-Museifu Kyōsan—Kakumei*) [**Fig. 4**].

Figure 4: *Cover of the booklet written and printed by Uchiyama Gudō. The five horizontal characters in two lines at the top of the pamphlet cover read: "Anarcho-Communism". The four Chinese characters on the right-hand side read: "In Commemoration of Imprisonment". The two characters on the pennant read, "Revolution" (Photo © Brian Victoria)*

This work is interesting for a number of reasons, not least of all because it contains a pointed critique of the then widespread understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of karma. After beginning with a lament for the poverty of tenant farmers, Gudō wrote:

> Is this [your poverty] the result, as Buddhists maintain, of the retribution due to you because of your evil deeds in the past? Listen, friends, if, having now entered the 20th century, you were to be deceived by superstitions like this, you would still be [no better than] oxen or horses. Would this please you?[8]

Gudō clearly understood that the Buddhist doctrine of karma was being used to provide the justification for social and economic inequality. That is to say, if tenant farmers were impoverished, they had no one to blame but themselves and their own past actions. Shaku Sōen (1860–1919), the Rinzai Zen priest who was D.T. Suzuki's master, was typical of those Buddhist leaders who advocated this interpretation. He said:

> We are born in the world of variety; some are poor and unfortunate, others are wealthy and happy. This state of variety will be repeated again and again in our future lives. But to whom shall we complain of our misery? To none but ourselves![9]

Gudō was also critical of certain aspects of Buddhist practice. For example, on May 30, 1904, he wrote a letter of protest to the abbot of Jōsenji, Orihashi Daikō. In this letter he requested that the Sōtō sect cleanse itself of the practice of selling temple abbotships to the highest bidder. When Daikō refused to endorse his position, Gudō expressed his determination to push for this reform on his own. The real significance of "In Commemoration of Imprisonment: Anarcho-Communism—Revolution" lay not in its critique of certain aspects of Buddhist doctrine, but rather in its blistering denial of the heart and soul of the Meiji political system, i.e., the Imperial system. It was, in fact, this denial of Japan's Imperial system that more than any other single factor led to Gudō's subsequent arrest, imprisonment, and execution. He wrote:

> There are three leeches who suck the people's blood: the Emperor, the rich, and the big landowners. [...] The big boss of the present

[8] See Kashiwagi 1979: 197 (my translation).
[9] See Yokoyama 1993: 136.

> government, the Emperor, is not the son of the gods as your primary school teachers and others would have you believe. The ancestors of the present Emperor came forth from one corner of Kyushu, killing and robbing people as they went. They then destroyed their fellow thieves, Nagasune-hiko and others. [...] It should be readily obvious that the Emperor is not a god if you but think about it for a moment. When it is said that [the Imperial Dynasty] has continued for 2,500 years, it may seem as if [the present Emperor] is divine, but down through the ages the Emperors have been tormented by foreign opponents and, domestically, treated as puppets by their own vassals. [...] Although these are well-known facts, university professors and their students, weaklings that they are, refuse to either say or write anything about it. Instead, they attempt to deceive both others and themselves, knowing all along the whole thing is a pack of lies.[10]

Imprisonment

Gudō printed between 1,000 to 2,000 copies of the tract containing the foregoing passages and mailed them to former readers of the *Heimin Shimbun* in small lots wrapped in plain paper. Its radical content, especially its scathing denial of the Imperial system, so frightened some recipients that they immediately burned all the copies they received. Others, however, were so excited by its contents that they rushed out onto to the streets to distribute it to passersby. Predictably, it was not long before copies fell into the hands of the police. This in turn sparked an immediate nationwide search for both its author and the place and means of its production.

On May 24, 1909, Gudō was arrested on his way back to Rinsenji after having finished a month of Zen training at Eiheiji, one of the Sōtō sect's two chief monasteries. He was initially charged with violations of the press and publications laws and, at first, believed he would simply be fined and released. Upon searching his temple of Rinsenji, however, the police claimed to have discovered a cache of explosive materials including twelve sticks of dynamite, four packages of explosive gelatin, and a supply of fuses.

[10] See Kashiwagi 1979: 198–201 (my translation).

One contemporary commentator, Kashiwagi Ryūhō claims, though without presenting any proof, that the charges relating to the possession of explosive materials were false. In an article entitled "Martyr Uchiyama Gudō" Kashiwagi states: "The dynamite had been stored at his temple in conjunction with the construction of the Hakone mountain railroad. It had nothing to do with Gudō".[11] Nevertheless, Gudō was convicted of both charges and initially sentenced to a total of twelve years' imprisonment. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to seven years. On July 6, 1909, even before his conviction, officials of the Sōtō Zen sect moved to deprive Gudō of his abbotship at Rinsenji. Once he had been convicted, they quickly took more serious action. Thus, on June 21, 1910, Gudō was deprived of his status as a Sōtō Zen priest though he continued to regard himself as one to the end of his life.

The High Treason Incident

It was the High Treason Incident (*Taigyaku Jiken*) of 1910 that first brought public attention to the existence of politically radical Buddhist priests. Specifically, there were three Buddhist priests who were arrested, and convicted for their alleged participation in a conspiracy to kill one or more members of the Imperial family. These three were part of a larger group of twenty-six in all who were also convicted of the same crime. Of the three priests, Uchiyama Gudō was the only one to be executed. Although the remaining two were also initially sentenced to death, they later had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. Both of them would eventually die in prison, though the Shin (True Pure Land) sect priest, Takagi Kenmyō (1864–1914) died at his own hands. The remaining priest was Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated Mineo Setsudō (1885–1919).

The High Treason Incident began on May 25, 1910, when two socialists, Miyashita Takichi (1875–1911) and Niimura Tadao (1887–1911) were arrested in Nagano Prefecture after police had searched their quarters and found chemicals used to make explosives. In the minds of the police this was sufficient evidence to indicate the existence of a wider conspiracy against the Imperial House. This in turn led to Kōtoku Shūsui's arrest a week later, and the investigation and interrogation of hundreds of men and women in the following months. Although by this time Gudō had already been in prison for a full year, this did not prevent him from becoming a suspect once again.

[11] See Kashiwagi 1984: 11 (my translation).

At the conclusion of their investigation, charges were brought against a total of twenty-six persons, including Gudō, the two additional priests, and one woman, Kanno Sugako (1881–1911). If convicted under Article 73, i.e., "Crimes against the throne", of the new criminal code, all of them could face the death penalty. Under Article 73 prosecutors had only to show that the defendants "intended" to bring harm to members of the Imperial House, not that they had acted on this intent in any concrete way. Thus, what was on trial were ideas, not facts. The trial commenced in Tokyo on December 10, 1910. Kanno Sugako not only admitted in court that she had been involved in the alleged conspiracy but indicated how many others had been involved as well. Upon being asked by the presiding judge, Tsuru Jōichirō (1858–1926), if she wished to make a final statement, Kanno responded:

> From the outset I knew that our plan would not succeed if we let a lot of people in on it. Only four of us were involved in the plan. It is a crime that involves only the four of us. But this court, as well as the preliminary interrogators, treated it as a plan that involved a large number of people. That is a complete misunderstanding of the case. Because of this misunderstanding a large number of people have been made to suffer. You are aware of this. [...] If these people are killed for something that they knew nothing about, not only will it be a grave tragedy for the persons concerned, but their relatives and friends will feel bitterness toward the government. Because we hatched this plan, a large number of innocent people may be executed.[12]

In her diary entry for January 21, 1911, Kanno identified the other persons involved in the plot besides herself as being Kōtoku, Miyashita, Niimura and Furukawa Rikisaku (1884–1911). Kanno's plea on behalf of the other defendants fell on deaf ears. As for Gudō, Chief Prosecutor Hiranuma Kiichirō (1867–1952) went on to identify his earlier writing, with its uncompromising denial of the Imperial system, as "the most heinous book ever written since the beginning of Japanese history".[13] He also mentioned a second tract which Gudō had printed, entitled "A Handbook for Imperial Soldiers" (*Teikoku Gunjin Zayū no Mei*).

[12] See Hane 1988: 57.

[13] See Inagaki 1974: 128 (my translation).

In this, Gudō went so far as to call on conscripts to desert their encampments *en masse.* Additionally, Gudō repeatedly and forcefully advocated both land reform in the countryside and democratic rights for all citizens.

Execution

There was never any doubt at the time that the defendants would be found guilty. The only uncertainty was how severe their penalties would be. On January 18, 1911, little more than a month after the trial began, that uncertainty vanished when the court rendered its verdict. All defendants were found guilty, and twenty-four of them, Gudō and the two other Buddhist priests, were condemned to death. However, on January 19, a day later, an Imperial rescript was issued which commuted the sentences of twelve of the condemned to life imprisonment. In this way, two of the Buddhist priests, i.e., Takagi Kenmyō and Mineo Setsudō were spared the hangman's noose, but, as already noted, both of them would later die in prison. Mikiso Hane has suggested why the government was so determined to convict all of the defendants:

> The authorities (under Prime Minister Katsura Tarō [1848–1913], who had been directed by the [elder statesman] Yamagata Aritomo [1838–1922] to come down hard on the leftists) rounded up everybody who had the slightest connection with Kōtoku and charged them with complicity in the plot.[14]

Yamagata was particularly concerned by the fact that the court testimony of nearly all the defendants revealed a loss of faith in the divinity of the Emperor. For Yamagata, this loss of respect for the core of the state structure represented a serious threat to the future of the nation. Those holding this view had to be eliminated by any means necessary.

Acting with unprecedented haste, the government executed Gudō and his ten alleged male co-conspirators inside the Ichigaya Prison compound on the morning of January 24, 1911, less than a week after their conviction. Kanno Sugako, the only woman, would die the following day. Gudō was the fifth to die, and Yoshida Kyūichi records that as he climbed the scaffold stairs, "he gave not the slightest hint of emotional distress, rather he appeared serene, even cheerful—so much so that the attending prison chaplain bowed as he passed".[15] The next day, when Gudō's younger brother, Seiji, came to

[14] See Hane 1988: 56.

[15] See Yoshida 1959: 476 (my translation).

collect his body, he demanded that the coffin be opened. Looking at Gudō's peaceful countenance, Seiji said, "Oh, elder brother, you passed away without suffering. [...] What a superb face you have in death!".[16]

Post-execution developments

As his execution indicates, the authorities clearly considered Gudō to be the "worst" of the three Buddhist priests. This is not surprising for, of all the priests, Gudō was the most actively involved in the socialist movement that the Meiji government found so reprehensible. Gudō also left behind the most written material related to his beliefs. That said, even Gudō's writings contain relatively little that directly addresses the relationship he saw between the *Buddhadharma* and his own social activism. This is hardly surprising inasmuch as neither he, nor his two fellow priests, claimed to be Buddhist scholars or possess special expertise in either Buddhist doctrine or social/political/economic theory.

In contemporary terms, Gudō and his fellow priests might best be described as "social activists" who, based on their Buddhist faith, were attempting to alleviate the mental and physical suffering they saw around them, especially in Japan's impoverished rural areas. In addition, the Japanese government attempted, even before their convictions, to turn all of those allegedly involved in the High Treason Incident into "non-persons". One example of this was the fact that the entire court proceedings were conducted behind closed doors with no press coverage allowed, for the government argued that doing so would be prejudicial to peace and order as well as the maintenance of public morality.

In yet another example of government actions, Gudō's temple of Rinsenji was raided and all his writings and correspondence taken away as evidence never to be seen again. The only things left behind were a few statues of Buddha Śākyamuni that Gudō had carved and gifted to his parishioners. Even his death did not satisfy the authorities, for they would not allow his name to appear on so much as a grave marker at Rinsenji. Instead, his grave was marked by a small triangular rock not more than 50 cm high [**Fig. 5**]. When one of his parishioners dared to leave some flowers on his unmarked grave, the police instituted a village-wide, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, search to identify the offender.

[16] See Yoshida 1959: 478 (my translation).

Figure 5: *The small, uncarved, triangular stone in the foreground that originally served as Uchiyama Gudō's one and only grave marker*
(Photo © Brian Victoria)

The Sōtō Zen sect reacts

Readers will not be surprised to learn that Sōtō Zen sect officials raised no objection to Gudō's execution despite the fact that he was one of their own. In fact, as previously mentioned, Gudō had already been disrobed as a result of his previous convictions for illegal printing. Nevertheless, the administrative head of that sect, Morita Goyū (1834–1915), on the day preceding Gudō's execution, felt obliged to issue a statement abjectly apologising for not having adequately controlled the likes of Gudō. In part, Morita said:

> I am profoundly dumbstruck that there could have been someone like Uchiyama Gudō in this sect, a sect whose basic principle has been, since its founding, to respect the Emperor and protect the state. I therefore apologise most profusely and profoundly and pledge that I will guide and educate the priests of this sect to devote all of their energies to their proper duties and thereby actively practice being of service to society.[17]

In addition to this apology, the Sōtō sect hierarchy also issued a number of directives to all affiliated temples and educational institutions. Typical of these was the directive of February 15, 1911, which, after condemning Gudō yet again, advised sect adherents to "exercise vigilance over both themselves and others [...] in order to expiate this most serious crime in the sect's last one thousand years".[18]

The Rinzai Zen sect's reaction

Although a second Zen priest, Mineo Setsudo, affiliated with the Rinzai Zen sect, was not executed, but given a life sentence, leaders of the fifteen branches of the Rinzai Zen sect issued similar apologies and directives to those of the Sōtō sect. In the case of Myōshinji, the largest branch of Rinzai Zen, the administrative head, Toyoda Dokutan (1840–1917) had this to say:

> The essence of the Rinzai sect since its founding in this country has been to protect the nation through the spread of Zen. It is for this reason that in front of the central Buddha image in our sect's temples we have reverently placed a memorial tablet inscribed

[17] See *Sōtō Shūhō*, 1911, no. 340 (my translation).
[18] Ibid. (my translation).

> with the words, "May the current Emperor live for ten thousand years", thereby making our temples training centers for pacifying and preserving our country. [...] We make certain that adherents of our sect always keep in mind love of country and absolute loyalty [to the Emperor] [...], that they do not ignore the doctrine of karma or fall into the trap of believing in the heretical idea of "evil equality" [as advocated by socialists, et al.].[19]

In Dokutan's condemnation of "evil equality" (*aku byōdō*) can be heard an echo of Shimaji's earlier critique of socialists for their failure to understand the identity of differentiation and equality, and confusing the worlds of form and formlessness. The bifurcation of form and formlessness had by then become the dominant theoretical position of Buddhist thought. As such, it served to legitimate Buddhism's involvement in war while providing ammunition for attacking Western expansionist policies in Asia. It further provided justification for institutional Buddhism's assistance to Japan's own imperialist expansion.

The Shin sect's reaction

While Takagi Kenmyō was a Shin sect priest given a life sentence, he received similar treatment from his own sectarian leaders, for they were no less appalled by the actions of one their own, though Kenmyō, too, had been stripped of his clerical status. Two administrative leaders of the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect, Ōtani Eiryō and Kuwakado Shidō, issued an admonition to all subordinate temples on January 20, 1911. It stated in part:

> Last year [1910] there were those who, having adopted socialist extremism, hatched an extraordinary plot. Those who did so both violated a basic principle of this sect, which teaches the coexistence of relative and ultimate truth, and cast aside the Buddhist doctrine of causality. This is not the way in which priests of this sect should act. [...] Nevertheless, there was such a priest [Takagi Kenmyō] in this sect. [...] Adherents of this sect should quickly rectify their thinking in accordance with this sect's teaching that the Law of the Sovereign [*rājadharma*] is paramount and relations between men should be based on

[19] See Yoshida 1959: 510 (my translation).

> benevolence. [...] They must be taught, in accordance with this sect's teaching of the coexistence of relative and ultimate truth, just how deep is the gratitude they owe to both Heaven and their Country. [...] Especially those in this sect in supervisory roles must pay special attention to what the priests and laity under their supervision are doing. [...] You must eliminate misconceptions, being ever vigilant.[20]

Even though there were no priests of the Nishi Honganji branch of the Shin sect directly involved in the trial, the leader of that sect, Ōtani Sonyū (1886–1939), nevertheless felt compelled to issue his own statement. It began by noting that society was being "infected by dangerous thoughts" and went on to point out that "those who mistakenly involved themselves in such lawless speech and actions are not simply enemies of the state but of the [Shin] sect as well".

As justification for his position, Sonyū pointed out that Japan was a "flawless state" to which all sect adherents should selflessly devote themselves. In particular, "as teachers, sect priests should observe tendencies in social thought in order to promote national stability and maintain social order". In so doing, they would insure that "the splendor of our sect will be exalted".[21] Neither Sonyū nor the other Shin leaders, it would appear, ever considered the possibility that the Law of the Sovereign might come in conflict with the Law of the Buddha, i.e., the *Buddhadharma*, let alone what they would do if it ever did.

The scholarly reaction

In March 1912 a book was published under the title of "Essays on Reverence for the Emperor and Patriotism" (*Sonnō Aikoku-ron*). The nineteen separate essays contained in this work were written by fifteen leading scholars, one government official, and three intellectuals, including Buddhist scholar-priest, Ōuchi Seiran (1845–1918). In addition to Seiran, there were also such well-known Buddhist scholar-priests as Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) and Nanjō Bunyū (1849–1927), not to mention Murakami Senshō (1851–1929), a noted Buddhist historian.

[20] See *Chūgai Nippō*, 1911, no. 3259 (my translation).
[21] See *Honzan Rokuji*, October 15, 1910.

The book's connection to the High Treason Incident was made clear in its preface. The incident was referred to as "marking the greatest disgrace of the Meiji period".[22] As a result of the disturbance this incident caused, the book's editor, Akiyama Goan, wrote that he had decided to ask the leading thinkers of his day to clarify the true nature of reverence for the Emperor and patriotism "in order to exterminate vermin and provide the material to fill up ant holes".[23]

The titles of the various essays provide a good indication of the book's content. Tokyo University Professor Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944) wrote on "The Noble Cause of the Founding of the State", while Murakami Senshō contributed an essay entitled: "Loyalty [to the Emperor] and Filial Piety in Buddhism". Ōuchi Seiran's essay was entitled: "On Revering the Emperor and Repaying [One's Debt of Gratitude to] the Buddha". Seiran used his essay to renew the attack on Christianity, writing:

> Christianity and our Imperial House can never coexist, for it is impossible to truly revere the Imperial House while believing in Christianity. [...] Christianity not only turns its back on the righteous Buddhist teaching of cause and effect, but it is a heretical teaching that tears apart the establishment of our Imperial House and destroys the foundation of our country. [...] Therefore we must all join together to prevent this heretical teaching from spreading throughout our land.[24]

Inoue Enryō entitled his essay: "A Treatise on the National Polity, Loyalty [to the Emperor], and Filial Piety". In his essay, he presented the following syllogism:

> The land of our nation is sacred, and since our nation developed on this sacred land, it should also be called sacred. [...] Our Imperial House is sacred, and since all of the subjects in this land are its offspring, children of the gods and grandchildren of the Emperor, therefore they are sacred. [...] Our loyalty [to the Emperor] and patriotism are sacred [...] whereas in the West such things are private matters and therefore lifeless. Why? Because

[22] See Akiyama 1912: 1.
[23] Ibid.: 2.
[24] See Akiyama 1912: 49–52.

> the people and the King [in Western countries] do not become one family [...] since society is based on individuals who only think of themselves.[25]

In the above comments it is not difficult to see that the Buddhist essayists were determined to demonstrate that they, no less than their secular counterparts, were totally and completely dedicated to the Emperor and the state. In this effort, it must be admitted, they were eminently successful. With the state's assistance, "vermin" like Uchiyama Gudō had indeed been exterminated. Their role was to fill up the remaining "ant holes".

The Government's reaction

Needless to say, the Japanese government was no less interested than the sectarian Buddhist leaders and scholars in ensuring that religious figures would never again oppose its policies. With this goal in mind, it sponsored a "Conference of the Three Religions" (Sankyō Kaidō) which opened on February 25, 1912. This conference was attended by seventy-one representatives from Buddhism, Shinto and Christianity as well as numerous sponsoring government ministers and officials. The government's unprecedented inclusion of Christian representatives revealed that the patriotic fervor of the new creed, as demonstrated during both the Sino–Japanese and Russo–Japanese wars, had at last been officially recognised.

The conference concerned itself with passing a number of resolutions calling for such things as support of the Imperial way (*kōdō*) and promotion of national morality. Conference participants also advocated cooperation between politics, religion, and education as a way to ensure national prosperity. Notto Thelle makes the connection between the High Treason Incident and this conference very clear, when, after describing the conference agenda, he states:

> The plot to assassinate the emperor in 1910 made a great impact upon the political situation. [...] There is no doubt that the government policy toward religions and its support of religious cooperation was stimulated by apprehensions about socialism and other "dangerous thoughts".[26]

[25] Ibid.: 144–149.

[26] See Thelle 2021: 252.

The government was, without question, successful in its efforts. As a result of this conference, many influential leaders in the Buddhist and Christian establishments cooperated with each other not only to strengthen the state, but foster patriotic spirit, national unity, and moral strength in a time they perceived as fraught with danger. It is no exaggeration to say that this conference was akin to driving the last nail in the coffin of any semblance of Buddhist independence from state policies, especially those relating to questions of war and peace. This blind and near total obedience to the government on the part of Japan's religious leaders, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, was destined to become the most enduring religious legacy of not just the High Treason Incident but of the entire Meiji period, which itself came to an end in 1912.

2. Post-war developments culminating in Gudō's rehabilitation

In order to understand the events that led to the restoration of Gudō's clerical status, we must first understand the related post-war developments that took place within Japanese Buddhism, for what occurred was definitely not an isolated event. Instead, the restoration took place during a period of reflection and repentance on the part of many (but not all) leaders of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects regarding their slavish if not fanatical support of Japan's wars of aggression and aggrandisement from the Meiji period onwards. Three declarations of sectarian war responsibility and complicity took place prior to the restoration of Gudō's clerical status. The first of the three was made by the Higashi Honganji branch of the Shin sect in 1987, while the companion Nishi Honganji branch followed suit four years later in 1991. For its part, it was not until 1992 that the Sōtō sect published a "Statement of repentance" (*Sanshabun*) apologising for its wartime role.

What all of these statements share in common is the fact that even the earliest of them, i.e., the Higashi Honganji branch's declaration of 1987, was not issued until more than forty years after the end of the war. By comparison, the first Christian organisation in Japan to issue a similar statement was twenty years earlier in 1967. This latter statement was entitled, "A confession of responsibility during WW II by the United Church of Christ in Japan". Even this recognition of wartime complicity by Japan's largest Protestant organisation was more than a generation in the making.

It should be readily apparent that the three statements of Buddhist war complicity represent only a small percentage of Japanese Buddhism's thirteen major sects with their numerous branches. For example, prior to Gudō's reinstatement none of the fifteen branches of the Rinzai Zen sect formally addressed this issue in any manner.[27] In that sense, it can be said that the following statements represent only the beginning rather than the end of this important, if not crucial, issue for institutional Japanese Buddhism.

The 1987 Declaration of the Higashi Honganji branch

The following admission of war responsibility was made as part of the "Memorial service for all war victims" held on April 2, 1987. The statement was read by Koga Seiji, administrative head of the branch. It read in part:

> As we recall the war years, it was our sect that called the war a "sacred war". It was we who said, "The heroic spirits [of the war dead] who have been enshrined in [Shinto's] Yasukuni Shrine have served in the great undertaking of guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the Imperial Throne. They should therefore be revered for having done the great work of a Bodhisattva". This was an expression of deep ignorance and shamelessness on our part. When recalling this now, we are attacked by a sense of shame from which there is no escape. [...] Calling that war a "sacred war" was a double lie. Those who participate in war are both victims and victimisers. In light of the great sin we have committed, we must not pass it by as being nothing more than a "mistake". The sect said to revere things that were never taught by Saint [Shinran]. When we who are priests think about this sin, we can only hang our heads in silence before all who are gathered here.[28]

The 1991 Declaration of the Nishi Honganji branch

The following statement was issued by the administrative assembly of the Nishi Honganji branch on February 27, 1991. It was entitled "The Resolution to make our sect's strong desire for peace known to all in Japan and the world".

[27] It was not until 2001 that two major branches of the Rinzai sect, i.e., Myōshinji and Tenryūji, admitted and apologised for their support of the Japanese war effort.

[28] See *Shūkyō-sha no Sensō Sekinin*, 1994, p. 34 (my translation).

The central focus of this declaration, however, was the Gulf War coupled with the question of nuclear warfare mentioned in the second and third paragraphs. The sect's own wartime role did not rate mention until the fourth paragraph and included the following:

> Although there was pressure exerted on us by the military-controlled state, we must be deeply penitent before the Buddhas and Patriarchs, for we ended up cooperating with the war and losing sight of the true nature of this sect. This can also be seen in the doctrinal sphere, where the [sect's] teaching of the existence of relative truth and absolute truth was put to cunning use.[29]

The Sōtō Zen sect's Declaration of war responsibility

In 1992 the Sōtō sect published a "Statement of repentance" apologising for its wartime role. If the Rinzai Zen sect was initially unwilling to face its past, it cannot be claimed that the post-war leadership of the Sōtō Zen sect was any more anxious to do so. Yet, a series of allegations concerning human rights abuses by this sect had the cumulative effect of forcing it to face its past in spite of its reluctance. Unquestionably, the single most important event in this series of allegations was the sect headquarters' publication in 1980 of "The History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelisation and Missionary Work" (*Sōtō-shu Kaigai Kaikyō Dendō-shi*). In the January 1993 issue of *Sōtō Shūhō*, the sect's administrative headquarters announced that it was recalling all copies of the above-mentioned publication. The reason given was as follows:

> The content of this book consists of the history of the overseas missionary work undertaken by this sect since the Meiji period, based on reports made by the persons involved. However, upon investigation, it was discovered that this book contained many accounts that were based on discriminatory ideas. There were, for example, words which discriminated against peoples of various nationalities. Furthermore, there were places that were filled with uncritical adulation for "militarism" and "the policy to turn [occupied peoples] into loyal Imperial subjects".[30]

Immediately following the above announcement was a "Statement of repentance" issued by the administrative head of the sect, Ōtake Myōgen. The

[29] Ibid.: 39 (my translation).

[30] See *Sōtō Shūhō*, 1993, no. 688, p. 26 (my translation).

statement contained a passage which clearly shows how the preceding work served as a catalyst for what amounted to the sect's condemnation of its wartime role. The statement's highlights are as follows:

> We, the Sōtō sect, have since the Meiji period and through to the end of the Pacific War, utilised the good name of "overseas evangelisation" to violate the human rights of the peoples of Asia, especially those in East Asia. This was done by making common cause with, and sharing in, the sinister designs of those who then held political power to rule Asia. Furthermore, within the social climate of "ceasing to be Asian and becoming Western", we despised the peoples of Asia and their cultures, forcing Japanese culture on them and taking actions which caused them to lose their national pride and dignity. This was all done out of a belief in the superiority of Japanese Buddhism and our national structure. Not only that, but these actions, which violated the teachings of Buddhism, were done in the name of Buddha Śākyamuni and the successive Patriarchs in India, China and Japan who transmitted the Dharma. There is nothing to be said about these actions other than that they were truly shameful.
>
> We forthrightly confess the serious mistakes we committed in the past history of our overseas missionary work, and we wish to deeply apologise and express our repentance to the peoples of Asia and the world. Moreover, these actions are not merely the responsibility of those people who were directly involved in overseas missionary work. Needless to say, the responsibility of the entire sect must be questioned in as much as we applauded Japan's overseas aggression and attempted to justify it.
>
> Even further, the Sōtō sect's publication in 1980 of the "History of the Sōtō Sect's Overseas Evangelisation and Missionary Work" was done without reflection on these past mistakes. This meant that within the body of the work there were not only positive evaluations of these past errors, but even expressions which tried to glorify and extol what had been done. In doing this, there was a complete lack of concern for the pain of the peoples of Asia

who suffered as a result. The publication involved claimed to be a work of history but was written from a viewpoint which affirmed an Imperial historical understanding, recalling the ghosts of the past and the disgrace of Japan's modern history.

We are ashamed to have published such a work and cannot escape a deeply guilty conscience in that this work was published some thirty-five years after the end of the Pacific War. The reason for this is that since the Meiji period our sect has cooperated in waging war, sometimes having been flattered into making common cause with the state, and other times rushing on its own to support state policies. Beyond that, we have never reflected on the great misery that was forced upon the peoples of Asia nor felt a sense of responsibility for what happened.

The historian E.H. Carr has said: "History is an endless conversation between the past and the present". Regretfully, our sect has failed to engage in that conversation, with the result that we have arrived at today without questioning the meaning of the past for the present, or verifying our own standpoint in the light of past history. We neglected to self-critically examine our own "war responsibility" as we should have done immediately after having lost the war in 1945.

Although the Sōtō sect cannot escape the feeling of being too late, we wish to apologise once again for our negligence and, at the same time, apologise for our cooperation with the war. [...] We recognise that Buddhism teaches that all human beings are equal as children of the Buddha. And further, that they are living beings with a dignity that must not, for any reason whatsoever, be impaired by others. Nevertheless, our sect, which is grounded in the belief of the transference of Śākyamuni's Dharma from master to disciple, both supported and eagerly sought to cooperate with a war of aggression against other peoples of Asia, calling it a holy war.

Especially in Korea and the Korean Peninsula, Japan first committed the outrage of assassinating the Korean Queen [in 1895], then forced the Korea of the Lee Dynasty into dependency status [in 1904–1905], and finally, through the annexation of Korea [in 1910], obliterated a people and a nation. Our sect acted as an advanced guard in this, contriving to assimilate the Korean people into this country, and promoting the policy of turning Koreans into loyal Imperial subjects.

When human beings exist as human beings, they cannot help but seek a place where they belong. People feel secure when they have a guarantee of their identity coming from such things as their own family, language, nationality, state, land, culture, religious belief, etc. Having an identity guarantees the dignity of human beings. However, the policy to create loyal Imperial subjects deprived the Korean people of their nation, their language, and, by forcing them to adopt Japanese family and personal names, the very heart of their national culture. The Sōtō sect, together with Japanese religion in general, took upon itself the role of justifying these barbaric acts in the name of religion.

In China and other countries, our sect took charge of pacification activities directed towards the peoples who were the victims of our aggression. There were even some priests who took the lead in making contact with the secret police and conducting spying operations on their behalf.

We committed mistakes on two levels. First, we subordinated Buddhist teachings to worldly teachings in the form of national policies. Then we proceeded to take away the dignity and identity of other peoples. We solemnly promise that we will never make this mistake again. [...]

Furthermore, we deeply apologise to the peoples of Asia who suffered under the past political domination of Japan.

> We sincerely apologise that in its overseas evangelism and missionary work the Sōtō sect made common cause with those in power and stood on the side of the aggressors.[31]

In spite of the positive good that has resulted from the Sōtō sect's statement of apology, post-war Zen scholars like Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–1986) have made it clear that the rationale for Zen (and Buddhism's) support of Japanese militarism in particular, and state-sponsored warfare in general, is far more deeply entrenched in Zen and Buddhist doctrine and historical practice, especially within its Mahayana tradition, than any Japanese Buddhist sect has yet to publicly admit.

Of all the Japanese Buddhist sects to date, the Sōtō sect's statement of apology is certainly the most comprehensive. Yet, it almost totally ignores the question of the doctrinal and historical relationship between Buddhism and the state, let alone between Buddhism and the Emperor. Is, for example, "nation-protecting Buddhism" an intrinsic part of Buddhism or merely a historical accretion? Similarly, is the vaunted unity between Zen and the sword an orthodox or heretical doctrine? Is there such a thing as a physical "life-giving sword" or is it no more than a Zen metaphor that was terribly misused out of context during the war years?

The restoration of Uchiyama Gudō's status as a Sōtō Zen priest

In reading the preceding apology it is difficult to escape the feeling that, forty-eight years after the end of the war, it was, in the words of the text, "too late" for the leader of the Sōtō Zen sect to address the issue of war responsibility. That said, the chronology of events makes it clear that without the earlier war-related apology it would have been impossible for the Sōtō sect to have restored Uchiyama Gudō's priestly status, some eighty-three years after having deprived him of it.

This does not mean, however, that post-war concern about the unjust treatment Gudō suffered at the hands of the Japanese government and Meiji-era Sōtō Zen authorities only began following the sect's admission of war responsibility in the early 1990s. For this, it is possible to trace the initial focus on Gudō back as far as the 1970s when a group of lay Buddhist social activists, historians, lawyers, and a few Zen clerics, including the author of

[31] See *Sōtō Shūhō*, 1993, no. 688, pp. 28–31 (my translation).

this article, began holding Buddhist memorial services for Gudō on an annual basis at his former temple, Rinsenji, on the anniversary of his death, i.e., on January 24. For many years, however, the Sōtō sect headquarters ignored the activities of this group.

It was only in the latter part of the 1980s, following the establishment within the sect of the "Bureau for the Protection and Advocacy of Human Rights", that visits to Gudō's grave and related research began. It had previously been taboo to discuss Gudō's life and thought let alone his ousting from the sect. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Secretariat of the sect's administrative headquarters, together with the sect's Mutual Aid Association, began to sponsor memorial services for Gudō and engage in related research. This in turn led to a reconsideration of Gudō's thought and actions and, eventually, to a reevaluation of the sect's actions taken toward Gudō. The basis for the restoration of Gudō's clerical status was now in place.

It was these actions, in combination with the sect's admission of war responsibility, that served as the background, if not the catalyst, for the announcement in the July 1993 issue of the sect's administrative organ that as of April 13, 1993, Uchiyama Gudō's status as a Sōtō Zen priest had been restored. The announcement went on to say, "[Gudō's] original expulsion was a mistake caused by the sect's having swallowed the [then] government's repressive policies".[32] The sect's explanation of the cause of this turnabout was contained in a subsequent article that appeared in the September 1993 issue of the same periodical. Written by the sect's Bureau for the Protection and Advocacy of Human Rights, the highlights of the article are as follows:

> When viewed by today's standards of respect for human rights, Uchiyama Gudō's writings contain elements which should be seen as farsighted. Thus, we have much to learn from them, for today his writings are respected by people in various walks of life, starting with the mass media. In our sect, the restoration of Uchiyama Gudō's reputation is something that will both bring solace to his spirit and contribute to the establishment within this sect of a method of dealing with questions concerning human rights. [...] We now recognise

[32] See *Sōtō Shūhō*, 1993, no. 694, p. 16 (my translation).

> that Gudō was a victim of the national policy of that day. [...] The dynamite found in his temple had been placed there for safekeeping by a railroad company laying track through the Hakone mountains and had nothing to do with him. [...] The sect's [original] actions were those which strongly aligned the sect on the side of an establishment dominated by the Imperial system. These actions were not those designed to protect the unique Buddhist character of the sect's priests. [...] On this occasion of the restoration of Uchiyama Gudō's reputation, we must reflect on the way in which our sect has ingratiated itself with both the political powers of the day and a state under the suzerainty of the Emperor.[33]

While the Sōtō statement clearly views Gudō as a victim of government repression, it presents no new evidence in support of his innocence. Rather, it merely repeats Kashiwagi's earlier unsubstantiated claim that the dynamite found at his temple was put there as part of a nearby railway construction project. In that sense, this statement must be treated with some scepticism, perhaps more as a reflection of the sect's regret for what it came to recognise in post-war years as its slavish subservience to the state.

With regard to the question of whether a definitive statement can be made about Gudō's guilt or innocence, or that of many defendants in this case, the evidence (or rather lack of evidence) suggests it cannot. In the first instance, as has been noted, the government's attempt to turn the accused into "non-persons" resulted in the destruction of critical evidence. More importantly, when in 1975 the descendants of one of those originally convicted in the case petitioned for a retrial, the Ministry of Justice stated clearly for the first time that the trial's transcripts no longer existed.

Even if the transcripts had existed, it is doubtful that they would have provided definitive evidence, given that everyone directly connected with the trial was, by then, deceased and therefore unavailable for questioning about their statements and actions either in or out of court. It was factors like these which, at the end of his study, finally led the historian Fred Notehelfer to admit "an element of mystery [...] continues to surround the trial".[34] It probably always will.

[33] See *Sōtō Shūhō*, 1993, no. 696, pp. 12–16 (my translation).

[34] See Notehelfer 1971: 185.

3. Questions for further consideration

Was Uchiyama Gudō truly innocent?

While this concludes the study of "Buddhist heretic" Uchiyama Gudō, the restoration of whose clerical status signified his "rehabilitation", it by no means signifies the end of the questions raised either by his initial arrest and execution or the post-war restoration of his status. The first question to be asked is whether Gudō was truly innocent of the charges levelled against him? Certainly, when viewed through the lens of "freedom of speech", his initial writings, however critical they were of the Imperial system, should not have resulted in his imprisonment, especially in light of the fact that he did not call for the violent overthrow of the Emperor-centric, Meiji government.

Additionally, as Kanno Sugako pointed out in her court testimony, Gudō, as well as many of the other defendants, were not part of an admitted plot to harm a member of the Imperial family. Assuming her testimony to be true, Gudō should not have been sentenced to death. It was a true travesty of justice on the part of those Japanese political leaders who used the actual plot as an excuse to repress the entire socialist movement.

Unfortunately, however, the story does not end here, for there is creditable testimony that while Gudō was not part of Kanno's plot, he nevertheless offered the dynamite in his possession to socialist activists in the Osaka area for use in what appears to have been a proposal for a second and independent plot to overthrow the Meiji government through violence. While this second plot does not appear to have progressed beyond the talking stage, if true, it does indicate Gudō's willingness to employ violence against those political leaders, including the Emperor, he held responsible for the unjust social system prevailing in Japan, especially the plight of poverty-stricken tenant farmers.

Thus, given the importance of the role "intent" plays in Buddhist ethics, the question becomes if, as seems possible, Gudō had the intent to harm, or even kill, others, can he be said to have been innocent of having broken the third *pārājika*? If the charges involving a second plot were proven true, should Gudō have been expelled by the Sōtō Zen sect regardless of whether he was implicated in the first plot?

It can be further argued that it was Japan's secular authorities who wrongfully convicted Gudō in the first instance. Nevertheless, it was Sōtō Zen sect authorities who deprived Gudō of his priestly status based on his conviction in a secular court, not on the basis of their own independent investigation. For a Sangha that, at least in theory, is self-governing, was it proper for Sōtō Zen authorities to have accepted the judgement of secular authorities without any attempt to determine the facts on their own?

While these questions may all be considered hypothetical, they do point to far more difficult questions that have, I suggest, not yet been seriously grappled with, or resolved, by Buddhists, past or present. First, at what point, or under what circumstances, may a Buddhist, in accordance with Buddhist doctrine, employ or otherwise take part in violence? Do different standards apply depending on whether the Buddhist is a cleric, a monk, or lay person, especially given that even a lay Buddhist pledges to do no harm? Does it make a difference whether the violence is undertaken in personal self-defence versus at the direction of state authorities, e.g., organised warfare? And closely related to these questions is whether it is appropriate for Buddhist adherents, either clerical or lay, to be involved in social activism, let along political revolutions, in the first place?

It is certainly easy enough to answer the first question concerning the use of violence, especially for clerics, with a blanket statement: "Never, under any circumstances!" Yet, in reviewing 2,500 years of Buddhist history, it is clear that many Buddhists, including clerics and monks, have not accepted, or at least abided by, this blanket denial. Were the leaders of every Buddhist sect in Japan who strongly, even fanatically, supported Japanese aggression throughout Asia from the Meiji period onwards still Buddhists when they did so?[35] Or should they, too, have been expelled from the Sangha for having broken the third *pārājika*? If so, who would have been in a position to expel them?

Needless to say, questions concerning the relationship of Buddhism to violence and social activism are as longstanding as they are contentious, therefore far beyond the confines of this article to address let alone resolve. Yet, as attested to by the ongoing connection of Buddhism to social upheavals and violence in such majority Buddhist countries as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Tibet, these are questions that cannot be ignored if Buddhism wishes to continue to identify itself as a religion of peace and justice.

[35] For numerous examples of religious support for Japanese warfare, see Victoria 2006.

An equally difficult issue

As discussed in the introduction to this article, the Mahayana tradition allows for the possibility of the restoration of clerical status despite having been formally deprived of that status for having broken one or more of the four *pārājika*s. In the Theravada tradition, however, Buddhist monks who break any of these rules are said to have been "defeated" in the holy life, forfeiting membership in the Sangha for life. Thus, had Gudō been a Theravada monk it would have been impossible, either during his lifetime or posthumously, to have had his status restored no matter how mistaken the initial decision to disrobe him was. Is this fair?

This question takes on a particular urgency in the Theravada countries of Southeast Asia where social upheavals, civil wars and political revolutions, have repeatedly occurred in modern history and are ongoing. Inasmuch as social upheavals, much less civil war and political revolutions, nearly always include violence, and inasmuch as Buddhist clerics, to some degree, often play a role in these events, who decides who remains, and who does not, in the Sangha? Is a military government, often of a dictatorial nature, qualified to strip clerics of their status? If not, is the Sangha in such a country either able, or willing, to defy the military or otherwise dictatorial wishes of the country's leaders regarding those Buddhist clerics whom the former consider "troublemakers"? Still further, is the fate of devout, yet unjustly accused, Buddhist lay persons in such countries of no concern to Sangha leaders?

If these are difficult questions to answer, they nevertheless pale in comparison to the most controversial issue of all, i.e. the question of whether, at least for certain Mahayana countries like Japan, the *pārājika*s retain any relevance at all. If this statement sounds extreme, remember that the very first *pārājika* prohibits sexual relations of any kind. Yet, nearly all Japanese clerics and their Western "Dharma heirs" are married or otherwise sexually active, sometimes with multiple partners. Should they be stripped of their clerical status?

It is tempting to think that if Mahayana clerics, especially in the Zen sect, whether Japanese or Western, were required to abide by the first *pārājika*, on pain of losing their clerical status if they failed to do so, there would have been far fewer sexual scandals than those that have occurred in Western Sanghas. But is this accurate? Or would it simply mean, in the case of Zen, that this sect would have attracted far fewer followers than it has? Or, on the contrary,

would enforcing this *pārājika* have prevented many of those initially interested in Zen from abandoning their practice out of disappointment, or even anger, at the moral lapses of those whom they believed to be "enlightened"?

Once again, discussion of these questions is far, far beyond the scope of this article though it should be clear that they, too, are topics that must be addressed if the Buddhist tradition is to grow and flourish in its new home in the West. If the "saga" of Uchiyama Gudō can become a catalyst for addressing these questions, it is clear that his execution, however unjust, opens the possibility of spiritual growth, insight and renewal for Buddhists of today.

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Suicide: An Exploration of Early Buddhist Values

Alexander Wynne

ABSTRACT—Three canonical Pali Suttas tell the stories of early Buddhist *bhikkhu*s who committed suicide: Channa, Vakkali and Godhika. Each text concludes that all three were arahants, but the accounts are not what they seem. Two texts treat the suicidal *bhikkhu*s as unenlightened before concluding with their final Nirvana, whereas the other is deeply unorthodox. This article argues that the Suttas are not really about suicide, but rather the developing understanding of Nirvana, under the influence of non-Buddhist ideas.

KEYWORDS: Early Buddhism, Pali Canon, Nirvana, suicide, Vedānta

Three Suttas from the Pali Canon record the suicides of early Buddhist *bhikkhu*s: MN 144/SN 35.87 on Channa, SN 22.87 on Vakkali and SN 4.23 on Godhika.[1] All three texts have parallels in the Chinese Canon, and all versions conclude by stating that the three *bhikkhu*s had attained liberation. Most academic studies have concluded that this sets an important precedent: early Buddhism condones the suicide of arahants.[2] But all three texts on suicide, in

[1] In the main text of this article, I follow the text numbering system of the Pali Canon for individual Suttas. All citations are from Pali Text Society (Ee) editions, cited by volume and page number in the footnotes. In the Ee, the three texts on suicide are found at MN III 263ff/SN IV 55ff, SN III 119ff and SN I 120ff respectively.

[2] See Anālayo 2010 and 2011, Delhey 2009, La Vallée Poussin 1921, Lamotte 1987, Wiltshere

their Pali and Chinese recensions, are more complicated than at first appears. The texts on Channa and Vakkali contain much that deviates from the conclusions, whereas the account of Godhika's suicide is based on unorthodox meditative ideas. To understand the texts requires focusing not simply on their "enlightenment" conclusions, but also explaining the structure(s) and ideas of the texts as a whole, and in comparison with each other. A useful point of comparison is the acount of Assaji's final illness (SN 22.88), which shares important features with the three texts without recording Assaji's death.

What follows pays little attention to what has hitherto been the focus of most academic studies on the three texts, namely, suicide as an ethical problem. Early Buddhists would obviously have been deeply troubled by any case of *bhikkhu* suicide, even if the precept not to kill applies only to killing other beings.[3] Strangely, however, the three texts make no serious attempt to justify suicide by claiming that this is permissible for arahants, for two texts —on Channa and Vakkali—imply that the suicidees were not arahants. But if not normative justifications of suicide, then what are they saying? A different solution, considered here, is that the texts are really about doctrinal history, or rather, doctrinal creation. This study will argue that the real focus of the three texts is the idea of final Nirvana at death, which emerged through a process of doctrinal transformation under the influence of non-Buddhist values.

1. Channa (MN 144, SN 35.87)

The Sutta begins with the Buddha staying in the Bamboo Grove of Rājagaha, and with two prominent disciples, Sāriputta and Mahācunda, residing on Vulture's Peak. Sāriputta and Mahācunda visit Channa, who tells them in stereotypical terms that he is in pain, getting worse and cannot go on. Thus he has decided to commit suicide: "I will inflict the knife (upon myself), venerable Sāriputta, I do not wish to live".[4] When Sāriputta asks Channa not to do this, even offering to look after him by himself, Channa says he is being well looked after and adds:

1983; Keown (2005) differs by arguing that the accounts do not condone suicide. See also Sujato 2022, in this issue of the journal.

[3] See Delhey 2009: 72, n. 11. Anālayo (2010: 131) notes that suicide is a *dukkaṭa* offence according to the Pali Vinaya (III 73), but only because by jumping off a cliff a *bhikkhu* may harm another person.

[4] SN IV 57: *satthaṃ āvuso sāriputta āharissāmi nāvakaṅkhāmi jīvitun ti.*

> Moreover, venerable sir, for a long time I have attended the teacher quite willingly, not unwillingly, and it is appropriate, sir, that a disciple should attend the teacher quite willingly, not unwillingly. "The *bhikkhu* Channa inflicts the knife blamelessly": remember it thus, venerable Sāriputta.[5]

Sāriputta then questions Channa on doctrinal points, asking if the sense faculties, the corresponding types of cognition and things cognised (*dhamma*) should be regarded in terms of "self" ("this is mine", etc.).[6] Channa replies that he does not understand things in this way, but sees cessation in them and so views them in terms of "this is not mine", etc. Immediately after this, Mahācunda gives the following teaching:

> For the dependent there is trembling, but for the independent there is no trembling. When there is no trembling, there is tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, there is no inclination. When there is no inclination, there is no coming and going. When there is no coming and going, there is no falling away and arising. And when there is no falling away and arising, there is no here, yonder or anywhere in between. Just this is the end of suffering.[7]

Sāriputta and Mahācunda then leave and Channa commits suicide; according to the commentary, this was achieved by cutting the jugular vein.[8] When Sāriputta informs the Buddha and asks about Channa's rebirth destiny,[9] the Buddha in turn asks Sāriputta whether Channa had declared his blamelessness to him.[10] Rather than affirm that Channa had stated his blamelessness, Sāriputta replies that there is a Vajjian village, Pubbavijjhana,

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[5] SN IV 57: *api ca me āvuso satthā pariciṇṇo dīgharattaṃ manāpen' eva, no amanāpena. etaṃ hi āvuso sāvakassa patirūpaṃ, yaṃ satthāraṃ paricareyya manāpen' eva, no amanāpena. tam anupavajjaṃ channo bhikkhu satthaṃ āharissatī ti: evam etaṃ āvuso sāriputta dhārehī ti.*

[6] See for example, SN IV 58: *cakkhum āvuso channa cakkhuviññāṇaṃ cakkhuviññāṇaviññātabbe dhamme, etam mama eso 'ham asmi eso me attā ti samanupassasi* [...].

[7] SN IV 59: *nissitassa calitaṃ, anissitassa calitaṃ n' atthi. calite asati passaddhi hoti. passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti. natiyā asati āgatigati na hoti. āgatigatiyā asati cutupapāto na hoti. cutupapāte asati n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhaya-m-antarena. es' evānto dukkhassā ti*. Reading *āgati-* with Be instead of *agati-* in Ee.

[8] SN–a II 373: *satthaṃ āharesī ti jīvitahārakasatthaṃ āhari, kaṇṭhanāḷaṃ chindi.*

[9] SN IV 59: *tassa kā gati ko abhisamparāyo.*

[10] SN IV 59: *nanu te sāriputta channena bhikkhunā sammukhā yeva anupavajjatā vyākatā ti.*

where there are blameworthy families (*upavajja-kulāni*) who are friendly to Channa and "close to his heart" (*suhajja-kulāni*).[11] Sāriputta seems to imply that Channa was blameworthy because of the company he kept, contrary to Channa's claim of being blameless because of willingly attending the Buddha for a long time. However, the Buddha then states that despite his blameworthy lay associates, Channa was not blameworthy in a more fundamental way:

> Sāriputta, the one who lays down his body and takes up another, him I call blameworthy. But that does not apply to the *bhikkhu* Channa. "The *bhikkhu* Channa inflicted the knife blamelessly": remember it thus, venerable Sāriputta.[12]

The Sutta thus ends with this strange but clear statement of Channa being blameless because he did not take up another body (*aññañ ca kāyaṃ upādiyati*). In other words, the Buddha implies that Channa was an arahant at the time of his death.

Analysis

Everything in this Sutta apart from the conclusion suggests that Channa was not an arahant. At first Channa stresses his severe pain and states his wish to live no longer (*nāvakaṅkhāmi jīvitan ti*), and then Sāriputta and Mahācunda guide him through early Buddhist teachings; this is not a normal way of depicting an arahant. Sāriputta then asks the Buddha about Channa's rebirth, and assumes that he is "blameworthy" (*upavajja*) because of the company he kept. In this context, Channa's declaration of service to the Buddha can be understood as an attempt to set the record straight: claiming to have "willingly attended the Buddha for a long time" (*satthā pariciṇṇo dīgharattaṃ manāpen' eva*), and therefore that he will "inflict the knife blamelessly" (see above), looks like a tacit acknowledgement by Channa that he was in a problematic position but tried to explain it away by virtue of his service to the Buddha. All this points towards Channa's unenlightened and even problematic disciplinary status.

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[11] SN IV 59: *atthi bhante pubbavijjhanaṃ nāma vajjigāmo. tatth' āyasmato channassa mittakulāni suhajjakulāni upavajjakulānī ti.*

[12] SN IV 60: *yo kho sāriputta tañ ca kāyaṃ nikkhipati aññañ ca kāyaṃ upādiyati, tam ahaṃ saupavajjo ti vadāmi. taṃ channassa bhikkhuno n' atthi. anupavajjaṃ channena bhikkhunā satthaṃ āharitan ti, evam etaṃ sāriputta dhārehī ti.*

We should add that early Buddhist accounts of enlightenment are clear and unambiguous, and leave no room for doubt. Why was this not done here? Why not add a section in which Channa contemplates the not-self teaching and attains insight, as in one of the Chinese accounts of Vakkali's suicide (see below)? The text could easily contain such a section. The argument from silence is here important: the lack of an explicit statement of enlightenment matters. Even when the Buddha concludes by implying Channa's arahantship, it is hard to take it seriously: "being worthy of blame", which here refers to Vinaya matters, is hardly an appropriate metaphor by which to speak of rebirth in general. If the Buddha cannot even bring himself to state Channa's liberation directly, the text should be regarded as an uncomfortable fudge: despite treating Channa as unenlightened throughout, the text's conclusion implies that he was enlightened at the time of death.

The Chinese Āgama parallel (SĀ 1266)

According to Anālayo's translation (2010), the *Saṃyukta-āgama* (SĀ) version of the Sutta follows its Pali parallel closely. But it differs in several respects, the most important of which are as follows:

- The monks who visit Channa are Sāriputta and Mahākoṭṭhita, not Sāriputta and Mahācunda (2010: 126).
- Channa's statement of having completed his service to the Buddha occurs after the teachings given by Sāriputta and Mahākoṭṭhita, rather than beforehand, and differs from it, which creates a slightly different effect (2010: 129).
- Sāriputta's discussion with the Buddha about Channa's rebirth also differs, although the Buddha similarly equates being blameworthy with someone who "gives up this body to continue with another body", and defines a blameless person as "someone who has given up this body and does not continue with another body" (2010: 130).
- SĀ 1266 concludes its narrative with an explicit statement of liberation: "In this way, the Blessed One declared the venerable Channa to [have reached] the supreme" (2010: 130).

The order of narration and other features of the SĀ text result in a subtly different presentation of Channa's status. SĀ 1266 is far less equivocal than MN 144/SN 35.87, as can be seen in Channa's statement of service to the Buddha:

> Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita, my service to the Blessed One is now completed, my following the Well-gone One is now completed, being in conformity with his wishes, not contrary to his wishes. **What is to be done by a disciple, I have now already done** [...] (transl. Anālayo 2010: 129; my emphasis in bold).

Channa's statement that "what is to be done by a disciple, I have now already done", according to Bhikkhu Anālayo "involves an implicit claim to being an arahant" (2010: 131). He notes (2010: 129, n. 23) that the "expression 'having done what is to be done', 所作已作, is a standard pericope in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* to describe the attainment of full liberation, being the counterpart to *kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ* in Pali discourses [...]". The fact that this occurs after the teachings of Sāriputta and Mahākoṭṭhita is also significant. It reads almost as a rebuke, as if Channa is telling these two distinguished *bhikkhu*s that he has completed the holy life and is in no further need of instruction. Channa's statement of having completed his service to the Buddha is notable in one more respect. In the Pali version this statement concludes with Channa's claim that he is blameless ("The *bhikkhu* Channa inflicts the knife blamelessly": remember it thus, venerable Sāriputta). But the SĀ parallel in Chinese makes no reference to Channa's blameworthiness:

> **What is to be done by a disciple, I have now already done**. If other disciples are to serve the teacher, they should serve the great teacher like this, in conformity with his wishes, not contrary to his wishes. Yet now my body is sick and in pain, it is difficult to bear it up. I just wish to take a knife and kill myself, [since] I do not delight in a life of pain (transl. Anālayo 2010: 129; my emphasis in bold).

The SĀ text thus makes no mention of Channa's claim to inflict the knife "blamelessly", but instead stresses how Channa had conformed to the Buddha's wishes. The section where Sāriputta raises the subject of Channa's blameworthiness, shortly after asking about his rebirth, is also different in

this respect. In the SĀ version, the Buddha prefaces his statement—about blameworthiness being due to being reborn—as follows: "A clansman with right wisdom who is rightly and well liberated [can] have families as his supporters, be intimate with families and be spoken well of in families. Sāriputta, I do not say that in this he has committed a serious fault" (Anālayo 2010: 130). In speaking of a "clansman with right wisdom who is rightly and well liberated", the SĀ suggests that Channa is liberated.

Anālayo recognises (2010: 132) that the two versions of Channa's suicide suggest a "degree of ambiguity, evident in the description of how the two monks who had come to visit Channa try to dissuade him from his plan". In other words, ambiguity occurs because Sāriputta and his companion (Mahācunda/Mahākoṭṭhita) treat Channa as unenlightened. But Anālayo (2010: 132, n. 40) cites de Silva's judgement (1987: 41) that "this episode clearly shows that Sāriputta, who was the most eminent disciple of the Buddha, and who was renowned for his wisdom, did not have vision into the mental make-up of a colleague regarding his emancipation". Needless to say, Sāriputta is not usually presented in a foolish guise, and it is implausible to imagine that a canonical discourse would represent the second most important figure in the Canon as being deficient in terms of understanding. Instead, we should view Sāriputta as a voice of scepticism in the account of Channa's suicide. This agrees with the Pali representation of Channa as unenlightened throughout; it is not merely Sāriputta's judgement.

It is also important to note that SĀ 1266 makes no indication of Channa's enlightenment before Sāriputta and Mahākoṭṭhita deliver their teachings (Anālayo 2010: 127): Channa simply complains about his pain and affirms his wish to kill himself, a position that remains the same even after Sāriputta's teaching. Moreover, the statement "What is to be done by a disciple, I have now already done", given in response to Mahākoṭṭhita's teaching (Anālayo 2010: 129), is delivered in the context of his service to the Buddha, and concludes with a statement which implies that he is depressed: "it is difficult to bear it up. I just wish to take a knife and kill myself, [since] I do not delight in a life of pain" (Anālayo 2010: 129). Then, after the suicide, Sāriputta again plays the role of a sceptic by asking about Channa's rebirth (Anālayo 2010: 130), and mentioning Channa's problematic relationship with the laity of Pubbavijjhana (Anālayo 2010: 130).

Both texts are deeply ambiguous, in other words, even if SĀ 1266 more clearly implies Channa's liberation. What earlier source lies behind both versions of the text: an ambiguous Sutta, in which Channa's mundane status is contradicted by an enlightenment conclusion (the Pali SN text), or a similar account which contains stronger suggestions of his enlightenment (the Chinese SĀ text)? The principle of *lectior potior difficilior* ("the more difficult reading is the stronger") surely suggests that the Chinese SĀ account, with its slightly improved and clearer representation of Channa's situation, is an elaboration of a more ambiguous original similar to the Pali account. As we will now see, this tentative conclusion is supported by the presence of a similar structure in the accounts of the Vakkali's suicide.

2. Vakkali (SN 22.87)

This Sutta finds Vakkali staying in a potter's shed in Rājagaha, requesting that the Buddha visit him. When the Buddha arrives, Vakkali wishes to maintain the proper rules of decorum, but the Buddha tells him not to get up. The text then has a stereotypical formula, found also in MN 144/SN 35.87, indicating that Vakkali is seriously ill. The difference is that whereas Channa uses several similes describing the severity of his illness, here the Buddha asks whether Vakkali has any remorse or regret, a different way of implying that he is seriously ill, perhaps terminally so. Vakkali's regret, which he claims is not trifling, turns out to have nothing to do with virtue (*sīla*), but concerns having wanted to visit the Buddha for a long time and not being able to do so. To this the Buddha replies with an iconic statement:

> Enough, Vakkali, what's the point of you seeing this putrid body? He who sees Dhamma, Vakkali, sees me, and he who sees me sees Dhamma. For, Vakkali, seeing Dhamma one sees me, and seeing me one sees Dhamma.[13]

The Buddha then leads Vakkali through the not-self teaching, asking if the five aggregates should be understood as self and so on, before concluding with the enlightenment of the *bhikkhu* who understands this. As in MN 144/

[13] SN III 120: *alaṃ vakkali, kiṃ te iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena? yo kho vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati, yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati. dhammaṃ hi vakkali passanto maṃ passati, maṃ passanto dhammaṃ passati.*

SN 35.87, the not-self theme would seem to be a timely meditation on death. Vakkali, indeed, seems to find some solace in it, for when the Buddha then returns to Vulture's Peak, he has his helpers put him on his cot and take him out to the black rock on Mount Isigili, since how can someone like him consider "making his time" inside a building?[14] During the night two deities visit the Buddha with messages: one says that Vakkali is "intent on release",[15] the other says that "being well released, he will be released".[16] The next day, the Buddha sends some *bhikkhu*s to tell Vakkali what the deities said, adding this: "Do not fear, Vakkali, do not fear! Your death will not be bad!".[17]

When the messengers arrive Vakkali asks his attendants to take him off his cot, it being improper to listen to the Buddha's words on a raised seat. After receiving the message Vakkali tells them to tell the Buddha that he has understood the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of the five aggregates, and is in no doubt that he has no desire, passion or fondness for them.[18] As soon as the *bhikkhu*s leave Vakkali "inflicts the knife", and when the messengers report back to the Buddha, he immediately takes them back to the scene of Vakkali's suicide. In the final scene, the Buddha asks the *bhikkhu*s if they can see a dark cloud of smoke, moving here and there.[19] This, he says, is Māra searching in vain for Vakkali's consciousness.[20] But his consciousness is unestablished, the Buddha says: Vakkali has attained final Nirvana.[21]

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[14] SN III 121: *etha maṃ āvuso mañcakaṃ āropetvā yena isigilipassakālasilā ten' upasaṅkamatha. kathaṃ hi nāma mādiso antaraghare kālaṃ kattabbaṃ maññeyyā ti.* Perhaps Vakkali's wish to die outside explains the Buddha's question about Vakkali having regrets about his virtue/habitual lifestyle (*sīla*): the question could refer to the fact that Vakkali has been forced to relinquish the ascetic habit of living outdoors.

[15] SN III 121: *ekamantaṃ ṭhitā kho ekā devatā bhagavantam etad avoca: vakkali bhante bhikkhu vimokkhāya cetetī ti.*

[16] SN III 121: *aparā devatā bhagavantam etad avoca: so hi nūna bhante suvimutto vimuccissatī ti.*

[17] SN III 122: *bhagavā ca tam āvuso vakkali evam āha: mā bhāyi vakkali, mā bhāyi. apāpakan te maraṇaṃ bhavissati, apāpikā kālakiriyā ti.*

[18] SN III 122: *yad aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ, n' atthi me tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā ti na vicikicchāmi.*

[19] SN III 124: *passatha no tumhe bhikkhave etam dhūmāyitattaṃ timirāyitattaṃ gacchat' eva purimaṃ disaṃ ... la ... gacchati anudisan ti. evam bhante.*

[20] SN III 124: *eso kho bhikkhave māro pāpimā vakkalissa kulaputtassa viññāṇaṃ samannesati.*

[21] SN III.124: *appatiṭṭhitena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena vakkali kulaputto parinibbuto ti.*

Analysis

Correctly understood, this account does not treat Vakkali as liberated until the Sutta's conclusion. The Buddha asks Vakkali whether he has any regrets, and Vakkali states that he does (not visiting the Buddha); neither is appropriate behaviour for or with regard to an arahant. Furthermore, the not-self instruction from the Buddha looks like a guided meditation to a person in need, rather than a discussion with an arahant. What of the deities' messages to the Buddha? These could be understood to mean that Vakkali had just attained, or is about to attain, liberation. But this is not the case. The Buddha's response to them assumes that Vakkali is not an arahant, for he goes on to reassure Vakkali that "his death will not be bad", which is only plausible if the Buddha is speaking to an unenlightened *bhikkhu*. The Buddha apparently does not understand the deities' messages as statements of Vakkali's impending enlightenment. If so, we should try to see if they can be interpreted in a way which does not imply spiritual liberation.

The first deity reports that "the *bhikkhu* Vakkali is intent on release" (*vakkali bhante bhikkhu vimokkhāya cetetī ti*), and the second says that "being well released, he will be released" (*suvimutto vimuccissati*). It is important to note that derivatives of the verb √*muc* do not necessarily refer to spiritual liberation. They can even be used in the sense of being released from illness. For example, in the *Māgandiya Sutta* (MN 75), the verb √*pari-muc*—which can also refer to spiritual liberation—refers to release from leprosy (*kuṭṭhehi parimucceyya*).[22] With regard to Vakkali, the statement that "Vakkali is intent on release" could mean nothing more than that Vakkali will soon end his life and be "released" from pain.

The message of the second deity is more complicated. But the statement "being well released, he will be released" (*so hi nūna bhante suvimutto vimuccissatī ti*) once again need not refer to spiritual liberation. It looks like an elaboration of what the first deity states: the future tense verb "he will be released" (*vimuccissatī*) is a more emphatic way of stating what the first deity has said, i.e., that Vakkali "is intent on release"; both indicate something that Vakkali will achieve in the near future, that is, his own death. This leaves the adjective "well released" (*suvimutto*) as a possible indication that Vakkali has,

[22] MN I 506: *tassa so bhisakko sallakatto bhesajjaṃ kareyya. so taṃ bhesajjaṃ āgamma kuṭṭhehi parimucceyya, arogo assa sukhī serī sayaṃvasī yena kāmaṅgamo.*

through receiving the Buddha's guidance, attained spiritual liberation. But this too is not necessarily the case.

In a number of canonical Pali texts, (*su-*)*vimutta* means concentrated or absorbed, for example at SN 46.6 (Ee V 73ff), where the definition of sense restraint (*indriyasaṃvaro*) includes the statement that the *bhikkhu*'s "body is still, his mind is still, well composed internally (*ajjhattaṃ susaṇṭhitaṃ*) and well released (*suvimuttaṃ*)".[23] Being "well released" is here equivalent to the mind being "well composed", in other words concentrated. A similar sense of the term *suvimutta* is found in the Buddha's teaching to Sāriputta at Sn 975:

> Warding off desire for these things, the *bhikkhu*, being mindful and well released in mind (*suvimuttacitto*), investigating the Dhamma thoroughly, at the right time, and being one-pointed, would dispel the darkness.[24]

Being "well released in mind" (*suvimuttacitto*) is here the same as being concentrated, which leads to "dispelling the darkness". Being "well released" can only be a meditative state achieved prior to spiritual liberation, in other words. Another Sutta (SN 2.2) similarly uses the compound "released in mind" (*vimuttacitto*) in the sense of a concentration that precedes spiritual liberation:

> A *bhikkhu* should be a meditator, released in mind (*vimuttacitto*), if he longs for his heart's fulfilment. When he understands the rise and fall of the world, being joyful in mind (*sucetaso*) and without dependency, that (fulfilment) is his reward.[25]

The compound *vimuttacitto* is here equivalent to *sucetaso*: the *bhikkhu* who is "released" and "joyful in mind" is able to attain spiritual liberation. The commentary confirms that being "released in mind" refers to nothing more than meditative proficiency: "the *bhikkhu* seeking arahantship should become a meditator, he should become well released in mind".[26] It also interprets *vimuttacitto* in the sense of "with mind released (*vimuttacitto*) through release

[23] SN V 74: *tassa ṭhito ca kāyo hoti ṭhitaṃ cittaṃ ajjhattaṃ susaṇṭhitaṃ suvimuttaṃ.*

[24] Sn 975 (pp. 188–189): *etesu dhammesu vineyya chandaṃ, bhikkhu satīmā suvimuttacitto, kālena so samma dhammaṃ parivīmaṃsamāno, ekodibhūto vihane tamaṃ so ti bhagavā ti.*

[25] SN I 46: *bhikkhu siyā jhāyī vimuttacitto, ākaṅkhe ce hadayassānupattiṃ. lokassa ñatvā udayabbayañ ca, sucetaso asito tadānisaṃso ti.*

[26] SN–a I 104: [...] *bhikkhu arahattaṃ patthento jhāyī bhaveyya, suvimuttacitto bhaveyya* [...].

on the object of meditation (*kammaṭṭhānavimuttiyā*)".[27] The commentary on SN 22.87 similarly assumes that Vakkali attains spiritual liberation shortly after the suicidal act of severing his jugular vein (see n. 32 below). This means that the SN 22.87 commentarial interpretation of *suvimutto vimuccissati* must refer to a meditative state prior to attaining arahantship: "well released, he will be released: he will be released (*vimuccissati*) having become (meditatively) released (*vimutto hutvā*) on the meditative release (*-vimuttiyā*) leading to the fruit of arahantship (*arahattaphala-*)".[28]

We should finally note that the use of the verb √*vi-muc* in the sense of being concentrated is attested in one of the most important Suttas on meditation. In the *Ānāpānasatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, one of the practices is that the *bhikkhu* should breathe in and out concentrating (*samādahaṃ*) the mind, and should breathe in and out releasing (*vimocayaṃ*) the mind.[29] Being an aspect of the *bhikkhu*'s way of training himself (*sikkhati*), *vimocayaṃ* does not here refer to attaining the liberated goal.

These observations suggest that the most obvious way of interpreting the statements of the deities, given the context, is that Vakkali is determined to commit suicide ("intent on release", "will be released"), and that as a prelude to this he has attained meditative state of ease ("is well released") based on the Buddha's not-self teaching. If this was not the intended meaning, the Buddha's response to the deities would be different. The narrative demands that Vakkali is not yet liberated: he is not so when the Buddha first visits him, is still not liberated when the Buddha leaves, and must be the same when the Buddha gives the message that Vakkali's death will not be bad. Within this narrative, the deities messages only make sense as statements of his impending suicide; if the Pali use of the verb √*vi-muc* sometimes refers to meditative release, it must have that meaning here.

Even when Vakkali tells the Buddha that he does not doubt the impermanence of the five aggregates (*rūpaṃ aniccaṃ. tāhaṃ bhante na kaṅkhāmi*), or is not perplexed about the fact that what is impermanent is unsatisfactory (*yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhan ti na vicikicchāmi*), and further is not perplexed about the fact that he lacks passion for the five aggregates (*n' atthi*

[27] SN–a I 104: *vimuttacitto ti kammaṭṭhānavimuttiyā vimuttacitto. hadayass' anupattin ti arahattaṃ.*

[28] SN–a II 314: *suvimutto vimuccissati ti arahattaphalavimuttiyā vimutto hutvā vimuccissati.*

[29] MN III 83: *samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī ti sikkhati, samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī ti sikkhati, vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī ti sikkhati, vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī ti sikkhati.*

me tattha chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā ti na vicikicchāmī ti), this is not a statement of spiritual liberation. Vakkali does not actually say he is liberated, does not state anything along the lines that his "corruptions have waned away" (*khīṇāsava*), and does not even say that he has ended passion for good. Rather, Vakkali is simply affirming that he has understood the teaching and that it has had the required effect: Vakkali understood the timely meditation on not-self, and was ready to die.

The same observations made in relation to the account of Channa's suicide apply here: a text which gives every impression that Vakkali is not spiritually liberated, before strangely ending with this conclusion, is not to be taken at face value. The implicit message would appear to be that although the *bhikkhu* in question was not liberated, for some reason or other he eventually came to be regarded as an arahant.

Chinese Āgama parallel (1): SĀ 1265

Two Chinese Āgama parallels to Vakkali's suicide, SĀ 1265 and EĀ 26.10, have been the subject of detailed studies by Martin Delhey (2009) and Bhikkhu Anālayo (2011). According to Anālayo's translation, SĀ 1265 differs in several respects from SN 22.87, the most important of which are as follows:

- Immediately after describing his pain to the Budddha, Vakkali states his wish to kill himself (ibid.: 157).
- The Buddha does not rebuke Vakkali's wish to see this "putrid body", and does not utter the enigmatic statement that "he who sees Dhamma sees me [...]" (ibid.).
- The Buddha's not-self teaching to Vakkali is slightly expanded: "If one does not have greed for this body, or have desire for it, then one's death will be good and one's future will also be good" (ibid.: 157–158).
- The report of the first deity to the Buddha is also slightly different. It states that "the venerable Vakkali, being ill and afflicted, is giving attention to liberation. He wishes to take a knife and kill himself, as he does not enjoy living any longer" (ibid.: 158).

- The second deity says "The venerable Vakkali is already well liberated and attaining liberation" (ibid.: 158).
- The Buddha's message for Vakkali, after the deities have visited him, is that "If greed or desire for this body do not arise in you, then your death will be good and your future will be good" (ibid.).
- The narrative of Vakkali's death—being taken out, his conversation with other *bhikkhu*s, his reception of the Buddha's message, his response to it and so on—is expanded. For example, Vakkali kills himself while the messengers are said to still be there, and this is then reported to the Buddha (ibid.: 158–159).
- The conclusion of Māra as a dark cloud searching for the consciousness of Vakkali is essentially the same, but the narrative adds that "Vakkali had [reached] the ultimate" (ibid.: 160).

Anālayo's comparative analysis of SĀ 1265 and SN 22.87 focuses on the fact that both the SN and SĀ "clearly indicate that Vakkali passed away as an arahant, resembling in this respect the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and *Saṃyutta-nikāya* versions of Channa's suicide" (ibid.). Strangely, however, Anālayo is unable to explain exactly how Vakkali attained arahantship. The first deity's message to the Buddha—"venerable Vakkali, being ill and afflicted, is giving attention to liberation. He wishes to take a knife and kill himself, as he does not enjoy living any longer"—is obviously an expanded version of the Pali parallel. But the expansion merely makes clear Vakkali's suicidal intentions. Anālayo recognises this by noting that the "first *deva* indicates that Vakkali is ill, that he is giving attention to liberation and that he wishes to kill himself. The *deva*'s message thus appears to be that he is intending to 'liberate' himself from his sick and painful situation by suicide" (ibid.).

Anālayo (ibid.: 161) proposes two ways of interpreting the statement of the second deity: either it means "that Vakkali will still become an arahant, i.e., he will be liberated in a way that is well", or "the passage could be affirming that Vakkali is already well liberated mentally and now is about to liberate himself also from his painful situation by putting an end to his life". Anālayo does not make clear which reading he prefers, although neither makes any sense. The SĀ statement that "venerable Vakkali is already well liberated and attaining liberation" is surely a translation of something very much like the Pali *suvimutto vimuccissati*. Anālayo does not consider the possibility that the

underlying (*su*)-*vimutta* could simply mean Vakkali is in a state of meditative release, short of spiritual liberation, although he claims that this use of the verb √*vi-muc* as meditative release also occurs in the account of Godhika's suicide, where the compound *ceto-vimutti* occurs.[30]

More importantly, Anālayo does not read the deities' statements in the wider context of the narrative, which before and afterwards assumes Vakkali is not an arahant. In SĀ 1265, the Buddha concludes his not-self teaching to Vakkali with a statement that he will be reborn: "If one does not have greed for this body, or have desire for it, then one's death will be good and one's future will also be good" (Anālayo, 2011: 157–158). After he has received the two deities, the Buddha's message to Vakkali concludes in exactly the same way: "If greed or desire for this body do not arise in you, then your death will be good and your future will be good" (ibid.: 158). The messenger then delivers the same words to Vakkali (ibid.: 159), leaving us in no doubt about Vakkali's lack of liberation at this point.

To support his argument, Anālayo (2011: 160) refers back to the Pali text: "That Vakkali indeed believed himself to be liberated could be gathered from his last message to the Buddha, in which according to both versions he affirms his insight and detachment in regard to the five aggregates". As we have seen, Vakkali's statement in SN 22.87 about understanding the not-self teaching, and being in no doubt about having no passion for the five aggregates, stops short of stating his liberation. In fact, the parallel part of SĀ 1265 is much clearer about Vakkali's lack of liberating insight. It states Vakkali's last message to the Buddha, delivered to a messenger *bhikkhu* just before his suicide, as follows:

> Venerable one, the great teacher well knows what is to be known, he well sees what is to be seen. Those two *deva*s well know what is to be known, well see what is to be seen. Now for me there is definitely no doubt that this body is impermanent; there is definitely no doubt that what is impermanent is *dukkha*; there is definitely no doubt that is it not proper to let oneself have greed or let oneself have desire for what is impermanent, *dukkha*, of a

[30] Anālayo (2010: 162): "In discourses in the Pali Nikāyas and their parallels in the Chinese Āgamas, the expression liberation of the mind (*cetovimutti*)—when occurring on its own and without the qualification 'unshakeable', *akuppa*—does not stand for the type of liberation gained through the different levels of awakening, but only for the experience of deep levels of concentration".

> nature to change [...] (*similarly for feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*) [...]. The disease is now troubling my body just as before, I wish to [take] a knife and kill myself, as I do not enjoy living any longer (transl. Anālayo 2011: 159; his emphasis).

In short, Vakkali does not state that his understanding of the not-self teaching has liberated him. He says the teaching has had a different effect: it has settled his mental state, and prepared him for the final step of committing suicide.

According to Delhey (2009: 98–99) the SN and SĀ accounts "can hardly be explained in other ways than to assume that Vakkali was already an *arhat* when he killed himself. The *Saṃyuktāgama* recension, especially, is quite explicit in this regard". He further claims that:

> [...] it seems that the Buddha unconditionally assures that Vakkali's death—and his fate after death as well—will be good, since he has no desire for the *skandha*s anymore. So it seems that the Buddha also confirms that Vakkali is already released (2009: 87).

The exact opposite is quite obviously the case. Assuring Vakkali that his future state will be good is an explicit statement that he will continue in the realm of transmigration. An arahant cannot have a good "fate" after death: he has no fate after death. Delhey further claims that:

> [...] it is very well possible that according to the *Saṃyuktāgama* recension Vakkali is released right from the beginning. This assumption seems to be corroborated by another *sūtra* of the *Saṃyuktāgama* in which it is related how Vakkali finds release on another—and obviously earlier—occasion in his life (2009: 88).

The Pali tradition too has a canonical account of Vakkali's liberation at an earlier point in his life, in the relatively late *Apadāna*,[31] but such accounts are secondary to the canonical account of his suicide. Neither the SN nor the SĀ text can be read in any reasonable way that presumes Vakkali's liberation from the start. And as we have seen, in both versions of the story Vakkali is

[31] Ap II 465ff.

not regarded as an arahant even after the Buddha has received the two deities' messages. With regard to these messages, Delhey (2009: 76–77) points out, correctly, that the first message states only Vakkali's wish to kill himself: "it becomes quite clear from the context that this expression is an allusion to his intention to commit suicide: release (*vimokkha*) means in this expression and in this text passage obviously—at least primarily—: release from his grave incurable disease by death from his own hand". But Delhey interprets the second message differently:

> [...] the expression "being well-released, he will attain release" (*suvimutto vimuccissati*) [...] makes only good sense when both expressions refer to two different kinds of release which follow each other in chronological order. And in my view it is most natural to assume that these two kinds are the liberation from the fetters which bind Vakkali to *saṃsāra* (*suvimutto*) and, like in the term *vimokkha* used in the first part of the deities' message, liberation from his disease by death (*vimuccissati*) (2009: 77).

Just like Anālayo, Delhey is seemingly unaware of the semantic range of Middle Indic forms of the verb √*vi-muc*, and ignores the overall context in which the Buddha does not regard the messages as an indication of Vakkali's spiritual liberation. He also fails to understand the importance of the Pali commentary on SN 22.87, which reads as follows:

> "He inflicted the knife". The elder was apparently overconfident—not seeing that the operation of the defilements had (merely) been suppressed, through concentration and insight, he thought "I have destroyed the corruptions, so what is the point with this miserable life? I will inflict the knife and die". He cut his jugular vein with a sharp knife. Then a painful sensation arose, and at that moment he understood that he was merely an ordinary person. But because he had not let go of his meditative object, by mastering his subject of meditation he attained arahantship and then died.[32]

[32] SN–a II 314: *satthaṃ āharesī ti thero kira adhimāniko ahosi. so samādhivipassanāhi vikkhambhitānaṃ kilesānaṃ samudācāraṃ apassanto, khīṇāsavo 'mhī ti hutvā, kiṃ me iminā dukkhena jīvitena? satthaṃ āharitvā marissāmī ti. tikhiṇena satthena kaṇṭhanāḷaṃ chindi. ath' assa dukkhā vedanā uppajjati. so tasmiṃ khaṇe attano puthujjanabhāvaṃ ñatvā, avissaṭṭhakammaṭṭhānattā sīghaṃ*

This commentary indicates what the canonical account lacks, and what it really should contain, if it wishes to make clear that Vakkali was an arahant before death: a formula stating Vakkali's liberation. Delhey's summary of the commentary unfortunately misses the point:

> Buddhaghosa says in his commentary on the *Vakkalisutta* that Vakkali, while committing suicide, wrongly conceived himself to be an *arhat* without actually being one. Rather he was still a common person (*puthujjana*) at that point in time. Only immediately after cutting his throat did Vakkali realize that he had not yet been released and passed the stages of the way to salvation, so that he became an *arhat* in the last moments of his life. The problem with this interpretation is that the wording of the *sūtra* contains neither any hint whatsoever regarding the possibility of a salvific experience while committing suicide or dying, nor regarding the possibility that Vakkali wrongly conceived himself to be an *arhat* before killing himself (2009: 78; his emphasis).

Delhey is correct to point out that the Pali Sutta gives no indication of liberation at the time of suicide, which necessitates a commentarial exegesis along these lines. But he fails to note that this is the only option the commentary has, in the circumstances: if the Buddha continues to treat Vakkali as unenlightened even after the deities' messages, Buddhaghosa can only situate liberation at the time of death. Not seeing this, Delhey claims that Vakkali actually attained liberation after the Buddha's teaching to him:

> [...] it is indeed somewhat unclear when exactly Vakkali attained release according to the Pali recension. It seems that he is not yet an *arhat* in the beginning of the sermon, and there is no explicit reference to his liberating experience in the later parts of the sermon. I assume, however, that he already attained release immediately, or at least shortly, after the Buddha's instruction on the unsatisfactoriness of the *skandha*s. Regarding this topic, Tilmann Vetter [2000: 234] points to the fact that the Buddha's

kammaṭṭhānaṃ ādāya sammasanto arahattaṃ pāpuṇitvā va kālam akāsi. Reading *kaṇṭhanāḷaṃ* with Be instead of *kaṇḍanāḷiṃ* in Ee.

> sermon on the five *skandha*s which can also be found in many other places of the canon "is here not depicted as directly resulting in an experience of release" and suggests that Vakkali "achieved the result a little later, when he no longer clung to the wish to see the Buddha and felt free to dispose of a body that caused him unbearable pain" (2009: 78, n. 29).

Vetter's point about liberating conclusions to accounts of the not-self teaching merely highlights its absence in SN 22.87. Given the overall context, Delhey's assumption "that he already attained release immediately, or at least shortly, after the Buddha's instruction on the unsatisfactoriness of the *skandha*s" is unwarranted. The most significant fact about the Buddha's instruction to Vakkali is its lack of a formula describing his liberation: the ease of including such a formula, and the presence of such formulae in so many other occurrences of the not-self teaching, is surely a glaring and meaningful omission, one certainly noticed by Buddhaghosa, and one which in the SN and SĀ versions agrees with the Buddha continuing to treat Vakkali as unenlightened after he has received the deities.

Delhey misses the point that the Pali commentary deals with a received tradition quite logically: if Vakkali was unenlightened after receiving the Buddha's teaching, and was thus when the deities delivered their messages to the Buddha, and yet is somehow regarded as a liberated arahant in the Sutta's conclusion, the moment of enlightenment can only be placed around the time of his suicide. This is exactly what another Chinese version of the Sutta states, to which we will now turn.

Chinese Āgama parallel (2): EĀ 26.10

According to Anālayo's translation (2011: 164–166), the Chinese account in the *Ekottara-āgama* at EĀ 26.10 is quite different from the SN/SĀ versions of Vakkali's suicide. Set in Jeta's Grove in Sāvatthī, Vakkali is ill and lying in his own excrement, and states his desire to kill himself. He claims that no other disciple "liberated by faith" is superior to him, and that in this life he cannot "get from this shore to the other shore". Vakkali's unenlightened status is thus the initial focus of the narrative. Provided a knife by his attendant, Vakkali stabs himself but immediately realises it is "contrary to the Dharma". But by contemplating the rise and fall of the five aggregates he attains liberation, and the account concludes by saying that he attained final Nirvana "in the

element of Nirvāṇa without remainder" (Anālayo 2011: 164–165). The account then moves slightly back in time, by stating that the Buddha heard with his divine ear that Vakkali was "seeking a knife to kill himself". After having Ānanda gather the monks for a discourse, they go to Vakkali's dwelling and an expanded version of the episode with Māra seeking Vakkali's consciousness occurs. At this point the text is worth citing in full:

> Then the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "May the Blessed One declare it. Where has the consciousness of the monk Vakkali become established?". The Blessed One said: "The consciousness of the monk Vakkali is forever without attachment. That clansman has taken final Nirvāṇa. You should remember it like this". Then, the venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "On which day did the monk Vakkali attain [full insight into] the four truths?". The Blessed One said: "He attained [full insight into] the four truths today". Ānanda said to the Buddha: "This monk had been ill for a long time, originally he was a worldling". The Blessed One said: "That is so, Ānanda, it is as you said. That monk had been dissatisfied with being in great pain for a very long time, yet, among disciples of the Buddha Sakyamuni, who have been liberated by faith, this person was the foremost. Though his mind had not yet been liberated from the influx of becoming, [he thought]: 'I shall now seek a knife and stab myself'. Then, just when that monk was about to stab himself, he gave attention to the qualities of the Tathāgata. On the day when he gave up his life, he gave attention to the five aggregates [affected by] clinging: 'This is reckoned to be the arising of form, this is the cessation of form [...]'. Then, having given attention to this, that monk [realised that] whatever is of a nature to arise is of a nature to cease. This monk has attained final Nirvāṇa" (trans. Anālayo 2011: 165–166).

This account is obviously very different from the SN/SĀ parallels, starting with its location in Sāvatthī. It is striking that the Buddha does not visit Vakkali, does not give him a not-self teaching, and does not receive any messages from visiting deities. Even more importantly, this text contains an actual account of Vakkali's liberation, which is said to occur through contemplation immediately after the suicidal act. As a parallel to the Pali commentary, this episode can

perhaps be regarded as a late addition to the EĀ text; on the other hand, it could show that the Pali commentary reworks material of great antiquity.

Apart from its general difference from the SN/SĀ accounts, EĀ 26.10 also shares certain features in common with them. The not-self contemplation of the five aggregates, while not part of a teaching delivered by the Buddha, is once again the doctrinal focus of the story. And just as in the SN/SĀ parallels, the EĀ text has an account of Māra searching for the consciousness of the suicidee. Most strikingly, the theme of a disciple asking the Buddha about the fate of a suicidal *bhikkhu* is encountered: EĀ 26.10 uses the figure of Ānanda, of all people, to introduce a note of scepticism into the story. Ānanda's first questions the Buddha on where Vakkali had been reborn, then asks when exactly he attained liberation, and finally points out that Vakkali "had been ill for a long time, originally he was a worldling". Ānanda's scepticism goes against the text's claim that Vakkali died an arahant, and mirrors Sāriputta's queries to the Buddha after Channa's death. This section of the text thus comes close to the ambivalence of the SN/SĀ accounts. But whereas the SN/SĀ versions contrast Vakkali's unenlightened status in the main body of text with enlightenment conclusions, EĀ 26.10 contrasts a straightforward account of Vakkali's liberation with a sceptical conclusion, in which Ānanda—hardly a figure of unorthodoxy in early Buddhism—voices his doubts.

All in all, the EĀ treatment of Vakkali's suicide appears to draw from the same stock of tradition about early Buddhist suicidees, but puts the pieces of tradition together very differently from the SN/SĀ. Somehow this was not seen by Delhey (2009: 99, followed by Anālayo, 2011: 166–167) who claims the EĀ account "can best be understood as a secondary reinterpretation of the original account", i.e., "an exegetical recension of the *Vakkalisutta*" (2009: 81; his emphasis). This is surely an exaggeration. There is nothing "exegetical" about the EĀ text, which is in the old Sutta style; its account of Vakkali's liberation, although parallel to the Theravadin exegesis of Buddhaghosa, is much simpler than it and clearly belongs to the Sutta period of composition. Even if this parallel highlights a later addition to EĀ 26.10, there is no reason to regard its basic account as any earlier or later than the SN/SĀ parallels.

A final peculiar feature of the accounts of Vakkali's suicide, contained in all three versions (SN, SĀ, EĀ), is the episode involving Māra as a dark cloud searching for Vakkali's consciousness. This conclusion is extremely peculiar, just as strange, in fact, as the peculiar ending of the Pali and SĀ accounts of Channa's suicide, where blameworthiness is equated with being reborn. But the same

motif of Māra seeking a suicidee's consciousness also occurs in the Pali account of Godhika's suicide, the most peculiar text of all, to which we will shortly turn. Before doing this we must first consider a different text, on Assaji's final illness, which sheds further light on the accounts of Channa's and Vakkali's suicides.

3. Assaji (SN 22.88)

So far, we have seen that the texts on Channa's and Vakkali's suicides are not normative endorsements of arahant suicide. If they were, we could expect them to be unequivocal in their account of these *bhikkhus*' liberation, in a fashion similar to the EĀ, albeit without Ānanda's scepticism. The peculiarity of the enlightenment conclusions to these texts can be seen by comparing them to a text which shares numerous points in common with them, but without actually recording the suicide of a *bhikkhu*. This Sutta (SN 22.88) deals with Assaji's illness,[33] and the action once again takes place in Rājagaha: the Buddha is in the Bamboo Grove, and Assaji, ill and staying nearby in "Kassapa's Park" (*kassapakārāme*), sends messengers to ask the Buddha to visit, out of compassion.[34] The Buddha visits in the evening, after emerging from seclusion, and on seeing him approach Assaji tries to get up from his cot, but the Buddha tells him not to bother. In the same stereotypical style of the texts on Channa and Vakkali, the Buddha asks if Assaji is getting better, and Assaji replies that he is not.

As in his discussion with Vakkali, the Buddha then asks if Assaji has any regret. Being answered that he does and that it is not trifling (*anappakaṃ*), the Buddha enquires if it concerns virtue (*sīla*). Assaji denies this but points out that when previously ill, he was able to repeatedly pacify (*passambhetvā passambhetvā*) his bodily "volitions" or "activities" (*kāya-saṅkhāre*), but being now unable to do so, he worries "May I not fall away".[35] In using vocabulary

[33] On the wider context of this Sutta, see Wynne 2019: 123ff.

[34] SN III 124: *etha tumhe āvuso yena bhagavā ten' upasaṅkamatha, upasaṅkamitvā mama vacanena bhagavato pāde sirasā vandatha: assaji bhante bhikkhu ābādhiko dukkhito bāḷhagilāno. so bhagavato pāde sirasā vandati. evañ ca vadetha: sādhu kira bhante bhagavā yena assaji bhikkhu ten' upasaṅkamatu anukampam upādāyā.*

[35] SN III 125: *pubbe khvāhaṃ bhante gelaññe passambhetvā passambhetvā kāyasaṅkhāre vippatisārī viharāmi, so taṃ samādhiṃ na paṭilabhāmi. tassa mayhaṃ bhante taṃ samādhiṃ appaṭilabhato evaṃ hoti: no cassāhaṃ parihāyāmī ti*. The commentary (SN–a II 315) interprets: *no cassāhaṃ parihāyāmī ti, kacci nu kho ahaṃ sāsanato na parihāyāmi. tassa kira ābādhadosena appitappitā samāpatti parihāyi, tasmā evaṃ cintesi*. Reading *cassāhaṃ* with Be for *ca khvāhaṃ* in Ee (in the text and commentary).

similar to that found in accounts of the mindfulness of breathing,[36] the text seems to refer to Assaji's ability to attain meditative absorption through practising mindfulness of breath,[37] and so abide without feeling the effects of ill-health (*gelañña*). But although Assaji cannot attain absorption (*samādhi*), and is worried about regression (*parihāyāmī*), the Buddha tells him that only ascetics and Brahmins for whom "absorption is the essence" (*samādhi-sārakā*) think like this.[38] The Buddha duly delivers the not-self teaching, concluding with the liberation of the *bhikkhu* who understands it. To conclude the Sutta the Buddha then elaborates the not-self teaching as follows:

> If he (the *bhikkhu*) feels a pleasant sensation, he understands it is impermanent, and that it is neither clung to (*anajjhositā*) nor welcomed (*anabhinanditā*) [The same is repeated for an unpleasant feeling (*dukkhaṃ*) and a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling (*adukkhamasukhaṃ*)]. If he feels a pleasant sensation, he feels it in a state of detachment (*visaṃyutto*) [The same is repeated for an unpleasant feeling (*dukkhaṃ*) and a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling (*adukkhamasukhaṃ*)].
>
> Feeling a sensation limited by the body (*kāyapariyantikaṃ*), he understands: "I feel a sensation limited by the body". Feeling a sensation limited to life (*Jīvitapariyantikaṃ*), he (the *bhikkhu*) understands: "I feel a sensation limited to life". He understands: "With the breaking up of the body, after the consumption of life, all sensation, not being welcomed, will become cool right here".
>
> Just as, Assaji, an oil lamp would burn dependent on oil and a wick, but when both are consumed, no longer having any fuel, it would be blown out, thus when he feels a sensation limited by the body (*kāyapariyantikaṃ*), he understands: "I feel a sensation limited by the body" [...] [The text repeats "Feeling a sensation limited to life [...] will become cool right here"].[39]

[36] DN II 291 = MN I 56: *passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī ti* [...].

[37] SN–a II 315: *kāyasaṅkhāre ti assāsapassāse. so hi te catutthajjhānena passambhitvā vihāsi.* The commentary thus understands Assaji to be referring to the fourth *jhāna*, although its claim that by attaining this Assaji "pacifies" i.e., stops his breathing is of course a commentarial understanding of what attaining the fourth *jhāna* involves.

[38] SN III 125: *ye te assaji samaṇabrāhmaṇā samādhisārakā samādhisāmaññā, tesan taṃ samādhiṃ appaṭilabhataṃ evaṃ hoti: no c' assu mayaṃ parihāyāmā ti.*

[39] SN III 126: *so sukhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, sā aniccā ti pajānāti. anajjhositā ti pajānāti. anabhinanditā ti pajānāti. dukkhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, sā aniccā ti pajānāti. anajjhositā ti pajānāti.*

Analysis

Although no final outcome is reported, the text's conclusion implies that Assaji's death is impending; this seems to be the meaning of the simile of the oil lamp exhausting its fuel. Just like Channa and Vakkali, Assaji appears to be ill and with no possibility of recovery. The Buddha's response to him is the same as his response to Channa and Vakkali, but adapted to Assaji's worries about meditative failure: he chides Assaji for valuing absorption, and duly delivers the not-self teaching supplemented by further teachings on the correct spiritual attitude to experience, apparently in relation to death.

The text does not tell us what happened to Assaji. But it is worth speculating on this absence. If it had concluded with Assaji's suicide, would his situation have been treated just like that of Channa and Vakkali, by adding an enlightenment conclusion? To be sure, Assaji does not appear to be enlightened: he is worried that he will fall away from his earlier meditative attainment. But in the case of his suicide, there would at least be some assumed meditative basis from which to fashion an enlightenment conclusion. This account therefore gives us further reason to suspect the conclusions to the accounts of Channa's and Vakkali's suicides. Since the text knows nothing of Assaji's suicide, a similar conclusion was not required, and hence is not found. The same would probably be true had Channa and Vakkali not committed suicide. The texts would probably have ended with the not-self teachings given to them: there would have been no reason to elaborate any further.

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anabhinanditā ti pajānāti. adukkhamasukhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, sā aniccā ti pajānāti ... la ... anabhinanditā ti pajānāti. so sukhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, visaññutto naṃ vediyati. dukkhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, visaññutto naṃ vediyati. adukkhamasukhaṃ ce vedanaṃ vediyati, visaññutto naṃ vediyati. so kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno, kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī ti pajānāti. jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno, jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmī ti pajānāti. kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā idh' eva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sītibhavissantī ti pajānāti. seyyathāpi assaji telañ ca paṭicca vaṭṭiṃ ca paṭicca telapadīpo jhāyeyya, tass' eva telassa ca vaṭṭiyā ca pariyādānā anāhāro nibbāyeyya. evam eva kho assaji bhikkhu kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayimāno, kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmī ti pajānāti. jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyamāno, jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vediyāmī ti pajānāti. kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā idh' eva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sītibhavissantī ti pajānātī ti.

4. Godhika (SN 4.23)

The account of Godhika's suicide is entirely different from those of Channa and Vakkali. It is, however, similar to the account of Assaji's illness in that it concerns Godhika's meditative problems, although the Buddha strikes an entirely different tone from his response to Assaji. As we have seen, Assaji is criticised for entertaining the non-Buddhist idea that "absorption is the essence". But Godhika's meditative beliefs are even more unorthodox than this, and yet are endorsed by the Buddha. The Sutta begins with the Buddha staying at the Bamboo Grove in Rājagaha, and Godhika living nearby on Mount Isigili. Godhika is said to have "touched a temporary liberation of mind" (*sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ*), before "falling away" from it.[40] This happens six times; on the seventh occasion, he contemplates "inflicting the knife" on himself.[41]

At this point Māra enters the narrative and plays a surprising role: reading Godhika's mind, Māra tells the Buddha that a disciple is intent on death and should be stopped.[42] For how can a *bhikkhu* in training, unrealised but delighting in the *sāsana*, die (through suicide)?[43] But before anything else happens Godhika actually commits suicide,[44] and the Buddha addresses Māra as follows:

> The wise act thus, they do not long for life; Godhika has uprooted thirst, along with its roots, and attained final Nirvana.[45]

[40] SN I 120: *atha kho āyasmā godhiko appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viharanto sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ phusi. atha kho āyasmā godhiko tamhā sāmayikāya cetovimuttiyā parihāyi.* Both here and in the next note, reading *sāmayikaṃ/sāmayikāya* with Be instead of *sāmādhikaṃ/sāmādhikāya* in Ee; on these variants, see below.

[41] SN I 121: *atha kho āyasmato godhikassa etad ahosi: yāva chaṭṭhaṃ khvāhaṃ sāmayikāya cetovimuttiyā parihīno. yaṃ nūnāhaṃ satthaṃ āhareyyan ti?* The commentary views Godhika's plight (SN–a I.183: *tena samādhissa sappāye upakārakadhamme pūretuṃ na sakkoti, appitappitāya samāpattiyā parihāyati*) in a way similar to that of Assaji (SN–a II 315: *ṭhitāya kira ābādhavasena appitappitā samāpatti parihāyi, tasmā evaṃ cintesi*).

[42] SN I 121: *sāvako te mahāvīra maraṇaṃ maraṇābhibhū, ākaṅkhati cetayati, taṃ nisedha jutindhara.*

[43] SN I 121: *kathaṃ hi bhagavā tuyhaṃ sāvako sāsane rato, appattamānaso sekho, kālaṃ kayirā jane sutā ti.*

[44] SN I 121: *tena kho pana samayena āyasmatā godhikena satthaṃ āharitaṃ hoti.*

[45] SN I 121: *evaṃ hi dhīrā kubbanti nāvakaṅkhanti jīvitaṃ, samūlaṃ taṇham abbuyha godhiko parinibbuto ti.*

The Buddha then takes a group of *bhikkhu*s to Isigili, where they see Godhika, who is "lying on his cot, his shoulders twisted around",[46] apparently an indication that he has cut his jugular vein.[47] The Buddha points out a dark cloud moving all about, which he says is Māra looking for the consciousness of Godhika. Just as in the story of Vakkali's suicide, the Buddha comments "with his consciousness unestablished, Godhika, son of good family, has attained final Nirvana".[48] When Māra asks questions the Buddha about where Godhika has gone,[49] the Buddha elaborates his previous statement to him as follows:

> That wise meditator endowed with resolve, ever delighting in meditation, exerting himself day and night, with no desire for life, he conquers the army of death and does not return to continued existence. Godhika has uprooted thirst, along with its roots, and attained final Nirvana.[50]

The Sutta then ends with a final verse on Māra's plight:

> Overcome with sorrow, his lute (*vīṇā*) fell from his armpit, and then that pathetic spirit disappeared, right there.[51]

Chinese and Sanskrit parallels

A parallel to SN 4.23 is found in the Saṃyukta-Āgama (SĀ 1091) and has been mentioned in some publications by Anālayo (2011: 162–163; 2015: 247ff). He points out that "[u]nlike Vakkali, the monk Godhika had not been sick or in pain, but had resorted to suicide because he had several times lost a temporary liberation of the mind" (2015: 247). Given that illness is a major theme in the accounts of the Channa's and Vakkali's suicides, its absence in the SN/SĀ texts

[46] SN I 121: *addasā kho bhagavā āyasmantaṃ godhikaṃ dūrato va mañcake vivattakkhandhaṃ semānam.*

[47] SN–a I 183: *satthaṃ āharitaṃ hotī ti thero kira, kiṃ mayhaṃ iminā jīvitenā ti, uttāno nipajjitvā satthena galanāḷiṃ chindi, dukkhā vedanā uppajjiṃsu.*

[48] SN I 122: *appatiṭṭhitena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena godhiko kulaputto parinibbuto.*

[49] SN I 122: *anvesaṃ nādhigacchāmi, godhiko so kuhiṃ gato.*

[50] SN I 122: *so dhīro dhitisampanno jhāyī jhānarato sadā, ahorattaṃ anuyuñjaṃ jīvitaṃ anikāmayaṃ, jetvāna maccuno senaṃ anāgantvā punabbhavaṃ, samūlaṃ taṇham abbuyha godhiko parinibbuto ti.*

[51] SN I 122: *tassa sokaparetassa vīṇā kacchā abhassatha, tato so dummano yakkho tatth' ev' antaradhāyathā ti*. Reading *tatth' ev'* with Be rather than *tath' ev'* in Ee.

must surely indicate that it was not part of early traditions about Godhika. The Pali commentary in fact claims that Godhika had an underlying illness,[52] but this must be regarded as a later way of interpreting the text.

The Chinese SĀ parallel also helps confirm the correct way of referring to Godhika's meditative attainment. The Pali Text Society (PTS) edition (SN I 120–121) reads *sāmādhikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ*, which is clearly wrong, whereas the Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana (SN I 122, Be) reads *sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ* and the Siamese Syāmaraṭṭhassa (SN I 176, Se) reads *sāmāyikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ*. Either the Burmese or Siamese edition reading make good sense: Godhika attains a "temporary" liberation of mind, a fact confirmed by SĀ 1091 (Anālayo 2011: 162, n. 36). According to La Vallée Poussin (1936), the same account is mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośa* and its *Vibhāṣa*, where it refers to Godhika's attainment of a *sāmayikī vimukti*, "a temporary or occasional emancipation". La Vallée Poussin also draws attention to *sāmāyikam pi vimuttiṃ* at AN III 349ff; the notion of a "temporary liberation" (*sāmayikaṃ* [...] *cetovimuttiṃ*) is also found in a couple of other Suttas, even in their PTS editions.[53]

Analysis

This Sutta is striking for several reasons. Godhika is not ill but still commits suicide; his meditative beliefs are difficult to understand and certainly unorthodox; but these beliefs are endorsed by the Buddha, directly contrary to his rejection of Assaji's more orthodox meditative ideas; and finally, the conclusion is identical to the account of Vakkali's suicide, where Māra is imagined as a dark cloud searching in vain for his consciousness. The commentary supplies an interpretation of Godhika's liberation that is similar to the commentarial account of Vakkali's liberating insight: it says that liberation was achieved through paying attention mindfully to the pain which arose after severing his jugular vein, and returning to the object of meditation.[54] In the circumstances, this insight interpretation is even more implausible than the account of Vakkali's suicide. Instead, we must take the account at face value as the work of an unorthodox wing of the early Sangha.

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[52] SN–a I 183: *parihāyī ti kasmā yāva chaṭṭhaṃ parihāyi? sābādhattā. therassa kira vātapittasemhavasena anusāyiko ābādho atthi, tena samādhissa sappāye upakārakadhamme pūretuṃ na sakkoti, appitappitāya samāpattiyā parihāyati.*

[53] MN III 110–111, AN V 139ff.

[54] SN–a I 183: [...] *satthena galanāḷiṃ chindi. dukkhā vedanā uppajjiṃsu. thero vedanaṃ vikkhambhetvā taṃ yeva vedanaṃ pariggahetvā satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā mūlakammaṭṭhānaṃ sammasanto arahattaṃ patvā samasīsī hutvā parinibbāyi.*

Godhika apparently believes that dying in a state of meditative absorption will be liberating. He must therefore have the highest possible regard for the state of meditation he has attained; his problem is that he cannot sustain it. If so, we should perhaps understand the terminology "temporary liberation of mind" (*sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ*) literally: for Godhika, the state literally is a temporary escape from *saṃsāra*, and not merely a meditative absorption short of spiritual liberation. Since all states of meditative absorption (*cetovimuttiṃ*) are temporary, why specify the point here? Godhika cannot be unhappy because his concentrated state is temporary, for this is an inescapable fact of meditative practice. His problem is rather the fading away of a state he believes is tantamount to liberation. Thus he wishes to die in the state while the attainment persists.

The appearance of Māra as a dark cloud searching for Godhika's consciousness, which occurs also in the account of Vakkali's suicide, reinforces the impression that Godhika's ideas are entirely unorthodox. In fact, the idea of being unable to locate a liberated person's consciousness at death occupies an extremely marginal position in the Pali Canon: it only occurs in these two texts. If we therefore conclude that it is a relatively late aspect of the Pali discourses, as we surely must, it should be regarded as a reworking of a more widespread early Buddhist teaching. In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (MN 22), the Buddha states that "Despite searching, the gods including Indra, Brahma and Pajāpati cannot find the *bhikkhu* thus liberated in mind (as follows): 'the consciousness of the Tathāgata is supported by this'".[55] This teaching states the idea of ineffability in a poetic form; but the idea of ineffable liberation in the present is a more widespread idea, famously articulated in the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* (MN 72), where the Buddha applies the metaphor of a fire gone out to the person liberated in life.[56] It is reasonable to assume that SN 4.23 has adapted the idea of ineffability in life, and especially the idea in MN 22 of the gods being unable to find the consciousness of a liberated person, to a new end, of stating the ineffability of the liberated person at death.

SN 4.23 therefore seems to adapt an old idea to a new end based on unorthodox meditative ideas. A further feature of the text suggests that this unorthodox tradition was in conflict with the Sangha in general. This would seem to be the only the only way of explaining the curious reversal of roles played by the Buddha

[55] MN I 140: *evaṃ vimuttacittaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhuṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā anvesaṃ nādhigacchanti: idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan ti.*

[56] On the interpretation of this Sutta, see Wynne 2007: 95–96.

and Māra. The Sutta portrays the Buddha and Māra against type: it really should be Māra tempting Godhika to commit suicide, just as he tempts the Buddha to enter final Nirvana at certain points in his life. On the other hand, we should expect the Buddha to intervene and stop an "ardent meditator" killing himself.[57]

It is remarkable, indeed, that the Buddha's justification of Godhika's suicide is directly contrary to the tradition of Māra tempting the Buddha to enter final Nirvana. According to the *Mahāparinbbāna Sutta,* when the Buddha was at Uruvelā, immediately after the enlightenment, Māra spoke to him as follows: "May, sir, the Blessed One, the Sugata, now enter final Nirvana; now is the time, sir, for the Blessed One's final Nirvana" (*parinibbātu dāni bhante bhagavā parinibbātu sugato, parinibbānakālo dāni bhante bhagavato ti*).[58] But in SN 4.23 exactly the opposite happens: rather than being keen to accelerate a *bhikkhu* towards death, Māra tries to stop Godhika killing himself, whereas the Buddha does not intervene and then defends Godhika's suicide by twice stating that the wise do not desire life. Had the Buddha followed his own advice, he would surely have entered final Nirvana immediately after the enlightenment at Uruvelā.

How is this reversal of roles to be explained? Why does the Buddha defend suicide, whereas Māra, the god of death, implores the Buddha to save Godhika's life? Why is the Buddha for death and Māra for life? The strange form of the text, and the peculiar ideas it expresses, can only be regarded as a direct challenge to early Buddhist orthodoxy. The tradition represented by Godhika believed it better to attain final Nirvana sooner, rather than later, as soon as a temporary meditative escape from *saṃsāra* has been realised, apparently

[57] Wiltshere (1983: 134) claims that the role played by Māra in SN 4.23 is ironic: "Māra gets very excited at the prospect that Godhika will commit suicide. He thinks that, as Godhika is only a *sekha* (trainee), he will acrue bad *kamma* (*pāpa*) from his act and fall into Māra's hands (literally *qua* death and metaphorically *qua* apotheosis of evil). Convinced that the Buddha can do nothing to save Godhika, Māra, with his tongue in cheek, taunts the Buddha and urges him to 'dissuade' (*nisedha,* S I 121) his disciple from committing the fatal act". This overlooks the changed role of the Buddha in the text, however, and nothing in the text indicates that Māra speaks "tongue in cheek".

[58] DN II 112: *ekaṃ idāhaṃ ānanda samayaṃ uruvelāyaṃ viharāmi najjā nerañjarāya tīre ajapālanigrodhe paṭhamābhisambuddho. atha kho ānanda māro pāpimā yenāhaṃ ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā ekamantaṃ aṭṭhāsi. ekamantaṃ ṭhito kho ānanda māro pāpimā maṃ etad avoca: parinibbātu dāni bhante bhagavā parinibbātu sugato, parinibbānakālo dāni bhante bhagavato ti. evaṃ vutte ahaṃ ānanda māraṃ pāpimaṃ etad avocaṃ: na tāvāhaṃ pāpima parinibbāyissāmi*. In the Pali account (MN I 168ff), Māra does not intervene at this point to tempt the Buddha to enter final Nirvana.

paying little heed to the important ideal of liberation in life. Where did these ideas come from?

Although the text does not elaborate Godhika's beliefs, his position seems to reflect the presuppositions of the meditative tradition articulated in the early Upaniṣads and Mokṣadharma. According to this tradition, a meditative adept first realises the cosmic essence (Skt., *brahman*) through meditation, before finalising this attainment at death by merging into it.[59] In other words, the experiential anticipation of *brahman* in meditative absorption leads to a final, irreversible, release into it at death. As far as I am aware, no text of this tradition actually states that death must be attained in a state of meditative realisation. Nevertheless, we must try to understand what a realised adept of this tradition, or a neo-Vedāntic Buddhist version of it, would do if he could not stabilise a meditative attainment believed to be liberating. If this adept assumes that prior meditative realisation guarantees liberation at death, it is easy to imagine that, if the stabilisation of the meditation is proving problematic, he might well wish to proceed rapidly towards final liberation. This would explain why Godhika committed suicide whilst in a meditative absorption he considered to be tantamount to liberation.

Godhika's suicide suggests that a non-Buddhist tradition of meditation, ideologically related to the early Upaniṣads, somehow found followers among the early Buddhist Sangha and was at odds with the emerging mainstream. The idea of Māra searching for a deceased arahant's consciousness surely belongs here: it is part of this school of thought's distinct signature. Delhey (2009: 98) has raised the possibility that this motif belonged originally to SN 4.23, before migrating to the account of Vakkali's suicide. This is a likely scenario. But if so, we might suppose that the same applies to the enlightenment conclusion: it originated in SN 4.23 was then was added to the text on Vakkali, with the account of Channa's suicide caught up in the same development.

We have now reached a tentative solution to the problem posed by the ambiguous texts on suicide. What is at stake in the accounts of suicide is the understanding of Nirvana, prompted by the meditative pessimism of Godhika. Suicide *per se* is not the problem: when a *bhikkhu* commits suicide it is not a breach of Buddhist ethics, but simply a tragic fact of life that occasionally happens. If the account of Godhika's suicide was a polemical work of neo-

[59] For a detailed analysis of this tradition and its philosophical basis, see Wynne 2007, especially the appendix to Chapter 4.

Vedāntic Buddhist meditators, we can suppose that the accounts of Channa's and Vakkali's suicides were in some way a response to it. Older stories of their suicides as unenlightened worldlings (*puthujjana*s) were adapted to the idea that they achieved arahansthip at death, perhaps for a number of reasons, but motivated at least in part to the polemical account of Godhika's meditative suicide. However, the adaptation of the texts on Channa and Vakkali was done half-heartedly, without any wish to change the historical record, and the general awareness of the fact that they had not achieved enlightenment.

5. Suicide and the transformation of early Buddhist values

The three texts on suicide, when studied carefully as a group, are not really trying to condone suicide in certain circumstances, even if that is the logical consequence of them. The accounts of Channa's and Vakkali's suicides, in particular, fail to say how either attained liberation, and generally present both as unenlightened throughout. Sāriputta's questions about Channa (MN 144/SN 22.87) and Ānanda's about Vakkali (EĀ 26.10) can be regarded as voicing the general scepticism of the early Sangha, who doubted that they attained arahantship at death, because they knew that they had not. The idea of final Nirvana was probably added to these accounts as an afterthought, prompted by the account of Godhika's suicide, the real focus of which is the doctrine of Nirvana, rather than an ethical problem. The *Godhika Sutta* can only be regarded as a strange sort of neo-Vedāntic polemic, but even if so, it is not as unusual as it might seem. In the wider context of the doctrinal development of early Buddhism, it should be regarded as a radical version of a more general process.

We have seen that the motif of Māra seeking the consciousness of a dead arahant, found in the accounts of Godhika's and Vakkali's suicides, was most likely an adaptation of the earlier notion that the gods cannot locate the consciousness of a person liberated and indefinable in life (MN 22). To this we can add that the doctrine of ineffable liberation in life is stated as the ultimate ideal in texts which the Pali tradition presents as among its oldest records: the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga*.[60] These collections focus entirely on the realisation of Nirvana in life, and some of their individual texts even reject the idea of final release at death. This can be seen in the *Kalahavivāda Sutta*

[60] On the antiquity of these collections, see Wynne 2007: Chapter 5.

(Sn 4.11). Questioned about how "form, pleasure and pain disappear",[61] the Buddha describes such a state of as follows:

> Neither perceiving perceptions nor misperceptions, neither without perception nor perceiving what is not: form disappears for the one who has realised this state, for conceptualisation and reckoning depend on perception.[62]

This enigmatic statement can be interpreted in a number of ways, but it can at least be said that the Buddha is talking about a transformed state of consciousness in life. What he fails to add is the metaphysical significance of the state: is it tantamount to liberation, and if so, what does this liberation entail? Attempting to get the Buddha to fill in this gap, his interlocutor asks the following question:

> Do indeed some learned men here say that the purity of a *yakkha* is this much, or do they say it is something different from this?[63]

This indirect question asks the Buddha to clarify his position on liberation. But the Buddha refuses to place his statement on the "disappearance of form" within a metaphysical framework:

> Some wise men here indeed say that the purity of a *yakkha* is only this much, but some of them, claiming to be experts, say there is an attainment[64] of that which is without a remainder of material substratum.
>
> But understanding (this as) "dependent", through that understanding the sage enquires into (states of) dependency. Released through understanding, he does not get involved in disputes: the wise one does not encounter existence or non-existence.[65]

[61] Sn 873 (p. 170): *kathaṃsametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ, sukhaṃ dukhañ cāpi kathaṃ vibhoti.*

[62] Sn 874 (p. 170): *na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī, no pi asaññī na vibhūtasaññī, evaṃsametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ, saññānidānā hi papañcasaṃkhā.*

[63] Sn 875 (p. 171): [...] *ettāvat' aggaṃ no vadanti h' eke, yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitāse, udāhu aññam pi vadanti etto.*

[64] I take the term *samayaṃ* as a nominal equivalent of the past participle *sameta*, which is used in the immediately preceding verses (vv. 873–874) in the sense of meet with, encounter, enter, i.e., attain, realise. A similar meaning must be understood for *sameti* in v. 877 (see note below).

[65] Sn 876–877 (p. 171): *ettāvat' aggam pi vadanti h' eke, yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitāse. tesaṃ*

It is again difficult to understand the meaning of these two verses, which conclude the Sutta. The Buddha apparently regards the notion "purity", or spiritual realisation in life, and the "attainment of that which is without a remainder of material substratum", as forms of "dependency". Perhaps what is meant is that the two ideas are conceptually interdependent, and closely related to the conceptual interdependence of life and death, all of which must be transcended. Whatever the case, the notion of final liberation at death is certainly rejected, for liberation means being liberated precisely from such concepts. There can be little doubt that this text rejects what was to become a standard early Buddhist doctrine: Nirvana with and without a remainder of material substratum.

The Buddha's approach in the *Kalahavivāda Sutta* reflects the teachings of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* in general. The same approach is also found in its sister text, the *Pārāyanavagga*, as can be seen in the Buddha's dialogue with the Brahmin Upasīva (Sn 5.7). The Buddha is asked (v. 1073) about what happens to the liberated adept who "becomes cool", a metaphor which draws on fire imagery: "becoming cool" refers to an extinguished fire, an image which belongs to the same metaphorical world as the concept of Nirvana "without a remainder of material substratum" (*anupādisesa*), where the term *upādi* is equivalent to *upādāna*, the basic meaning of which is "basis, esp. said of a fire, = fuel" (CPD, sv. *upādi*). "Becoming cool" thus refers to being finally liberated at death, just as a fire ceases when its "material (fuel)" is consumed. But the Buddha refuses to accept the presuppositions of the question, and instead continues to consider only the ineffable state of transformation in the present:

> Just as a flame thrown back by the force of the wind goes out and cannot be reckoned, so the sage released from the category "name" goes out and cannot be reckoned.[66]

This verse does not state the liberated person's release from "name and form", but rather his release (*vimutto*) from the "category name" (*nāmakāyā*). The sage is in an ineffable state beyond "reckoning" (*saṃkhā*) and cannot be

pun' eke samayaṃ vadanti, anupādisese kusalā vadānā (v. 876). *ete ca ñatvā upanissitā ti, ñatvā munī nissaye so vimaṃsī. ñatvā vimutto na vivādam eti, bhavābhavāya na sameti dhīro ti* (v. 877).

[66] Sn 1074 (pp. 206–207): *accī yathā vātavegena khitto, Upasīvā ti Bhagavā, atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṃkhaṃ, evaṃ munī nāmakāyā vimutto atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṃkhaṃ.*

defined.[67] As such, spiritual value is placed entirely on the ideal of living in a transformed manner. A different way of expressing this ideal is stated in the *Dhammacetiya Sutta* (MN 89) by King Pasenadi of Kosala:

> Moreover, venerable sir, when I stroll about from park to park, and from garden to garden, I see some ascetics and Brahmins there who are thin, wretched, off-colour, very pale and with their veins popping out—as if not capturing the eyesight for people to see them, methinks. It occurred to me that these venerable ones clearly lead the spiritual life dissatisfied, or else some bad deed they have committed is concealed, and that is why they are thin, wretched, off-colour, very pale and with their veins popping out—as if not capturing the eyesight for people to see them, methinks. I went up to them and spoke thus: "Venerable sirs, why are you so thin, wretched, off-colour, very pale and with your veins popping out—as if not capturing the eyesight for people to see you, methinks?" And they said this: "We have jaundice, great king". But here I see mendicants, happy and joyful, elated and exultant, clearly delighted, with satiated sense faculties, unburdened, pacified, living off the gifts of others, with minds like wild deer. This occurred to me: "Clearly these venerable sirs have gradually realised a lofty distinction in that Blessed One's instruction [...]".[68]

Quite different from the conceptual subtleties of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga*, this statement describes what the doctrine of liberation in life

[67] For a detailed analysis of this verse and the *Upasīvamāṇavapucchā*, see Wynne 2007: Chapter 5.

[68] MN II 121: *puna c' aparāhaṁ bhante ārāmena ārāmaṁ uyyānena uyyānaṁ anucaṅkamāmi anuvicarāmi, so 'haṃ tattha passāmi eke samaṇabrāhmaṇe kise lūkhe dubbaṇṇe uppaṇḍuppaṇḍukajāte dhamanisanthatagatte, na viya maññe cakkhuṃ bandhante janassa dassanāya. tassa mayhaṃ bhante evaṃ hoti: addhā ime āyasmanto anabhiratā vā brahmacariyaṃ caranti, atthi vā tesaṃ kiñci pāpaṃ kammaṃ kataṃ paṭicchannaṃ, tathā ime āyasmanto kisā lūkhā dubbaṇṇā uppaṇḍuppaṇḍukajātā dhamanisanthatagattā, na viya maññe cakkhuṃ bandhanti janassa dassanāyā ti. tyāhaṃ upasaṃkamitvā evaṃ vadāmi: kin nu kho tumhe āyasmante kisā lūkhā dubbaṇṇā uppaṇḍuppaṇḍukajātā dhamanisanthatagattā, na viya maññe cakkhuṃ bandhatha janassa dassanāyā ti? te evam āhaṃsu: bandhukarogo no mahārājā ti. idha panāhaṁ bhante bhikkhū passāmi haṭṭhapahaṭṭhe udaggudagge abhiratarūpe pīṇindriye appossukke pannalome paradattavutte migabhūtena cetasā viharante. tassa mayhaṃ bhante evaṃ hoti: addhā ime āyasmanto tassa bhagavato sāsane uḷāraṃ pubbenāparaṁ visesaṁ sañjānanti* [...]; reading *paradattavutte* with Be instead of *paravutte* in Ee.

means in actual terms: living freely and naturally, with meditative flourishing alleviating the burdens of life. What happened to this ideal? There is a strong argument that it was subsumed in a widespread and comprehensive influence from an early meditative tradition based on early Vedāntic ideas, the same general tradition to which Godhika belonged. The formless meditations (*arūpa/āruppa*), the eight "meditative releases" (*vimokkha*s), the "spheres of totality" (*kasiṇāyatana*s) and the "cessation of sensation and perception" (*saññāvedayita-nirodha*) probably all stem from this tradition.[69] To this list we can probably add cosmology, the twelvefold doctrine of Dependent Origination,[70] the doctrine of four "foods" (*āhāra*),[71] and the appropriation of the deity Brahma as further influences from early Brahmanism. But the Vedāntic impact was perhaps most significant in the area of speculation on which our three texts on suicide focus: the doctrine of Nirvana. The Buddhist idea of final Nirvana at death, or "Nirvana without a remainder of (material) substratum" (*anupādisesa nibbāna-dhātu*), is not only rejected in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and *Pārāyanavagga*, but is also formulated in a Vedāntic fashion in the *Udāna*:

> Just as, *bhikkhu*s, streams flow into the great ocean and rain falls down from the sky, and yet not because of this is any deficit or excess discerned in the great ocean, in just the same way many *bhikkhu*s attain final Nirvana into the Nirvana realm without a remainder of substratum, and yet not because of this is any deficit or excess discerned in the Nirvana realm without a remainder of substratum.[72]

The image of streams running into the sea is a Buddhist adaptation of an early Brahmanical motif, stated as follows in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III.2.8): "Just as flowing rivers sink into the ocean, abandoning name and form, so the wise man, released from name and form, reaches the divine person, beyond

[69] See Wynne 2007: Chapter 3.

[70] Jurewicz (2000) has shown that the twelvefold version of Dependent Origination adapts the terminology of late Vedic cosmology.

[71] On the later addition of the twelvefold version of Dependent Origination, and the doctrine of four foods, to MN 38, see Wynne 2018.

[72] Ud 5.5 (p. 55): *seyyathāpi bhikkhave yā ca loke savantiyo mahāsamuddaṃ appenti, yā ca antalikkhā dhārā papatanti, na tena mahāsamuddassa ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati, evam eva kho bhikkhave bahū ce pi bhikkhū anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti, na tena nibbānadhātuyā ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati.*

the other world".[73] In this Upaniṣad, river imagery expresses the idea of merging into *brahman* at death, an idea which is the natural counterpart of the early Vedāntic idea that the world is created from and ultimately returns to a divine source. The logical direction of influence is from Upaniṣadic thought to early Buddhism, rather than vice versa. This does not mean that the Buddhists simply borrowed a metaphor, however. As we have seen, the very idea of final liberation at death is rejected in some of the oldest texts of the Pali Canon. This suggests that the twofold doctrine of Nirvana was created only when the Brahmanical understanding of final liberation was added to an earlier doctrine: of liberation in life, the ultimate ideal of the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, *Pārāyanavagga* and related texts (MN 22, 73, 89, etc.).

A pervasive Vedāntic influence on the early Buddhist Sangha explains how an early ideal, Nirvana in life, was reformulated in a system of Nirvana with and without a remainder of material substratum. The Vedāntic ideal of liberation at death was Buddhicised, in other words. The emergent system was symbolised by the god Brahma, who in the account of the enlightenment implores the Buddha not to enter final Nirvana yet.[74] At the other end of the spectrum, Māra personifies an extreme form of the Vedāntic ideal: his attempts to persuade the Buddha to enter final Nirvana immediately voices the belief that final liberation from *saṃsāra* should be realised as soon as possible. Early Buddhists belonging to the tradition related to Godhika stuck to the pessimistic meditative beliefs of this neo-Vedāntic tradition. The existence of the *Godhika Sutta* shows that this tradition was important enough to be commemorated in textual form: there was a place for it in the early Sangha, albeit as a minority grouping. The emergent mainstream, symbolised by Brahma, is better represented by the *Channa* and *Vakkali Sutta*s, which were *ad hoc* responses to the *Godhika Sutta*. The account of Assaji's final illness also looks like an attempts to put Godhika's unorthodox meditative tradition in its place. All three texts fit more easily into the emerging Buddhist system, with their doctrinal focus on the not-self teaching and, in the case of Channa and Vakkali, the acceptance of final Nirvana only when death is imminent.

[73] MuU III.2.8: *yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre, astaṃ gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya | tathā vidvān nāmarūpād vimuktaḥ parāt paraṃ puruṣam upaiti divyam ||* (ed. Olivelle 1998: 452).

[74] Vin I 5, MN I 168.

Abbreviations

All Pali citations refer to Pali Text Society editions, and are either using the numbering system of the Pali Canon for the individual Suttas in the main text, or given by volume and page number in the footnotes, using the abbreviations of the *Critical Pali Dictionary*. All translations from Pali and Sanskrit are my own.

EĀ = *Ekottara-āgama*
SĀ = *Saṃyukta-āgama*

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Pali Facts, Fictions and Factions

Stefan Karpik

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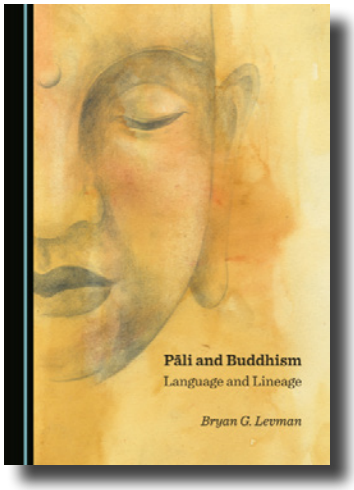

In this nicely printed collection of essays by Bryan Levman, there is useful work on the influence of non Indo-Aryan languages on Pali, on inferences of cultural borrowing, on the influence of Dravidian grammar on Pali and on the original meaning of *sati.* The essay on the correct pronunciation of the *anusvāra/niggahīta* was less impressive, and I was not at all convinced by a major thread running throughout this book, viz., Levman's koine theory, which, I regret to say, I still consider to be fantasy sociolinguistics. This review article is intended to examine and discuss the salient, as well as the contentious, points found in *Pāli and Buddhism: Language and Lineage*.

The influence of non Indo-Aryan vocabulary on Pali

This is the largest part of the book, spread across Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 16–182). Levman's salient point is (p. 40): "in the case of the IA [Indo-Aryan]-indigenous interaction, pervasive linguistic and structural borrowing do indeed mirror a strong cultural influence". He identifies several hundred

Pali words incorporated from Dravidian or Munda languages and infers cultural borrowing from them. He shows borrowings into Pali from non Indo-Aryan words in passages concerning: robe-making, their dyeing and their repair (pp. 19–31, 59–73, 140–149); the brahmanisation of the *jaṭila*, Kaṇḥa, into the *purohita*, Asita, at Suddhodana's court (pp. 45–59); and Dhamma words such as *sīmā*, *piṇḍa*, *phala*, *sīla*, *paṭhati*, *māla*, *mūla* (pp. 73–79). From the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, there are *yakkha* names attached to shrines (pp. 83–88), toponyms (pp. 88–103), the Buddha's final meal (pp. 103–107), and funeral rites for the Buddha (pp. 113–124). An appendix has selected derivations of 17 words such as *āgāra, sāla, kaṭhina* (pp. 152–182). There is also a claim of the importation of indigenous culture into Buddhism in the form of snake/tree worship, funeral practices and political organisation (pp. 44, 51): the Buddha himself was called a *nāga* (p. 100); *sāla*, the Sal tree, under which the Buddha was born and died, is claimed as the totem of the Sakya tribe instead of the teak (pp. 52, 164); funeral rites for the Buddha are shown to be non-Aryan (p. 113); the Buddhist order was organised like the tribal assemblies (pp. 80–83).

Although the topic is generally interesting, many parts seem redundant. Levman acknowledges (pp. 35, 45, 133) that toponyms and the names of local flora and fauna new to Indo-Aryan immigrants are loanwords and do not necessarily indicate cultural borrowing into Buddhism. Nonetheless there are pages of irrelevant detail on exactly that: thirty pages (pp. 83–103) given over to shrines devoted to *yakkha*s and toponyms with non Indo-Aryan names, plus sections on *mayūra*, a peacock (pp. 171–173), and *tumba*, a gourd (pp. 173–174). The author claims (pp. 45, 133) that there is an exemption for loan words and toponyms if they occur in a specific cultural or religious context, citing Franklin Southworth (2005: 122–123), who argues that religious word borrowing indicates a higher degree of linguistic convergence. While I agree with Southworth, this proposition does not offer Levman an exemption as it does not claim that religious word borrowing indicates actual cultural borrowing. Levman concludes for toponyms found in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, all outside the Buddha's Sakyan tribal land (p. 88): "The place names [...] tell us a great deal about the Buddha's cultural background". However, he does not explain what they tell and scepticism must remain. For example, the existence of Latin *castra* in English place names, such as Manchester and Lancaster, and in Welsh place names, such as Caerphilly and Cardiff, does not mean that Latin is the first language of any

21st-century British people or that they wear togas. Similarly, throughout the huge sprawling Chapter 3 "The Buddha's Autochthonous Heritage" (pp. 42–182), there are scattered many etymologies of non Indo-Aryan personal names and words such as *kuṭa*, *mukha*, *kula*, with no obvious connection to Buddhism. It is often hard to follow Levman's argument; for example, when the gods rain down four kinds of flower and three kinds of incense on the Buddha's palanquin, Levman states (p. 117): "Virtually all of these flowers and incenses are native words, suggesting that they have some ritual significance in the story". The words are *uppala*, *padma*, *kumuda*, *pundarika*, *agaru*, *tagara* and *candana*, for which Levman suggests only non Indo-Aryan origins. Is he suggesting that there were Indo-Aryan alternative names for these plants native to India? It appears that Levman has wrongly inferred cultural borrowing from words for which there was no Indo-Aryan alternative such as toponyms, personal names, and names of fauna and flora. Furthermore, he admits (p. 133) that another reviewer has commented that English has many Latin words, but that does not mean that the English have imported Roman customs. Then he continues (p. 133): "therefore the inference that usage [of non Indo-Aryan terms] means that an adoption of customs may be unproven and perhaps unprovable". However, that admission has not constrained Levman's enthusiasm for etymology.

Despite these reservations, the reviewer was impressed in some places. Levman's methodology for etymology (pp. 31–36) comes from several authorities, including Burrow (1946: 13–18) and Witzel (1999: 3–5), with supplements from Levman himself, and seems very sound. Others have noted word and cultural borrowing, but Levman's unique contribution is that he links the two with several examples. In particular, he presents connected passages of Pali on robe practices, in which the surprising scale of the non Indo-Aryan word borrowing in Pali is evident. Such passages to my mind prove cultural borrowing because of the sheer density of word borrowing for which alternative Indo-Aryan vocabulary must have been available. Overall, Levman is convincing regarding indigenous language and cultural borrowing in robe-practices and some Buddhist vocabulary, but he has greater ambitions. He is laying the groundwork for historians to investigate the proposition of: "an autochthonous origin of Buddhism, appropriated by the Indo-Aryan immigrants and translated into MI [Middle Indic]" (p. 132). Frankly, it is doubtful that he will succeed in this goal because Buddhism obviously also has Aryan influence, which this book does not discuss at all.[1] However, the search has been productive.

[1]For example, the facts that Buddhism has the third precept of *brahmacariya*, that Brahmā

The influence of Dravidian grammar on Pali

Chapter 4 (pp. 183–209) is, perhaps, the most important contribution in the book. It backs up the early claim made above of structural (i.e., syntactical) borrowing (p. 40) by comparing Buddhaghosa's opening verses to his *Dīgha-nikāya* commentary with some verses of the Old Tamil Buddhist epic *Maṇimēkalai*, both written in South India around the 5th to 6th centuries CE. The Tamil is parsed and translated and comparisons are made regarding: (a) strings of absolutives/participles with a single main verb at the end; (b) participial constructions replacing relative-correlative constructions; (c) constructions of the type, *paṭhamajjhānam upasampajja viharati* (Geiger 1943/1994, §174.5), which apparently is common to all Indic languages (p. 202); (d) a dative-like genitive; and (e) absolutives used as postpositions. The reviewer found the correspondences to be remarkable, and the author commendably shows that these features are also found in the Pali Canon. I observe the increased use of absolutives as a salient difference in style between canonical Pali and the story-telling of the *Dhammapada* commentary as well as the Jātakas. Even though Levman does not draw any inferences from such tendencies, he does refer to the Tamilisation of Pali (p. 201), and he may have proved his point successfully. I still have a mental caveat, however, that the languages may have been converging, and wonder if it might also be true to speak of a "Palicisation" of Old Tamil, especially Buddhist Old Tamil. I hope Levman will clarify that aspect in the future.

The meaning of *sati* in the Burmese tradition

In Chapter 8 (pp. 310–356), Levman believes the original meaning of *sati* as "memory" is being lost in Western secular mindfulness practice. To correct this, the author provides the entry for *sati* in the 24 (so far) volume *Pāli–Myanmā Abhidan'* dictionary with a translation of the Burmese, an exploration of the references and an analysis of *sati* into 30 categories, thus providing a helpful resource for research. He does not recapitulate his 2018 debate with Anālayo in the journal *Mindfulness*, but aims to provide information on how *sati* was understood in the Burmese tradition

Sahampatī asks the Buddha to teach, that the Buddha's claim that one is a Brahmin by skilful action instead of by birth, that Lord Sakka, a renaming of the Vedic god Indra, is attending the Buddha on many occasions including his funeral, and so on. Levman partly rows back from this radical proposition by saying (p. 378): "Certainly, Brahmanical influences, especially Brahmin converts to the Buddha's philosophy, played an important role, but it was not the whole story".

that gave birth to its modern Western counterpart. He concludes (pp. 355–356) that *sati*, according to this dictionary, includes a degree of memory and is to be cultivated on the foundations of the Buddhist teachings of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* as encapsulated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and other meditation Suttas. In this book, the author does not go into where that leaves Western secular mindfulness practice.

Nasalisation in Pali: how to pronounce *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

Chapter 9 (pp. 357–376) includes a tour of many Sanskrit and Pali grammatical sources whereby Levman concludes, using an odd mixture of romanised Pali and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), that *buddhã saraṇã gacchāmi* should be the correct pronunciation of *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* if spoken slowly in separated speech (p. 375). Note that his *buddhã* and *saraṇã* have a tilde, not a macron, which indicate a nasalised vowel in IPA: Levman (p. 367) believes it is like a nasal vowel in French. However, he presents only Sanskrit authorities to support this, and I wonder if this pronunciation is a Sanskritism. At any rate, it was certainly rejected by the Vinaya commentary and other Pali sources advocating a closed mouth *anusvāra*/*niggahīta*, as we shall see below.

The author claims that for separated speech, the Vinaya commentary advocated *buddham saraṇam gacchāmi* with final *m* consonants, and that this is a Sanskritisation or archaism (p. 373) because Middle Indic never has words ending in *m*. His argument is probably misreading the commentary and certainly is hard to follow. Firstly, Levman has a series of awkward mistakes in this section. For example, three times (pp. 372–373), he has Sv (*Dīghanikāya* commentary) with no reference where he surely means Sp (Vinaya commentary) mentioned some fourteen pages earlier (p. 359, n. 489).[2] Secondly, Levman does not give the Vinaya commentary definition of the *niggahīta*, including its rejection of the pronunciation *pattakallā* for *pattakallaṃ*, which appears to regard Levman's preferred pure nasal pronunciation as unacceptable for separated speech in formal

[2] Levman makes the same mistake of confusing the commentaries on p. 362, but he cross-references to footnote 489, so this is less of a problem; the same mistake of Sv for Sp is found at p. 363, n. 494. Similarly, he refers to the Vinaya commentary, the *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp), on p. 375, although it is almost certain that he means the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (cf. p. 358, n. 488), which incidentally is misspelt as *Sumaṅgalalvilāsinī* (p. 362), while *Samantapāsādikā* is misspelt as *Samantalapāsādikā* in the list of abbreviations (p. 383).

Sangha proceedings because it does not have an unopened mouth.[3] Thirdly, although Levman is perhaps not unreasonably influenced (pp. 359, 366) by that commentary's apparent approval of an *m* sound in separated word pronunciation,[4] I believe it should be interpreted differently. Since *m* requires closing *and release* of the mouth, could it be that instead the *niggahīta* was pronounced with the mouth initially open for the preceding vowel then closing and remaining closed *without release* (*avissajjetvā*) until the airstream was ended? This would produce in the nasal cavity an aftersound, which is what *anusvāra* means, and it could also be considered a kind of (incomplete) *m* sound, although it could not be represented by the IPA symbol [m] or any other. It would meet several criteria of the *anusvāra*: it has an indeterminate status as not a pure vowel or a pure consonant;[5] it is long/heavy (*garu*); it is

[3] Vin–a *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp 7, 1399–1400): *niggahitan ti yaṃ karaṇāni niggahetvā avissajjetvā avivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ katvā vattabbaṃ.* [...] *vimuttan ti yaṃ karaṇāni aniggahetvā vissajjetvā vivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ akatvā vuccati.* [...] *suṇātu me ti vivaṭena mukhena vattabbe pana suṇantu me ti vā esā ñattī ti vatabbe esaṃ ñattī ti vā avivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ katvā vacanaṃ vimuttassa niggahītavacanaṃ nāma.* ***pattakallan*** *ti avivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ katvā vattabbe* ***pattakallā*** *ti vivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ akatvā vacanaṃ niggahitassa vimuttavacanaṃ nāma.* "*Niggahīta* (restrained/nasal) means restraining the organs of articulation without release where it should be pronounced with a closed mouth nasally. [...] *Vimutta* (free/non-nasal) means by not holding still the organs of articulation and relaxing them, it is spoken with an open mouth without making a nasal sound [...]. Where *suṇātu me* should be pronounced with an open mouth, but *suṇantu me* is said, or where *esā ñatti* should be pronounced and *esaṃ ñatti* is said, the nasal pronunciation with an unopened mouth is called *niggahīta* pronunciation of *vimutta*. Where ***pattakallaṃ*** should be pronounced with a closed mouth and nasally, the pronunciation ***pattakallā*** with an open mouth without making a nasal sound is called *vimutta* pronunciation of *niggahīta*" (my translation and emphasis in bold).

[4] Levman (p. 359, n. 489) offers this translation of Vin–a *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp 5, 969): *imāni ca pana dadamānena, buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmī ti evaṃ ekasambaddhāni anunāsikantāni vā katvā dātabbāni, buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmī ti evaṃ vicchinditvā vā makāra-antāni katvā dātabbāni.* "If one pronounces *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* in one continuous line, it is allowed to make a nasalization at the end (of each word), and if one pronounces *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* after breaking up the words, then it is OK to pronounce the end of each word as the sound *-m*". In my interpretation, here *anunāsika* means the commonly made [ŋ] sound for *ṃ*, and *makāra* here means a sub-division of *anunāsika*, starting with *m*, but holding it, thus allowing air through the nose. So, in the context of *anunāsika*, *makāra* is shorthand for *karaṇāni niggahetvā avissajjetvā avivaṭena mukhena anunāsikaṃ katvā* (see above Sp 7, 1399–1400) if this commentary is consistent.

[5] Allen (1953: 43, n. 4) quotes the *Ṛkprātiśākhya* I 5: *anusvāro vyañjanaṃ vā svāro vā*. I take this to mean: "The *anusvāra* can be either a consonant or a vowel". Cf. Deokar (2009: 4): "According to *Saddanīti* 11: *assarabyañjanto pubbarasso ca*, which assigns the designation '*garu*' to a short vowel not followed by either a vowel or a consonant as in '*sukhaṃ*' and '*isi*', *niggahīta* is neither a vowel nor a consonant".

nasalised (*anunāsika*); it has an aftersound (*anusvāra*) in the nasal cavity; it restrains (*niggahīta*) the organs of articulation without release (*avissajjetvā*) while the airstream continues in the nose during the aftersound; it has an *m* mouth position (*makāra*), but without opening the mouth (*avivaṭena mukhena*); if a vowel follows *niggahīta*, it is written as *m* in connected speech, e.g., *evameva* instead of *evaṃ eva*, because release of the mouth in order to say the following vowel actually completes [m]. Levman himself quotes the *Saddanīti* (p. 363), while Deokar (2009: 3) quotes the *Kaccāyanavaṇṇanā* 1.1.8 and Thitzana (2016: 123, n. 9) comments on *Kaccāyana Pāli Grammar*, all confirming that the *niggahīta* is made with an unopened mouth.[6] I infer that the sound described above is what Pali writers meant by an unopened mouth *niggahīta*, or else there would be no difference between *ṃ* and *m*.[7] Levman does not consider this sound at all, so I am not convinced by his first preference of a pure nasal vowel in separated speech in Pali, contrary to these four Pali sources referring to a closed mouth.

As for continuous speech, Levman would certainly also allow the commonly spoken [bʊ.dʰãŋ sarəɳãŋ gə.tʃʰaːmɪ] with final slightly nasalised vowels and velar nasals, as in English *sing*. However, he writes it (p. 375) as "*buddhaŋ śaraṇaŋ gacchāmi* (*buddhaṅ śaraṇaṅ gacchāmi*)", which is Sanskrit in idiosyncratic notation and must be a mistake. After his investigations Levman finally concedes (p. 373) that the Buddha would be happy with a variety of pronunciations.

This treatment of *niggahīta* contains sections on the diachronic development of nasality and the influence of non-native Indo-Aryan speakers; it is the longest that I know of, but it is still not a complete survey of this intricate subject. I am not convinced nasality is as clear-cut as Levman presents, and I defer to Allen (1953: 46),[8] who, after his own analysis of nasality, comes to no final conclusions: "In view of their [ancient phoneticians] generally high standard of competence it seems fair to assume that the phonetic problem in question was a particularly difficult one [...]".

[6] Levman (p. 363, n. 496) translates *avivaṭena mukhena* as "with a not-open opening" in the belief it refers to the partial closure of the soft palate to make a nasalised vowel. However, Warder (1995: 2, 4) believes it refers to the closure of the mouth.

[7] This pronunciation for slow, emphatic chanting has been heard by the reviewer at Wat Asokaram, Samut Prakan, Thailand in the 1970s.

[8] Levman (p. 360, n. 492) refers to Allen (1953: 39, n. 5) but omits to list *Phonetics in Ancient India* in his references.

Levman's koine theory

The present reviewer argued recently that the Buddha taught in Pali (Karpik 2019a), to which the author (Levman 2019) advanced his koine theory, which I critiqued subsequently (Karpik 2019b). Levman (2020: 110, n. 10) said he would answer my criticisms in the present book, then forthcoming. Alas, it turns out that he ignores many of my points, although Prof. Richard Gombrich comes off far worse when the author states (p. 279): "Gombrich's book does not provide an argument to justify his view [that the Buddha spoke Pali]", thus completely ignoring the argument that the Buddha developed a composite dialect containing local variants (Gombrich 2018: 74–82).

The koine theory (κοινή, *koiné*; lit. "common") is principally argued in a reprint (pp. 236–274) of Levman (2016) and a new chapter, "The Evolution of Pali" (pp. 275–307). His thesis is that: in northeast India, the Indo-Aryan speakers were in a minority even during the time of the Buddha; the Buddha spoke Indo-Aryan as a second language; his Indo-Aryan language was pre-Pali; the pre-Pali was a koine existing in India in his time; Pali is a translation from this koine and other languages; Pali was subsequently Sanskritised extensively; and finally, his teachings in his original language are lost. I aim to show here that each of these claims is suspect and, taken as a whole, the theory is incorrect, overcomplicated and unhelpful.

1. *"in north-east India, the Indo-Aryan speakers were a minority even during the time of the Buddha"* (p. vii)

This eye-catching claim is made without any evidence in the text (pp. vii, 16, 40, 169, n. 259, 371). However, his note 23 on p. 40 makes the banal point: "Initially at least the non-Indo-Aryan inhabitants of the sub-continent formed the plurality of the population". It is hard to evaluate this argument because Levman has switched from northeast India to the subcontinent, which included areas when Aryans had never penetrated at the time of the Buddha; furthermore, "Initially" could predate the Buddha by centuries. This footnote then references Burrow (1955:386), Emeneau (1980: 198), Sjoberg (1992: 61), Krishnamurti (2003: 15, 36), and Southworth (2005: 118–122), but this offers no clarity. Burrow refers to "a considerable element of Dravidian speakers", which could be a considerable minority and is referring to the central Gangetic plain and the classical Madhyadeśa, which is not the northeast *per se*; Emeneau, Sjoberg, Krishnamurti and Southworth have nothing to say on the matter with no reference to the Buddha's time or locality on the pages cited

nor anywhere else in these works that I can find. In short, Levman provides no relevant evidence to back up his repeated claim.

The reason I found this claim eye-catching is that there is evidence against it; the Aśokan inscriptions had translations in the Northwest into Greek and Aramaic. If Levman's claim were correct, there would surely have been Dravidian or Munda translations in the Northeast a mere 150 years after the Buddha's demise, for example, on the Pillar Edict at Lumbinī, his birthplace in Sakyan tribal land.

2. *The Buddha spoke Indo-Aryan as a second language*

Levman (p. 3) claims the Buddha's people, the Sakyans, spoke Dravidian with a Munda substrate and that Middle-Indic was their second language. His evidence for this is (p. 4): "an infusion of autochthonous values into the Buddhist belief system". Actually, I accept that there was such an infusion, but that does not mean the Buddha's first language was necessarily Dravidian or Munda as is implied by Levman. By that logic we would infer from the borrowings of Latin or Greek language, mythology, and philosophy in Britain that the British have Latin or Greek as their first language and English as their second. This is patently not the case and cultural borrowing does not entail the wholesale borrowing of another language. The author further claims (p. 31): "He [the Buddha] could have spoken in both languages [i.e., Dravidian/Munda and Indo-Aryan] at different times and probably did", for which he cites K.R. Norman (1980: 75), who refers only to different dialects of Indo-Aryan and does not support this idea at all. Levman also states (p. 237): "we can be fairly certain that they [the clans] spoke a non-Indo-Aryan language because most of the place names in the [...] republics of the clans are non-IA in origin"; but by that same logic again, there would be no native English speakers in Wales or the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and that is clearly not the case.

Levman also claims (p. 3): "there is no reason to believe that the Buddha only spoke in Middle Indic". I can suggest a reason for it. In the Pali Vinaya, the Buddha pronounces on the disrobing procedure as follows:

> If he declares his resignation in Aryan to a foreigner and the latter does not understand, his resignation is not valid. If he declares his resignation in a foreign language to an Aryan [...] and the latter does not understand, his resignation is not valid.[9]

[9] Vin III 27–28: *ariyakena milakkhukassa santike sikkhaṃ paccakkhāti so ca na paṭivijānāti*:

This implies the Buddha considered *Ariyaka*, the Aryan language, to be the default language as it is the only one mentioned; he therefore speaks from the perspective of an Indo-Aryan speaker. This might suggest a situation like Britain, where the majority in Wales and Scotland speak only English and are not bilingual in Welsh or Gaelic. I am not claiming that this passage is conclusive proof, but, when combined with the lack of Dravidian or Munda translation in the Aśokan inscriptions, it is suggestive that the Buddha was very likely a native Indo-Aryan speaker.

3. *The Buddha's Indo-Aryan language was pre-Pali*

Levman states (p. 9): "Ever since Buddhaghosa announced that the Buddha spoke the language of Magadha (Māgadhī), which he considered identical to Pāli, this has been a controversial subject". For me, it is controversial inasmuch as nowhere in the Pali Canon or the commentaries is "Māgadhī" mentioned; in fact, the commentaries studiously avoid that term, instead using expressions like *magadhabhāsa* and *māgadhiko vohāro*, while the Pali Canon has nothing remotely close to that term. In his commentary to the Vinaya passage above (§2), Buddhaghosa actually defines *magadhabhāsa* as equivalent to *Ariyaka*, the Aryan language, not a dialect, such as Māgadhī or Kosalī:

> Here "Aryan" means the Aryan language, the speech of Magadha; "foreign" means any non-Aryan language, Andha (Telugu), Damila (Tamil) and so on.[10]

"Magadha" with its capital situated at Pāṭaliputra comprised most of the subcontinent in Buddhaghosa's time, in the form of the Gupta empire, and also in the earlier time of the Mauryan empire, when Mahinda, Aśoka's son, brought Buddhism and early commentaries to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE. I have argued for this broader sense of *magadhabhāsa* and Magadha previously (Karpik 2019a: 20–38); the late Ole Pind (2021) has also criticised the notion that the Buddha spoke Māgadhī. However, Levman (pp. 236–237) adopts the misreading, Māgadhī, and assumes Magadha at its smallest extent without responding to my argument. The author uses the

apaccakkhātā hoti sikkhā. milakkhukena ariyakassa santike [...] *sikkhaṃ paccakkhāti so ca na paṭivijānāti: apaccakkhātā hoti sikkhā* (my translation).

[10] Vin–a I 255: *tattha ariyakaṃ nāma ariyavohāro Magadhabhāsā, milakkhukaṃ nāma yo koci anariyako Andhadamilādi* (my translation).

considerable body of speculation fuelled by that misreading, e.g., Lüders' Urkanon, Hinüber's Buddhist Middle-Indic or Norman's Old Māgadhī (pp. 236–239), as a justification to insert his own version of the Buddha speaking some form of pre-Pali. Enter the koine.

4. *Pre-Pali was a koine existing in India in the Buddha's time*

Levman argues (p. 238) that the Aśokan dialects found on the Shābāzgaṛhī and Kālsī rock edicts[11] were mutually unintelligible or not necessarily mutually intelligible (p. 292) and therefore a koine would have been needed in the Buddha's time. I regard this argument as fantasy sociolinguistics for the following reasons: (a) Levman does not respond to my claim (Karpik 2019a: 58–64) that the differences in the Aśokan varieties were overwhelmingly one of accent and were therefore mutually comprehensible, in which case a koine would not be needed to promote understanding; (b) elsewhere (pp. 31, 60, 244, n. 375) the author argues for bilingualism and states (p. 244): "The mechanism which creates these shared features [lexical, phonological and grammatical features common to Old Indic, Dravidian and Munda] is extensive bilingualism [...]", in which case again a koine would not be necessary; we know that in modern Belgium, Finland and Switzerland where there are respectively two, three and four official languages, a koine has not developed; (c) there is no written evidence for this koine, as might be expected in inscriptions, while on the other hand Epigraphic Prakrit is a reflex of Pali (Karpik 2019a: 52–53).[12]

[11] See: https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&view=fulltext&vid=362&cid=381523&mid=634131 (accessed on November 8, 2022).

[12] Dr Yojana Bhagat, Head of the Department of Pali, University of Mumbai, was asked in email correspondence with the reviewer why this standard inscriptional language for centuries is not called "Epigraphic Pali". Her answer was that Indian scholars are generally ignorant of Pali.

5. *Pali is a translation from this koine and other languages*

Levman first claims (p. 31): "the conversion [of autochthonous technical terms] is not interdialectic, but a true translation of a local language into MI [...]". He does make an exception for terms which had no equivalent in the receiving dialect, but does not consider the possibility of simple word borrowing here. Further, he claims (p. 59): "The Buddha certainly spoke other languages as well, including the language of the Sakya tribe, and one must assume he taught in that idiom, the proof being the large number of loan-words imported into MI". This is quite illogical; it is similar to claiming that modern English speakers must also speak Latin, the proof being the large number of loanwords borrowed from Latin. He does not address my argument (Karpik 2019a: 12-19) that oral translation of the *Buddhavacana* was simply impractical, discouraged and unnecessary.

6. *Pali was subsequently Sanskritised extensively*

According to Levman (p. 277): "Sanskritization of the Buddha's teachings probably began right after his *parinibbāna* (post ~380 BCE)". The author regards the *pr*, *kr*, *tr*, and *ṣṭ* clusters found in the Aśokan Girnār inscriptions[13] as Sanskritisations and does not consider the possibility of their being retentions from Old Indic in this particular dialect. Oddly, he offers the existence of Prakritisms being Sanskritised in the Vedas as proof of a general proclivity towards Sanskritisation in Indian culture as if it were significant that Sanskrit was Sanskritised! He does not answer my arguments (Karpik 2019a: 53–58) that Pali has Vedic, non-Sanskritic features, which do not fit in with the Sanskritisation narrative.

Instead, Levman quotes numerous scholars (pp. 238–239, 278–279, 290–291) who all claim Pali was Sanskritised, but I regard this as academic groupthink. There is an assumption with most advocates of Sanskritisation, with which Levman (p. 296) agrees, that Pali was originally more like the Aśokan Prakrits. However, I assume that, like Sanskrit and Ardhamāgadhī, Pali is not represented in these inscriptions although it existed at that time and, like its reflex, Epigraphic Prakrit/Epigraphic Pali, it was a formal conservative language, unlike the Aśokan Prakrits which represent the accents of local bureaucrats, messengers and stone-masons (Karpik 2019a: 58–64).

[13] See: https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=fulltext&view=fulltext&vid=362&cid=381524&mid=634132&level=2 (accessed on November 8, 2022).

To be fair, the author does engage in some technical arguments with the present reviewer, but there are always counter-arguments:

a. As proof that Pali is an artificial language, Levman (p. 291) quotes Oskar von Hinüber alleging that *katvā* and *disvā* are artificial formations, and quotes Norman having the same issue with *disvā* and *atrajā*. From my perspective, their difficulty was misconstruing *Magadhabhāsa* as Māgadhī, and then trying to derive these forms from an eastern Aśokan Prakrit; as that cannot work, they resorted to artificial formations as an explanation, but Wilhelm Geiger was not so blinkered. Geiger calls *katvā* and *disvā* historical forms (§209), and *atrajā* a folk etymology (§53.2). I imagine he thought *katvā* < Old Indic (OI) *kṛtvā* (Geiger §12.1, 53.3), and *disvā* < OI *dṛṣṭvā* (Geiger §12.2, and perhaps a unique assimilation of *s* < *ṣṭ*).[14] Levman further states (p. 293): "Norman argues that this view [Sanskritic forms in Pali are retentions] is simply 'wrong' (2006: 96)". However, Norman bases his argument solely on *atrajā*, which he sees as a quasi-Sanskritic form, and ignores Geiger's explanation (and the Pali-English Dictionary's). Furthermore, backformations are a natural language process, as searching online with the terms "backformation" and "English" will confirm, and cannot prove Sanskritisation.

b. Levman (2019: 80–81, n. 13) has already criticised my view (Karpik 2019a: 56–57) that the *-tvā* absolutive is a retention in Pali and not a restoration. He (pp. 293–294) does not openly dispute my argument (Karpik 2019b: 107–108) that over 13,000

[14] In the 1943 edition, Geiger §59.4 notes *dissā* in Ardhamāgadhī (AMg) and refers to Pischel (1957: §334) who states that the regular form in AMg would be **diṭṭhā*; Geiger appears to me to be arguing that there is an analogous, but unknown route in both P. and AMg from *dṛṣṭvā* to their respective reflexes. In the 1994 edition of Geiger, Norman derives *disvā* from the non-Pāṇinian form *dṛśya* via **dissa*, which was later Sanskritised. My alternative is that, as Pali does not have the *śy* or *sy* cluster, *dṛśya* went straight from **diśya* to *disvā*, without Norman's intermediate **dissa*, on the analogy of other *tvā* absolutives (Karpik 2019a: 56–57, 2019b: 107–108). Essentially, I argue that Norman's "Sanskritisation" was really a natural backformation, much as the once incorrect verb "to administrate", backformed from the noun "administration" (Latin noun *administratio*), is now used by some instead of the verb "to administer" (Latin verb *administrare*).

-tvā and 1,900 *-tvāna* absolutives in the Tipiṭaka overwhelm the handful of alleged *-ttā* absolutives in Pali (Pind lists 45, 2005: 499–508), which all have alternative explanations. However, my argument that the retained *tv* conjunct is also found over 2,000 times in *tvam* and over 400 in the sandhi *tve-* is dismissed as a "numbers game". Levman then makes the puzzling statement (p. 293): "for if one looks at all the *-tv-* > *-tt-* assimilations in the canon (e.g. *catvara* > *catur*; *-tvā* > *-ttā*; *tvaca* > *taca*; *satva* > *satta*; to name a few), these far outnumber those that remain". He does not present the results of his searches, however, to justify what for me is a plainly incorrect assertion. To me the fact that the *-tv* > *-tt-* assimilation is incomplete in the Tipiṭaka means that Pali was a natural language in which sound changes do not occur instantly in every instance and the sheer numbers argue against Sanskritisation. Levman does admit that the assimilation was not quite complete in Aśokan inscriptions and goes on to say (p. 294): "The commonality of *tvam* perhaps argues for its retention, but why then was it not kept in the other Prakrits?" My answer to that is that Pali was a conservative, formal language variety in which the *tv* conjunct persisted to a large extent and was preserved in its pre-Aśokan form in conformity to the Buddha's wishes.

c. I have argued elsewhere (Karpik 2019a: 57) that the Sanskrit *brāhmaṇa* is a loan word in Pali, not a retention. Levman investigates this and concludes (p. 296): "Of course it is always possible that both terms [OI *brāhmaṇa* and MI **bāhaṇa*] were used alongside each other from the earliest time of the Buddha's teachings, with the MI form being used in the *gāthā*s and the OI form *occasionally* employed elsewhere for the reason Norman has suggested: to make it clear to both disciples and Brahmins, whom the Buddha was *castigating*". If the word "occasionally" were deleted and *speaking of* were substituted for "castigating", I would be in complete agreement with Levman's conclusion. The use of the Sanskrit form could be a matter of politeness.

d. Levman (pp. 296–297) also discusses my claim (Karpik 2019a: 55–56) that the *-bb-* geminate being unique to Pali proves that it is archaic. He suggests that *-b-* and *-v-* were allophonic and it was merely a scribal convention that only *-v-* for *-bb-* is used in Aśokan inscriptions. I too have considered this possibility and also wondered if they are different representations of [β], the voiced bilabial fricative, which sounds halfway between *b* and *v* and may have been allophonic, with *v* for non-native Indo-Aryan speakers in instances like *vy-*. Despite these ruminations, I still think that my argument stands as: (1) *-bb-* is not found in Epigraphic Prakrit/Epigraphic Pali either; (2) the Sri Lankan manuscript tradition never alternates with *-vv-* although it interchanges *vy-* and *by-* in initial position; (3) I believe no manuscript tradition has, for example, **bā*, **baṇṇa*, **bibatta* or **vandhati*, **vāhu*, **vīja*, and there are many more examples where *-b-* and *-v-* are not interchangeable. I therefore think they were not allophonic, but were on occasions interchanged.

e. Finally, Levman (pp. 298–300) does answer my point (Karpik 2019b: 109) that geminates do not undergo lenition by pointing out that non-native Indo-Aryan speakers might not be able to distinguish geminate and single consonants and so might introduce errors into the transmission. His point is valid, but not his conclusion that natural language processes and backformations are better explanations than manuscript errors for the variety of readings found, for example, at Dhp 335. This points to a larger problem with his koine theory: the koine reconstructions are extrapolated from variant readings and there is the issue that manuscript errors could be their basis.

7. *The Buddha's teachings in his original language are lost*

Levman additionally suggests (p. 59): "The Buddha then spoke and taught in several languages; that the only one that survived is Pali, which is apparently derived from a mixed MI interlanguage [...], is just an accident of preservation".

Later (pp. 292–293), he lays out an unconvincing argument that although the Buddha specifically forbade the use of Sanskrit, his disciples failed him by Sanskritising his teachings given in the koine and losing those in his native Sakyan language. This is not provable or disprovable, but seems unlikely. For, to echo Oscar Wilde in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), to lose teachings in one language may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose teachings in both seems like carelessness. Levman's implicit assumption is that because some teachings were extensively Sanskritised into Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, all early teachings of the Buddha were extensively Sanskritised. However, there is no robust evidence for the second proposition.

8. *A misunderstanding*

In one passage of the book, Levman cites Karpik (2019b: 110) and states (p. 279) that what I took as natural fortitions in his theory are actually non-natural backformations. The author leaves the impression that I am at fault, not he. However, Levman (2019: 76–78) made a case for a degree of natural language change in Pali and he earlier stated: "this word [*kañjiya*] is straightforwardly derivable from **ga*/*u*(*N*)*hiya*, with the **fortition** [my emphasis] of g- > k-" (2019: 90), thus using the terminology and notation of natural language change. "Fortition" is in bold to demonstrate that Levman (2020: 110) is completely inaccurate when claiming he does not use this word: "He [Karpik] calls the editing/revision/back-formation/Sanskritization process 'fortitions' (although I do not use the word)". Whether Levman has adapted his theory in response to my earlier criticism of excessive fortitions in his theory or not, clarification is welcome. However, he continues to muddy the waters in this book by using the notation of natural language change for backformations, e.g., **veha* > *(vedha)* > *dvaidhā* (p. 282), and even calling a backformation from *roẏa* a "fortition" (p. 288): "Pali preserves *roga* and *pa-loka* (idem) with a **fortition** [my emphasis] of *-g-* > *-k-*"; I have no idea why Levman writes "preserves" rather than "restores", but I believe he means the latter if his clarification stands. To avoid confusion, in what follows, I will notate natural language change as > and revisions/non-natural backformations as →.

9. What use is Levman's koine theory?

The kindest thing that can be said of the koine theory is that it is an alternative explanation to transmission errors for variants in texts. However, it comes at the cost of believing that the majority of Pali words are Sanskritisations (Levman

2020: 144) and such an extreme position is unnecessary to explain why Pali is as it is. Here are my comments on some types of alleged Sanskritisations:

> Key: ***bold*** *= alleged koine form* /*AMg = Ardhamāgadhī* / *Aś = Aśokan Prakrit / OI = Old Indic / P = Pali*

Revision (Levman)	Retention (Karpik)	Comments
OI *loka* >Aś, AMg ***loga*** → *loka*	OI *loka* > P *loka*	One of many Vedic forms retained in Pali (Karpik 2019a: 53).
OI *śata* >AMg ***saẏa*** → P *sata* (pp. 286–287)	OI *śata* > P *sata* (Geiger §3)	Retention of a simplified Vedic form after OI *s*, *ś* and *ṣ* merged into P *s*.
OI *laghu* > Aś, P ***lahu*** (p. 287)	OI *laghu* > P *lahu* (Geiger §37)	Levman regards the Pali as a failure to restore the original form. I take it that Pali, like all Prakrits, was beginning to simplify aspirates, but left most aspirates untouched when the oral teachings were codified.
OI *prabhā* > ****paha*** → P *pabhā* (pp. 285–286)[15]	OI *prabhā* > P *pabhā* (Geiger §53.1)	Retention of simplified Vedic form after most OI conjuncts became single consonants in Pali. *Paha* is found once in the Tipiṭaka at D I 233 and could be an accidental lenition in dictation (Karpik 2019b: 110) or a confusion of *ha* and *bha* in the Sinhalese scribal tradition (Norman 2008: 189); it is a transmission error.

Revision (Levman)	Retention (Karpik)	Comments
OI *veṣṭa* > P *veḍha*> ***veha*** Then at D II 100, S V 153 and Th 143 these readings appear: ***veha*** → *vekha* ***veha*** → *vega* ***veha*** → *vegha* ***veha*** → *veṭha* ***veha*** → *veḍha* ***veha***→ *vedha* ***veha*** → *veḷa* ***veha*** → *vesa* At Vin II 136 these readings appear: ***veha*** → *vidha* * ***veha*** → *vīṭha* * ***veha*** → *vītha* * ***veha*** → *veḍha* (von Hinüber 1991) * ***veha*** → *veha* (von Hinüber 1991) (pp. 280–285)	OI *vyathā* > P *vedha* (Geiger §25.1, 38.4) I defer to Gombrich (1987) who deduces from the context and Sanskrit sources that *vedha* (trembling) is correct for D II 100, S V 153 and Th 143; Levman does not discuss this work. Vin II 136 has *vidha* (buckle), which Norman (1994: 97–98) connects to OI *veṣṭa*(*ka*) (covering/ surrounding).	Levman's alleged koine form exists in only one manuscript of which the editor, Oskar von Hinüber (1991: 2), writes: "*veha* remains unexplained and may be a simple error". The manuscript tradition appears to have confused different roots and meanings; the koine reconstruction is too wide-ranging to determine the correct readings.

Overall, Levman's revision/Sanskritisation hypothesis risks turning natural sound changes and transmission errors into speculative pre-Pali reconstructions for no advantage in terms of identifying correct readings. On the other hand, in every case, retention has the greater economy of explanation, satisfying the principle of Occam's Razor. Retention further explains why Vedic, non-Sanskritic, forms are found in Pali and why advanced Pali forms are found in Epigraphic Prakrit/Epigraphic Pali. That Pali was contemporaneous with the Buddha is the better, parsimonious hypothesis.

In conclusion

Overall, Levman's scholarship in this book is at times impressive. Possibly no other scholar can demonstrate a working knowledge of Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, German, French, Burmese and Old Tamil, as Levman does here. His 27 pages of references are also a useful and up-to-date resource. However,

with the greatest respect, I have found his koine theory lacking in convincing argument and scholarship, not least in his inaccurate or irrelevant citations of Buddhaghosa, Burrow, Emeneau, Gombrich, Krishnamurti, Norman, Sjoberg, and Southworth. Nonetheless, the author's demonstration of linguistic and cultural borrowing regarding robe-practices from non Indo-Aryan sources into Pali and Buddhism will, I believe, stand the test of time. For applying this analysis to connected passages of Pali is pioneering work and Levman deserves praise for this. Likewise, his comparison of syntax in Pali and Old Tamil poetry is exceptional. His project (p. 378) of a "Prolegomenon for a Pali Etymological Dictionary of non Indo-Aryan Words" is an extension of this good work and to be welcomed. I very much hope he will follow through on his claim (p. 131) that one could do a whole study of the chronological strata of the Suttas based on their engagement with Brahmanism.

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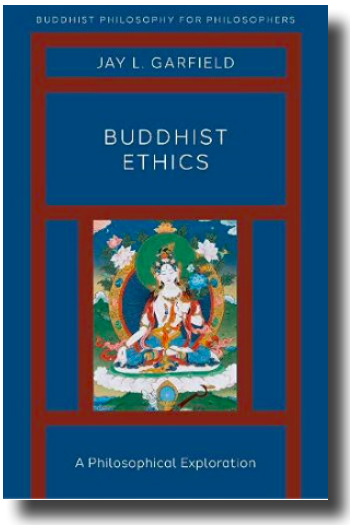
Garfield, Jay L., *Buddhist Ethics: A Philosophical Exploration*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022, 248 p., hardback, £64, ISBN: 9780190907631

Reviewed by John J. Holder



In this highly readable book, Jay Garfield makes a strong case that Buddhist ethics offers distinctively significant contributions to ethical theory and, as such, deserves the attention of ethical theorists working in any philosophical tradition. Drawing mainly from Indian and Tibetan sources, Garfield aims to provide "an outline of the understanding of ethics shared among the Buddhist traditions, and an understanding of how that vision can inform contemporary ethical discourse" (p. 28). As an outline or "rational reconstruction" of Buddhist ethics, the book neither attempts a defence nor claims to be a comprehensive account of Buddhist ethics. Throughout the thirteen chapters of the book, Garfield emphasises the distinctiveness of Buddhist ethics in relation to Western ethical theories. In particular, he gives an account of Buddhist ethics that does not focus on personal agency/responsibility, avoids metaethical theories, aligns with particularism rather than universalism in regard to ethical theory, and coheres with scientific naturalism in ways that most ethical theories in Western traditions do not.

Despite Garfield's intention to frame a Buddhist ethical theory that is shared by the various Buddhist traditions, the ethical theory outlined in the book is informed predominantly by the Indian Mahayana tradition (with some ancillary consideration of Theravada scholasticism). The justification for this evaluation of the book is developed below in the discussion of specific elements of Garfield's reconstruction of Buddhist ethics. Suffice it to say at this point that the main philosophical guide to Garfield's reconstruction is the 8th century Mahayana philosopher Śāntideva. Śāntideva's contributions to Buddhist ethics in such seminal texts as *How to Live an Awakened Life* (*Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*) are quoted numerous times and at length by Garfield as illustrative of Buddhist ethics generally. Nāgārjuna's *Precious Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*) also figures prominently in Garfield's reconstruction.

The fact that the book develops a predominantly Mahayana approach to Buddhist ethics does not undermine Garfield's central claim that his book identifies aspects of Buddhist ethics that offer important contributions to ethical theory; however, it does beg for an important qualification that Garfield fails to make in claiming that his reconstruction is shared by Buddhist traditions generally. This shortcoming of the book leaves Garfield's claim open to counterarguments based on the conceptions of ethics in non-Mahayana traditions (notably, ethics found in the Pali texts or Nikāyas) that do not share key elements of Garfield's reconstruction of Buddhist ethics. In fact, Garfield's attempt to offer a pan-Buddhist reconstruction could have the unintended consequence of showing that the diversity in the approaches to ethics among the various forms of Buddhism simply does not permit consolidation into a single shared framework.

In the introduction to the book, Garfield eschews the comparative approach to Buddhist ethics that is commonly used to present it to Western readers. Many, if not most, studies of Buddhist ethics attempt to fit the Buddhist approach to ethics into traditional ethical theories developed in Western philosophy. Some scholars explain Buddhist ethics as deontology (focused on intentions), while others see it as consequentialism, and still others present it as a virtue ethics (where the focus is on training moral habits). Although Garfield agrees that there are some important connections between Buddhist ethics and these Western ethical theories, he believes that it does not fit any of these ethical models. Instead, he maintains that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a "moral phenomenology" and, as such, Buddhism contains an

approach to ethics not represented in contemporary ethical discourse. What it means to call Buddhist ethics a "moral phenomenology" will be discussed in detail below.

In Chapter 1, Garfield offers a helpful overview of the book by surveying the main ideas of Buddhist ethics from the problematic of suffering that motivates Buddhist ethical thought to an analysis of the causes of suffering, and, finally, to Buddhism's proposed cure for suffering by means of knowledge of the Buddhist metaphysical doctrines of dependent origination (Skt., *pratītyasamutpāda*; P., *paṭiccasamuppāda*) and no-self (Skt., *anātman*; P., *anattā*). Garfield explains that such metaphysical knowledge has an ethical significance, because it provides a "salutary ethical perception of the world" that is expressed in moral behaviour as non-egocentricity. By surveying Buddhist ethics in broad strokes, the first chapter provides a useful roadmap to the central ideas that are developed in detail in the later chapters of the book. Such a high-level preview is especially helpful to readers who are new to Buddhist philosophy.

In Chapter 3, Garfield begins building his case that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a "moral phenomenology". The argument for this claim is a thread that weaves together the ten remaining chapters of the book. A moral phenomenology, as Garfield explains it, is "an approach to ethics in which the goal is the the cultivation of a distinct way of experiencing oneself and others in the world, or a mode of comportment toward the world" (p. 21, n. 6). The aim of ethics as phenomenology, according to Garfield, is a transformation of the person that manifests itself as new modes of perception which fundamentally reframe how we evaluate both ourselves and the phenomena we experience in the world around us. By contrast to other traditions of ethics, a moral phenomenology is not primarily about rules of conduct or even the cultivation of one's personality, rather, it is a matter of developing a correct understanding of certain metaphysical truths that produce in the person a radically new "way of being in the world" (p. 91). This new way of being in the world makes ethical behaviour effortless and natural. Thus, in a moral phenomenology, morally good/bad actions are not the focus of ethical theory. Moral actions are secondary by-products that flow naturally from a person's mode of being or comportment toward the world.

Garfield claims inspiration for his conception of phenomenology from philosophers like Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger in that he sees "perceptual

experience as deeply implicated with embodiment, attention, desire, and intention" (p. 27). But, unlike Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the way that Garfield applies his conception of phenomenology to Buddhist ethics emphasises the cognitive aspects of the mind and downplays the roles of affective and conative mental factors. As discussed in more detail below, Garfield holds that in Buddhism the problem of suffering is ultimately grounded on the fact that we do not have a correct understanding of the way the world really is and that the transformation of perception eliminates suffering as the result of knowing Buddhism's central metaphysical doctrines. Thus, in Garfield's reconstruction of Buddhist ethics, both the problem of suffering and its solution are fundamentally matters of cognition.

Philosophical and religious traditions that offer ethical teachings typically give specific guidance about morally good and morally bad behaviour, what philosophers refer to as "substantive ethics". However, Garfield claims that Buddhist ethics is not focused on substantive ethical guidance, because it does not specify "the kinds of actions we ought to perform"(p. 199). This is a puzzling claim given that many Buddhist texts clearly contain substantive ethics in the forms of precepts for lay persons and monastics (e.g., refrain from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, taking intoxicants, etc.) as well as rules of conduct for Buddhist monastics known as the *prātimokṣa* or *pātimokkha*. If Garfield is correct about downplaying the importance of substantive ethics in Buddhism, it raises the question why early Buddhist texts in Pali focus so much on substantive ethics. In the *Long Discourses of the Buddha* (*Dīghanikāya*), the first two discourses (the *Brahmajālasutta* and the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*) have long sections that describe specific moral practices that are important steps on the path to awakening.[1] Moreover, substantive ethics in the Pali Nikāyas is not addressed only to monastics. The Buddha gave very specific moral advice to laypersons in the *Sigālovādasutta* regarding such things as the value of friendship and a person's duties to family and teachers. This emphasis on substantive ethics is so well-known to anyone familiar with Buddhism as to hardly need mentioning. So, of course, Garfield is aware that substantive ethics is evident in Buddhism, and yet he downplays substantive ethics in his reconstruction because he thinks Buddhist ethics is more fundamentally located in the cognitive transformation that happens

[1] The passages that contain specific guidance on morality are D I 43–11 and D I 63–69 (here and elsewhere, I refer to the volume and page numbers of the Pali Text Society editions).

when a person fully realises the central metaphysical doctrines of Buddhism. Garfield also attempts to justify the lack of focus on substantive ethics in his reconstruction by pointing out that specific ethical rules handicap a person's ability to respond flexibly to the challenges of a particular ethical situation. Garfield seems to be suggesting that since the cause and the solution to suffering are mainly matters of how a person cognises the world (incorrectly or correctly), a person can navigate moral situations more effectively and sensitively by relying on metaphysical realisation than by following specific moral rules.

One might wonder, however, whether or not Garfield, in shifting the focus to his moral phenomenology, has given Buddhist substantive ethics its due. The Buddha claims in the Pali Nikāyas that the fruit of ethical action is evident both in achieving tangible benefits in our worldly lives but also (and more importantly) in the karmic ramifications whereby such actions transform and/or reinforce a person's moral psychology. The karmic ramifications of moral action are used to justify the traditional moral precepts that are undertaken by laypersons and monastics. Moreover, three of the eight elements of the Eightfold Path are constituted by substantive ethical guidance: right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Here the Buddha tells us that we should refrain from such things as lying, stealing, and selling weapons. Traditionally, these three elements of the Eightfold Path are categorised as "moral conduct" (*sīla*). Moral conduct, more generally, is the first stage of the threefold training, also consisting of mental culture (*samādhi*) and wisdom/insight (*paññā*). The Pali Nikāyas and the Theravada tradition emphasise that such training is sequential and cumulative with wisdom/insight (including knowledge of dependent origination and no-self) depending on the cultivation of moral conduct and mental culture as prerequisites. One might wonder, then, how Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics that downplays substantive ethics can account for the threefold training. Even more puzzling is the fact that Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a moral phenomenology appears to reverse the order of the training when he claims that "the Buddhist approach to moral cultivation begins with the correction of our view of the world" (p. 81). It is true that Garfield's interpretation of Buddhist ethics has textual support in Mahayana sources like Śāntideva, Nāgārjuna, and certain Tibetan philosophers, but the primacy of moral conduct in the threefold training emphasised in other Buddhist traditions suggests that Buddhist ethics in these traditions does not fit Garfield's phenomenological model of ethics.

No doubt, wisdom/insight as the right understanding of dependent origination and no-self is crucial to becoming a fully awakened person according to all Buddhist traditions. But for some, realising these metaphysical insights is predicated on the reshaping of the mind in all of its psychological complexity. That complexity includes irreducibly the affective and conative functions of the mind as well as cognitive mental functions. This difference among Buddhist traditions is evident in how they conceive "purification of the mind". Although all Buddhist traditions agree that purifying the mind is the central ethical/soteriological issue; some (including the Pali Nikāyas) give an important and essential role to moral and meditative activities that eliminate affective and conative corruptions of the mind (such as anger, hatred, grasping, attachment, etc.). Based on this more complex view of the mind and the strategies for purifying it, some Buddhist traditions envisage a "gradualist" path to enlightenment along the lines of the threefold training (as discussed above) that focuses first on moral conduct as a therapy for transforming/purifying the mind in terms of its affective and conative functions. Whether or not the affective and the conative pathologies of the mind ultimately derive from cognitive pathologies is precisely an area of disagreement among Buddhist traditions.

In Chapter 6, Garfield offers a detailed study of the Four Truths as the distilled essence of Buddhist ethics. In regard to the First Truth—the fact of suffering (Skt., *duḥkha*; P., *dukkha*)—Garfield explains that suffering pervades human experience in a wide variety of ways: via physical pain, psychological distress, and existential anxieties over such things as unavoidable death. Suffering is clearly the problematic that motivates Buddhist ethics. Garfield explicates with clarity and insight the Buddhist understanding of suffering through a number of illustrative metaphors and stories—some his own and others drawn from Buddhist texts. No doubt, Garfield is on firm ground in his view that Buddhist ethics is fundamentally a response to suffering and the attempt to replace it with a way of faring well in the world. In regard to the Second Truth—that suffering is caused by craving (*taṇhā*)[2]—Garfield points out that such suffering is not caused primarily by external phenomena, but by our psychological attitudes toward them. At this level of generality, Garfield's account of the Second Truth suits all forms of Buddhism. But a more contentious aspect of Garfield's discussion of suffering is the way he views it

[2] See, for example, M I 48.

through the lens of his cognitivist/metaphysical approach to Buddhist ethics. Garfield agrees that the proximate cause of suffering is craving and unfulfilled desires, but he carries the analysis further by claiming that suffering derives ultimately, or more fundamentally, from an epistemic failure. In Garfield's account of Buddhism, "the root cause of suffering is an incorrect view of the world" (p. 82). More specifically, "suffering arises from a way of seeing ourselves and the world" (p. 80), and it involves "a misunderstanding of our own nature" (p. 79). Thus, the cause of suffering (in Garfield's interpretation of Buddhism) is ultimately a cognitive problem. As such Garfield's account of suffering raises the question whether the ultimate root of suffering is to be found mainly in the cognitive/perceptual aspects of human psychology or whether non-cognitive/affective/conative structures of the mind are also significant (and irreducible) factors. This question is answered differently by different Buddhist traditions.

Based on his reading of certain Mahayana scholastics like Śāntideva, Garfield holds that Buddhism sees suffering as grounded on a particular corruption of the mind, namely, "primal confusion" (Garfield's translation of *moha*, a term more commonly translated as "delusion").[3] According to Garfield's account of Buddhism, we suffer from primal confusion because we do not see the world as dependently arisen (as a nexus of changing, causally interdependent and impermanent phenomena) and such ignorance grounds our false belief in a permanently real self. Traditionally, primal confusion is presented in the early Buddhist texts in Pali as one element among the three fundamental corruptions of the mind (*lobha*: greed/attraction, *dosa*:

[3] Garfield introduces a number of novel translations for Pali and Sanskrit terms in the book. Other newly minted translations include "friendliness" for *mettā* (instead of "loving kindness"), "care" for *karunā* (instead of "compassion") and "impartiality" for *upekkhā* (instead of "equanimity"). These new translations sometimes seem appropriate (as in the case of "impartiality" for *upekkhā*, and "primal confusion" for *moha*, on which see also Peter Masefield, "A brief note on the Meaning of *Moha*", *Mahachulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 2010, Vol. 3, pp. 5–12), or merely a matter of preference, but others are questionable, such as translating *mettā* as "friendliness". Regarding the latter, it is true, as Garfield mentions, that *mettā* shares an etymology with the word for "friend". Yet the *locus classicus* of the term is the *Mettāsutta* in which the boundless, self-sacrificing love that a mother has for her child is the main image. Such a relationship between mother and child is surely better captured as "loving kindness" rather than "friendliness". It is worth noting that the *Mettāsutta*—among the most revered text on ethics among practitioners of all forms of Buddhism—is not discussed in the book.

hatred/aversion, and *moha*: delusion/primal confusion). In the early texts, these corruptions are taken as on a par with one another—the three are specifically listed as the proximate causes of the "unwholesome" (*akusala*) in human experience.[4] Yet Garfield sees primal confusion as the underlying cause of the other two. He writes:

> Attraction and aversion—the two faces of craving or insatiable thirst for what we can never attain—are ethically problematic because they are the causes of suffering. But because primal confusion is the root cause of these two morally problematic attitudes, that primal confusion is ethically problematic as well (p. 81).

However, there does not appear to be any justification in other (non-Mahayana) Buddhist traditions for making primal confusion the underlying cause of attraction and aversion. Garfield's claim that primal confusion has an ultimate or more fundamental function as the cause of suffering seems tailored to accord with his cognitivist interpretation of Buddhist ethics that is borrowed largely from Mahayana sources. Consistent with this cognitivist interpretation of the cause of suffering, Garfield sees the Third Truth (the elimination of the cause of suffering) as essentially a matter of transforming a person's conception of the self and the world. Given the fact that we cannot transform the world so much as we can transform our minds, the Buddhist solution to suffering focuses on controlling and/or eliminating certain mental factors that give rise to suffering. As Garfield sees it, "in order to eliminate suffering, all one needs to do is to eliminate the pathologies of attraction and aversion, and that to eliminate these, it is *necessary and sufficient* to eliminate the pathological reification of self and of the distinction between self and world" (p. 81; italics added). Taking his cue from Śāntideva, Garfield remarks that Buddhist ethics is therefore not "governed by a concern for developing dispositions to act in particular ways" (thus deviating from the interpretation of ethics affirmed in other forms of Buddhism); it is, rather, fundamentally about the knowledge of reality that removes primal confusion because by removing it a person trains one's moral perception to properly assess the moral value of phenomena within the field of experience and action. Again, Garfield appears to be offering a specifically cognitivist interpretation of one of the Four Truths. Although Garfield is correct

[4] See, for example, M I 47 where the three corruptions are on a par with one another.

to say that craving partakes in misconceptions about the nature of the world and the self, craving itself is not simply a cognitive function. For that reason, the therapy for the elimination of craving is not simply a cognitive therapy, as Garfield claims; the way to eliminate it is not just "right understanding". In fact, the Buddha said that the therapy for the elimination of craving is the wide range of transformative activities described as the Eightfold Path.

Chapter 7 offers an interesting study of the "path" metaphor in Buddhist ethics. Garfield mentions several times in the book that Buddhist ethical thought is not a grand ethical system laid out in terms of moral principles that are meant to give guidance to human actors. Garfield correctly points out that Buddhist ethics contains little, if any, metaethical theory (theorising about whether duties or consequences provide the basis for morality). He explains that one reason for this is that the problem of suffering is extremely complex, too multi-dimensional, too tied to particular situations to allow a simple metaethical theory. Garfield offers an even better reason why Buddhism offers little in the way of metaethics when he says that Buddhist ethics "is more concerned with how to become good than what it is to be good" (p. 108). For this reason, Buddhist ethics emphasises human ethical development as a path where Buddhist practice is guided by narratives that serve as ethical paradigms rather than as general moral rules.

Garfield draws an important philosophical implication from the path/narrative metaphor by suggesting that this aligns Buddhist ethics with "particularism" rather than "universalism" as regards ethical theory. According to ethical particularism, when we make moral choices we do so situationally or contextually, not guided by general moral principles, but by using specific paradigm cases as precedents that become habits of action. More specifically, paradigm cases inform our perceptual skills and these perceptual skills in turn have a conative function by assigning values to the phenomena in our experience that determine our moral choices. Garfield sees such ethical particularism as a great advantage for Buddhist ethics over rule-focused ethical systems because particularist ethics "allows flexibility and openness to special circumstances" and makes moral conduct "improvisational".

A highlight of the book is Garfield's exploration of the crucially important role of the no-self doctrine in Buddhist ethics. In the context of the no-self theory, Garfield's moral phenomenology offers important insights into Buddhist ethics that are widely shared by the various Buddhist traditions. Garfield points

out that most Western ethical theories assume that human beings are (have) selves and that moral responsibility depends on the freedom/autonomy of the self. And yet, Buddhism rejects the existence of an independently existing, autonomous self—that is the basic idea of the no-self theory. Given this Buddhist conception of human nature, Western ethicists might wonder whether Buddhism can have an ethics at all if the possibility of ethical evaluation depends on a human being possessing an autonomous self. But Garfield argues that Buddhism offers a coherent ethics without postulating an autonomous self, because Buddhist ethics is not focused on evaluating the moral responsibility of a moral agent, but recasts ethics as a path to spiritual fulfilment that reduces suffering and enhances well-being (both of the person who acts as well as those who are impacted by moral actions). Furthermore, because of the no-self theory, Buddhist ethics has a distinct advantage over ethical systems that assume an autonomous moral agent, for the reason that the no-self theory accords with our understanding of the human person via modern science.[5] Garfield claims that modern science commits us to a form of causal determinism that, much like Buddhism's theory of dependent origination, is incompatible with the belief in a genuinely free/autonomous self.

Garfield's discussion of the no-self theory relates a number of other ways that this theory has ethical significance. As Garfield explains in very clear terms, a crucial source of suffering is the delusion "manifest in grasping oneself as an agent, as an I, as a mine" (p. 43). This grasping after "self" has the negative ethical significance of "privileging" oneself both in terms encouraging selfish pursuit of a person's interests to the detriment of others, but also because it frames a view of the universe where everything and everyone is cast in relation to oneself. But Buddhism posits that because we exist as persons within a matrix of causal interactions there can be "no morally significant distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding actions" (p. 17). In this way, the no-self doctrine grounds the "non-egocentrism" that permeates the specific practices of Buddhist ethics. Ethical practice is reciprocally related to realisation of Buddhism's central metaphysical insights, explains Garfield, because ethical practice derives from a deep knowledge of dependent origination and no-self, but the ethical actions themselves replace corrupt, egoistic experience with

[5] In Chapter 11, Garfield explores his claim that Buddhist ethics offers ethical resources that are more coherent in relation to a modern scientific worldview than those offered in the non-naturalistic forms of ethics that are common to Western philosophy.

non-egocentric experience that reinforces the knowledge that we are each a part of a causally interdependent world.

One further implication of Buddhism's no-self doctrine is that it sidesteps a central question in Western ethics: "Why be good?". Western ethics makes such a question the *sine qua non* of ethical theory because these theories presume an independent moral agent who needs to rationalise the value of ethical action in terms of the benefit to the agent. But if there is no fundamental self, then there is no agent-specific good; there is just good defined as the easing of suffering or faring well no matter to whom (or what) the experience belongs. Garfield explains in his interpretation of Buddhist ethics that one starts from the recognition that there is suffering and a need for a path to alleviate that suffering (i.e., Buddhist ethics). There is simply no need to rationalise why the individual person should be moral as if morality comes down to a matter of personal (agent-specific) expediency. Here is another significant way that Garfield's account of Buddhist ethics makes a plausible case for his general thesis that it offers an important and distinctive approach to ethics.

In Chapter 9, Garfield gives an unusual twist to the interpretation of the *brahmavihāra*s or "divine abodes" that comprise the four cardinal virtues of Buddhism, namely, "friendliness, care, joy in the success of others, and impartiality".[6] The novelty in Garfield's account of the *brahmavihāra*s stems from his attempt to locate them within his moral phenomenology. According to Garfield, the *brahmavihāras* should be considered as "modes of comportment" that result from the realisation of dependent origination and the no-self doctrine. They are fundamentally ways of seeing or perceiving correctly, not ways of acting or moral ideals (except in a secondary sense). Morally ideal actions arise "spontaneously" when one has completed the cognitive transformation of correcting perception. Thus, Garfield interprets the *brahmavihāra*s as the transformation of one's being based on something like noesis (e.g., "kindness based on insight"). This interpretation runs counter to the widely held view that the *brahmavihāra*s are ideal ethical practices that reinforce Buddhism's non-egocentric psychology and are only indirectly related to Buddhism's metaphysics. It is hard not to conclude that Garfield's interpretation of the *brahmavihāra*s is tailored to fit his cognitivist moral phenomenology at the expense of a more credible understanding of the *brahmavihāra*s—that they are, as Buddhist tradition has long taken them to be,

[6] More commonly translated as loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

namely, the ultimate *moral* ideals of human behaviour, rather than epistemic/metaphysical concepts.

In Chapter 12, Garfield explores the contemporary application of Buddhist ethics known as "engaged Buddhism". He discusses the emergence of engaged Buddhism as a "global river" of movements that puts Buddhist ethics into action. Garfield recognises "engaged Buddhism" as "a distinctively modern Buddhist development evolving in conversation with Western ethical and political theory" (p. 195). As such, engaged Buddhism tells us a lot about what Buddhist ethics looks like today. In his assessment of socially engaged Buddhism, Garfield rejects any firm distinction between "traditionist" and "modernist" readings of Buddhism that is sometimes used to question the authenticity of engaged Buddhism (where it might appear to depart from the Buddhism of historical texts). Buddhism, in Garfield's view, remains a living tradition that has always been applied to social issues of a particular time. So, judging engaged Buddhism by strict historical standards is a non-starter. Buddhist ethics, Garfield writes, "goes beyond the trope of authenticity that only historical ideas count as real/pure Buddhism—Buddhism is a living, progressive tradition" (p. 197). Garfield offers several illustrations of engaged Buddhism via short summaries of the activities of its most prominent proponents, such as Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022), Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), and the Dalai Lama (b. 1935), with only short references to larger Buddhist movements like Soka Gakkai in Japan and eco-Buddhism in Thailand. Garfield leaves no doubt that he approves of such applications of the Buddha's teachings. "The Engaged Buddhist movement", he concludes, "shows that the voice of the Buddha is a voice that deserves to be heard: these ideas are not only of contemporary as well as historical interest; they are compelling, and call upon us to experience ourselves, our fellows, and the world we inhabit together in a different and perhaps more salutary way" (p. 198).

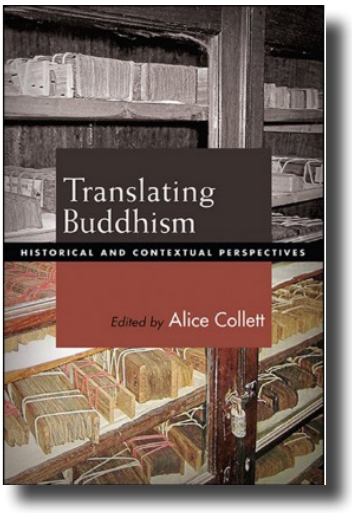
In summary, Garfield's book makes a number of important contributions to our understanding of Buddhist ethics and provides a clearly written and well-organised introduction for those interested in Buddhist ethics in the Indian Mahayana tradition. Garfield deserves much credit for delivering a book that enlivens Buddhist ethical thought by connecting Buddhist ideas to the mindset of a modern reader. His philosophical interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a moral phenomenology is a bold and insightful contribution to scholarship in Buddhist philosophy—even if it represents mainly the perspective of Indian Mahayana Buddhism rather than Buddhism generally—because this conceptualisation of

Buddhist ethics achieves one of the central aims of the book, namely, giving Buddhist ethics a voice in the contemporary conversation on ethical theory.

Lastly, a few comments on the book for academic instructors who might consider using it in university-level classes. Garfield's volume would serve well as a textbook for upper-level undergraduate or graduate-level classes that focus on Mahayana Buddhist ethics. Otherwise, in courses where Buddhist ethics is covered more generally, the book would be useful to students as a secondary (research) source. The author's call to philosophers to take Buddhist ethics seriously should be heeded. Thus, any instructor of a course in ethics that attempts to offer more than traditional Western ethical theories by including a Buddhist perspective should consider including key chapters of this book as reading material.

Alice Collett, ed., *Translating Buddhism: Historical and Contextual Perspectives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2021, 302 p., hardcover, US$ 95, ISBN: 9781438482934

Reviewed by Sarah Shaw



The history of Buddhism is a history of translation. Unlike other major religions, with a single language used for sacred texts, Buddhism has always travelled, with texts translated into new languages, adapted, or transmitted in different forms; or it has blossomed from ancient languages into a rich variety of vernaculars, and sometimes back again. There is such a range of languages involved in Buddhist transmissions, from Pali, to Sanskrit, to Chinese, to Tibetan, to Japanese, to the local and regional, that there are only a handful of scholars who can even approach a working knowledge of the principal texts in the original, let alone the background factors involved in producing them in the first place. For any study of Buddhism as a whole, scholars always need other scholars and translators to help them.

A new volume of essays, edited by Alice Collett, gives us a welcome study of this field. It explores the detailed linguistic, philological, cultural, historical and regional factors that can influence the production of a good translation into English. At a time when increasing numbers of scholars and the reading public are so interested in Buddhist texts, this is a timely volume. All ten papers in the collection, first delivered at a conference in York St John University,

England, in 2016, illustrate how the work of translation necessarily includes complex and subtle considerations: a detailed knowledge of context, empathy and understanding, as well as a clear sense of hermeneutics and theoretical background, all need to be absorbed and allowed to help the translation of any given text work.

Collett's introduction gives a helpfully clear overview of the overarching themes of the book. Suggesting that this work is a step in what will be a long process in defining and setting parameters of a potentially new subdiscipline, the exploration of translation itself, she says that this collection is about finding appropriate questions to pose and debate:

> The beating heart of the volume is, I hope, question after question about what the subdiscipline is, about how we define it, how we shape it, and how we want it to be constituted (p. 4).

As she further notes:

> [...] contributors discuss the nature of Buddhist texts, how it is we came to have an understanding of what constitutes a text, how we might engage in translation practices that communicate something more than literal words, upholding other aspects of the function of the text for its intended audiences and explorations of hermeneutics, genre, and intertextuality (p. 15).

These are large considerations. Collett groups the contributions according to the central preoccupations addressed by the participants. Part I focuses on the nature of a particular text and the ways in which any theory of translation needs to be mediated by a perception of its genre and place in a larger corpus and context. Part II looks at translators, in particular their agendas, often historically overlaid by colonialist assumptions that animated many of the early translations into English. Part III explores specific examples of translation work, scrutinising how the products reflect and embody the aspirations of their translators: some of the preoccupations of earlier chapters are seen in these investigations. In practice, the problems addressed by all the contributors overlap considerably. The principles involved, however, are interestingly simple and apply to many of the areas under investigation: the extent to which context affects our reading of a text, the degree to which terms and words may be regarded as technical and the consequent effects

on translation decisions, the intention of the text itself, and ways in which Western assumptions can often affect how a particular work is translated and its text converted for a new audience. Much of the argumentation and detail of particular articles is necessarily complex and, inevitably, context specific. So, this review gives brief accounts of each essay; Collett's introduction gives excellent and helpful short summaries of the contents of each paper.

Collette Cox, the keynote speaker at the conference, sets some central themes (Chapter 1). As she says, "all translators recognize that the practice of translation is by no means straightforward" (p. 21). She proceeds to pose some challenging questions. To what extent is a text, with its own cultural history and purposes, a static artefact or product? How does this affect the work of a translator, who may be addressing very different concerns and audience assumptions? The "sediment of multiple activities" associated with "transferring" a text has led to much modern disagreement and argument: what are the interpretative implications of a "pure" philological approach? Is it even possible? Or should we pursue a critical philology that integrates and accommodates historical, literary and cultural perspectives? Addressing problems such as context, medium of transmission, ritual usage, liturgical purpose and apparent "authorial" intent, Cox pinpoints several areas where translation work can be affected by and itself affects interpretation. The discussion is dense; Cox's own considerable experience in translation work is immediately helpful. Working as she does with Gandhāran fragments, she notes that translation involves acute awareness to sensitivities, ancient and modern, alongside the cultural underpinnings of both. Indeed, those who composed the texts often expected such reconstructive analysis: while more recent manuscripts appear to be from a library of resources, recorded in entirety for archival purposes, many earlier fragments offer oral/written hybrids, such as ritual guidelines, or schemas for pedagogical purposes.

Cox's recent experience in working with very different forms of text ensures her analysis of translation is informed by direct experience. She explores Chinese commentators' debates on the same subject. Working in an atmosphere of the systematically consistent translation bureaux, discussions often revolved on policy decisions such as whether a translation should be "unhewn" (*zhi* 質), with simple, straightforward renderings of terms, or "refined" (*wen* 文), involving embellishment and care to literary style: Chinese commentators were acutely aware of the deficiencies inherent in the very

process of translation. She suggests that for early Chinese translations, early Indian Buddhist materials, and ritual texts designed for active oral recitation and usage, a flexible approach is needed. The text may have taken various forms at any given time, including changes that may have occurred for a new region. Multiple texts archived in several locations confound attempts to find a "pure" urtext, with variants requiring emendation to conform. The conclusion that a complex hybrid model characterises much Buddhist textual transmission is convincing. Translation then requires considerable adaptability and a willingness to accommodate variants and variation:

> Such a historically sensitive approach entails a fundamental but quite simple shift in perspective: rather than assuming and looking for constancy, we expect and highlight difference [...]. For Buddhist materials in particular, this approach is necessary and indeed therapeutic since it undermines our "craving for stability" and negates the seductive appeal of an "essential" text, which the tradition teaches us cannot be found (p. 40).

Natalie Gummer's essay (Chapter 2) starts from a different viewpoint: a text that itself is supposed to constitute, on recital, a living embodiment of the Buddha, *Suvarṇa*(*pra*)*bhāsottama* (*Sūtra of Utmost Golden Radiance*). How can the translator communicate this intention? Usefully addressing many concerns raised by Cox, Gummer notes that the multi-layered distinctions, such as hermeneutics, historiography and translation practices are mutually dependent. She provides plentiful examples: all excursions into analysis are accompanied by translated material, as she explains her attempts to preserve aspects of Sanskrit syntax crucial to the rhythmic cadence of the piece. Even spacing and line endings on the page can be key, highlighting pauses, and the effects of what even read silently can still be appreciated as one would an oral recitation (p. 66). She demonstrates that a text may, if presented with an alertness to the difficulties of a modern silent reader, still retain the magnificence of its stated intention: here, the recreation of the Buddha body, the food for those participating, each time it is heard.

Amy Paris Langenberg's study (Chapter 3) of details in the Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghikalokottaravādins, a nuns' "handbook", examines hermeneutic and historiographical questions surrounding the translation of Vinaya texts. It stresses that we should not assume ancient texts are based

only on the preoccupations of a male elite: these stories offer vivid tableaux of the life of ancient nuns as well. Key issues addressed include what is legal, the extent to which Vinaya constituted a genuine guide or an ideal model, its accessibility to monastics at different times, and whether it offers a genuinely representative picture of life in ancient India. Philology, interpretation and speculation meet with fascinating conjecture about, for instance, the ancient use of tampons and expectations of correct female behaviour. Vinaya texts are curious: they depend upon the alarming misdeeds of often recurrently villainous or plainly anarchic figures, held as "bad" examples, in order to fulfil their purpose. Langenberg introduces the nun Sthūlanandā, for instance, an ancient admixture of Geoffrey Chaucer's wife of Bath in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (c. 1405–1410) and Charles Dickens' Sairey Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–1844). She is the transgressive figure constantly cited in the Vinayas as the embodiment of "How Not to Behave". It is through her, however, that the exemplary balance of the "good" life for a nun is taught: the beauty of each rule is highlighted by the manifestation of its sometimes monstrous omission. As Langenberg explores the social landscape of the Vinaya *imaginaire* she hints, surely correctly, at some implicit humour in such depictions: the narrative vitality of Vinayas derives from their depiction. Primarily, however, Langenberg suggests that the Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghikalokottaravādins exhibits the influence of some senior, mature nuns in some of its measured conclusions. This gives a satisfying and convincing explanation for the detail of female monastic life explored with such care in these texts: an active, female contribution to "authorship" is one further dynamic that complicates the discussion.

Part II opens with the scholarly detective work at which Oskar von Hinüber excels. His study (Chapter 4) focuses on the geographical, historical and regional aspects of philological work: the curious words that come up sometimes in Pali Suttas and Vinaya that date a piece of text or, very interestingly, locate it as stemming from a particular region. Here, philology gives clues to geography and date. To make his point, he discusses the word *giñjaka*, a kind of *hapax legomenon* in the Pali Canon in the sense that it is only used in a particular sentence, although that is found in several places in the compound *giñjakāvasathe*. It denotes a kind of house—"brick" could be a loose interpretation—which the Buddha visits on his last journey in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (D II 91). As Prof. von Hinüber points out, this word, suggestive of the kind of mud-

block building found in northeast India, would have been entirely alien in what is now Sri Lanka. The commentarial explanation must have come early, from India, suggesting a more ancient element in the commentaries than we sometimes suppose. He conjectures, plausibly, that there are others less easy to identify. Such geographical and regional linguistic analysis is used to elucidate some other passages which appear problematic and even ungrammatical. His conclusions, that some commentarial works emanating from Sri Lanka offers self-conscious improvements on older Indic *aṭṭhakathā*s, is accompanied by an argument that Pali itself could have continued in southern India for several centuries. A few inscriptions there appear to use Pali forms: perhaps, he conjectures, there were Theriya monks living in southern India for some time. This is philology and translation perceived as historical tools which gives new insights into textual transmission.

Elizabeth Harris' empathetic account (Chapter 5) of often maligned early 19th-century Christian missionaries and translators of Pali, such as Robert Spence Hardy, Benjamin Clough and Daniel J. Gogerly, argues for their reinstatement for serious consideration. The earliness of their translation and dictionary work, before that of later classical Orientalists, their insistence that Buddhism was more than a rationalist study and their frequent capacity to break free from missionary agendas demonstrate the real respect and affection with which they regarded the Pali traditions. They visited the countries concerned, met Buddhists then uninfluenced by colonialist thought systems, and often give what appear now as fresh and interesting translations of terms. Spence Hardy's strong narrative interest and Clough's work with material objects reflect very modern concerns. As Harris argues, "These missionaries are worth revisiting" (p. 144).

In Chapter 6, Ligeia Lugli explores modern translations and provides a lexicographical perspective, on, for instance, the sometimes static definitions of Abhidharma. Impressively, she undertakes a brave analysis of the challenging Sanskrit term *saṃjñā*. Exploring six hundred occurrences, she poses questions about its difficulties. Does a term have to mean the same thing in a different context? The varieties of translation reveal the problems: in some places it appears to merge with "consciousness"; in others the term seems more like the cognitive and identificatory process with which it is more usually associated. Problems such as the imposition of Western psychological preconceptions about the nature of "apperception" and "cognition" are clearly involved.

There is a lexical gap: we do not have an exact counterpart in English. So, the reviewer liked the author's translation of the use of *saṃjñā* as "to perceive as": a practical conclusion to some probing analysis of context and applicability.

Part III, on "Words", develops this scrutiny of a single term further, with studies that each focus on one term. In Chapter 7, Alice Collett alights on the Sanskrit term *antevāsinī*, the female "pupil" or novice, alongside its male counterpart *antevāsin*. After outlining some parameters of the idea of an *antevāsin/ī* in Vinaya literature, she studies scholarship that has explored the relationship between texts and epigraphy, and questions on the basis of the material evidence whether early communities really had comprehensive knowledge of the Vinaya. Epigraphic evidence, she argues, sometimes challenges the conception of Vinaya as a reflection of social reality: were Sanghas always separated on gender lines? Anomalies in inscriptional evidence create problems for the notion of the *antevāsinī*. Some early inscriptions suggest a fluid relationship in what actually happened in transmitting lineages: ancient Amarāvatī records a "male-female-female transmission" (p. 187). The Pali *pātimokkha* does not advise against male teachers and female pupils; other Vinaya literature, however, suggests a strict separation of sexes. Are Vinayas prescriptive or descriptive? For the Vinayas cannot have given the model for the teacher-student relationship here: they suggest the *antevasinin/ī* helping their teacher with bathing and getting dressed, which is hardly realistic across sexes. She concludes that this "fluid, dynamic technical term" (p. 190), like so many others, cannot be static: acceptable mores would differ according to context, and it could well have simply been variously applied.

Chris V. Jones in Chapter 8 shows how unconscious assumptions have shaped our perception of how one word should be translated. The word *tīrthika* in Sanskrit, or otherwise *tīrthya*, and with it the closely related *tīrthakara*, cognate with the Pali *titthiya* (also *titthakara*), is, he argues, too easy to overlay with Western assumptions. It has routinely been translated as "heretic". But the word "heretic" itself has all kinds of associations with defection and disloyalty derived from Christian usage. These are not necessarily present in the original Greek. Jones suggests the Pali/Sanskrit term's usage, while pejorative, was more akin to these Greek roots, in *haíresis* (αἵρεσις), a term derived from the word for "to choose", applied to someone who follows a path with commitments and objectives that are different from one's own. This helpful study shows, as Jones points out, that:

> As is so often the case with the reconstruction of Indian religious history, our available literature provides only small and opaque windows onto what people did or thought in the environments of our authors (p. 220).

Dhivan Thomas Jones (Chapter 9) makes a study of the grammatical and syntactical features of an even more difficult Pali term, *paṭiccasamuppāda*. His linguistic investigation and a critical analysis of secondary literature show that a nuanced appreciation of such philological concerns is often essential, particularly so, of course, in this case, involving core Buddhist doctrine. By exploring the minutiae of the way the term compresses the syntax of a longer sentence into a syntactical compound, as well assessing interpretations both commentarial and modern, Jones brings us finally to a simple conclusion: he argues that the core metaphor is one of growth, and the dependency that arises as a consequence of that. According to him, "Arising dependent on a causal basis" offers the best literal translation of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Given, as he argues, that the Indic cyclical view of time problematises words such as "cause", so often understood through the linear approach of Western philosophy, he argues for a metaphor suggestive rather of this natural vegetative process:

> The translation "dependent arising" best suggests the naturalistic concept of causation to which the term *paṭicca-samuppāda* refers, in its own cultural context, as is illustrated through comparisons to organic growth (p. 257).

In Chapter 10, Aruna Gamage makes detailed study of the term *desanāsīsa* as it is found in Pali commentaries. The essay explores the implications of "literalness": *desanāsīsa* is a widespread classificatory term in Buddhaghosa's works but appears to be used in all kinds of ways. Gamage examines a number of contexts and suggests that a single translation is not always helpful in rendering the term. It is just employed in so many ways: sometimes to denote two parts of a whole, sometimes to suggest two opposing qualities, and sometimes to introduce metonymy, with a kind of substitution rather than variation. At the end, we are directed to Margaret Cone's choice: "the indication of a category" or, perhaps best of all, "the headword in a discourse".[1]

[1] Margaret Cone, *A Dictionary of Pāli: Part 2, g–n*. Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2010, *sub voce*.

Overall, throughout this book there is a common thread: how a translation can best express the intent, style, cultural background and preoccupations of those who created the texts, who were often themselves alert to the possibility of diverse interpretations and applications in new settings. Texts grow over extended periods, as Hinüber points out: they get applied in different settings, particularly if liturgically or ritually based, as Cox reminds us. They often have multifarious forms, often emerging from hybrid oral/contexts, in, for instance, liturgical templates, making the search for ultimate "purity" challenging at best. As this volume attests, authors frequently change their own text, as Śāntideva (fl. late 7th to mid-8th century CE) apparently did. Precision and close attention to historical context, artefacts, inscriptions, however faulty such assessments may be, also compound difficulties. Despite or even because of such complex issues, the richly various contributions in this volume demonstrate that the depth of craft and skill involved in translation work is considerable.

One overriding theme is that each text poses its own idiosyncrasies and problems, requiring often subtle knowledge and the ability to discern what is needed. We see this from Cox's analysis of the difficulties in different kinds of Gandhāran manuscripts, each of which presents its own requirements and needs, and in, for instance, the interpretations of Vinaya texts by Collett and Langenberg, where all kinds of assumptions may be involved in the translation of some key terms. D.T. Jones' essay shows how highly technical linguistic analysis can reveal the need for a translation that denotes, however, the simple and even familiar. At the point of delivery, as Gummer shows, even presentation on a page can have an effect on the reader. It should be noted, however, that the enormous task of translation is rarely acknowledged and appreciated. No one gets a tenured position at a university on the basis of translating Buddhist texts; such work does not count for points in scholarly assessments. Collett summarises the situation with understatement: "Publications that are wholly translations, and not discursive volumes, have not always curried favor in some academic circles" (p. 2).

As a translator of Pali Jātakas myself, the most pressing problems I encounter are sometimes more mundane than many addressed here. As with other issues explored in this work, however, they too reflect complex cultural problems. Many, importantly, concern the conversion of a largely oral literature into a literary product that is "read", alone. Words used constantly in Jātakas, which worked when they were heard, just look banal when

clustered on a printed page. For instance, endless variations on *avoca* (he/she said), which can occur twenty times on one page, are sometimes needed. It becomes the pulse animating a particularly dramatic exchange. How can one translate it? He/she replied, said, stated, responded: resourcefulness founders in an attempt to break a repetition that looks deadly dull in a story held in one's hands, in a book or on Kindle. Should you use weighted words like "expostulated", "exclaimed", "pleaded", "argued", and even "wept", the means whereby stories in the English language usually give emotional variation to "he/she/they said" interchanges? It is the translator's decision, dependent on the content of what is "said". Words like *avoca* are border plants, that show themselves against a relief of background foliage and shrubs. In Indic texts, where indirect speech is so often framed in direct form, the talking conveys the emotion, in the shrubs themselves. In Anglophone stories, it is often in the ways of expressing "he/she said", around the edges of the bed, that we find the emotional variation and colour. Conversely, when you get to the Abhidhamma, a quite different problem emerges. All literary and human instincts make one want to have different translations for some terms, as the discussion on *saṃjñā* in the Abhidharma above has shown. We can see this in another Pali term: *kusala.* It means variously "healthy, skilful, wholesome, and good". One needs the many possibilities to get the right sense for a particular context. But it is the intricate variations in the lists and the patterns permutating according to simple templates which are of the essence in Abhidhamma. Consistency is essential; the most unhelpful and confusing thing a translator can do is to spoil all that by changing translations for words and terms halfway through! These two examples, from opposite extremes of the spectrum of terminological consistency, vindicate the far more scholarly research of the contributors to this volume on many axes: not too many rules can be applied to good translation work other than flexibility and a willingness to follow the direction of the text. It can be put even more simply. One needs to listen and empathise with the text. On many occasions, it will tell you what it needs.

For those working on Buddhist texts, the signposts and questions posed in this book are excellent. They suggest how we can interrogate problems such as the culture, background and mores of the texts we are "translating" in its modern literal sense—and then observe the often deeply embedded assumptions that we may bring to such an exercise. Through closely analysed

examples, new insights, often of an apparently simple kind, emerge through each essay, as well as specific understanding of the topic at hand. In the end, *Translating Buddhism* is primarily a book about translation in a much larger sense than our modern usage allows (Latin *transfero*: to translate, bring across). It describes the process of bringing across, or transferring, the words of the texts into a modern world, and thus finding out how sometimes just one word, or one gloss on a manuscript page, may reveal so much. Translators of Buddhism do something more than excavate and explain: they are not interpreting archaeological artefacts. They must replant a text in a new soil, as with an imported herb, flower, shrub, or tree, so that it survives as a living entity and can be appreciated by new people in new soils and settings. As with gardening, you cannot "bring across" these plants unless you love them.

Collett's volume shows the various crafts and disciplines that can be brought to bear on this necessarily painstaking work. It vindicates translation as a study, worthy of academic respect and value. After all, most of those who are Anglophone by upbringing first read or hear Buddhist texts in translation; for the many languages we do not know, we all continue to depend on translations. Under Collett's careful curatorship, all the essays in this impressive collection, with their keen awareness of problems raised by others participating in the same volume, also show how a group of scholars can listen to others, working on texts apparently very different from their own, and collectively explore some of the principles involved. This book should help further the status of translation: it will also, one hopes, encourage more of such interchange.