

***The Making of New Communicative Space
in Early Buddhist Canon***

*Modes of Address and Social Dialogues in the
Pāli Nikāyas and the Theravāda Vinaya Piṭaka*

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Theravāda Vinaya Piṭaka

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Certified that the Thesis entitled "The Making of New Communicative Space in Early Buddhist Canon: Modes of Address and Social Dialogues in the Pali Nikāyas and the Theravāda Vinaya Pitaka" submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Professor Nupur Dasgupta, Department of History, Jadavpur University and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/ elsewhere.

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Introduction

1.Introducing the Topic and the Sources

“The Ṛg verses are like honey, the Sāma verses ghee, the Yajus are the ambrosia, but when the dialogue (Vākovākya) is uttered, it is both milk and meat.” This is how the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa articulates its appreciation of the dialogic device as a prized mode of communication and dissemination within the religious circles.¹ Conversations, speeches and narrative devices as tools of preaching and intellectual communication were prevalent in the religious domain in India from a very early period. The preaching and addresses carried out in oral forms were frozen into written texts centuries later to build up a layered and accretive textual tradition. Vākovākya or literally speaking, speech and counter-speech, is however a technical term and denotes the formal mode of carrying out a conversation or a verbal exchange. The actual phenomenon of the debate itself has been unfurled most vividly in the early upaniṣads. The institution of public debates or Brahmodya, as a social practice, is barely attached to any ritual context and surfaces as impromptu exchanges between prominent and proficient orators and teachers. Specific definitional utterances accrue to the figures of prominent teachers. In any attempt that tries to tease out the methods and modes of dissemination, the preacher or the teacher and the audience, who receives the addresses are to be identified and situated on the communicative surface. This exercise opens up a scope of accessing bigger historical narratives. As we shall see, in the early Vedic literature, the

communicative surface was small and circumscribed, with an intimate and almost organic bond between the preacher and the listener. In the Upaniṣads this scope broadened, as the teacher and the audience were fitted into a broadened discursive frame and a widened pedagogical lineage.

In the Theravāda Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka there are concrete indications that a wider intellectual forum based on complex communicative modes was being fashioned in a systematic way. The present study intends to identify and examine certain distinctive modes of address in the Nikāya collections and the Vinaya Piṭaka. The distinctiveness and complexity of these communicative modes would be assessed against the backdrop of earlier discursive practices and narrative traditions. With the emergence of a self-conscious and organised order of monks with a hierarchically structured scholastic community, these addresses acquired a new dimension. This is an attempt to delineate the wider communicative space which assembled the speech-acts as authoritative utterances and tried to give it a societal shape. New patterns of cultural behaviour were transmitted and endorsed within an extended community. The site on which these addresses are to be investigated are primarily the Nikāya texts and the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Theravāda collection.

The Pāli Buddhist suttas known as the Nikāyas, the four principal texts within the Sutta Piṭaka -the Dīgha, the Majjhima, the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara and the Vinaya Piṭaka also from the Theravāda collection were originally oral literature- dating roughly from the fourth century BCE, when they were taking shape as recognizable ‘texts’ and were set down in writing shortly before the beginning of the common Era. Most scholars had assumed that these parts of the Theravāda canon contain the oldest sources for the study of Indian Buddhism. Their assumptions have been derived

from the evidence of the Sinhalese chronicles, which state that the Pāli canon was written down in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmiṇī (29-17 BCE) and it was brought to Sri Lanka during the reign of Aśoka.² According to the tradition of the chronicles, a complete canon of sacred texts was compiled on the occasion of the third council, at the time of Aśoka. It is certain that, at that time the saṃgha was divided into several schools. This was a period of ideological contestations and therefore it is possible that the need for holding on to a notion of a fixed body of texts became more important and claims to uphold the original utterances of the Buddha had become more palpable.

This assumption also stems from internal evidences from the Pāli Canon itself which seem to indicate that major chunks of the Sutta and the Vinaya Piṭakas were compiled in a pre-Aśokan North India and proves its antiquity and authenticity. This is the framework suggested by T.W. Rhys-Davids³, K.R. Norman⁴ and Richard Gombrich.⁵ Thus the accepted framework placed the earlier portions of the Pāli Canon around the middle of the 3rd century BCE. But this time-range has been challenged time and again. In more recent times Gregory Schopen takes up a critical view of this time-range and asserts that the Pāli texts have been preserved in very late manuscripts and can hardly contain evidence of a time before 5th century CE, when the major commentaries were being written.⁶ Most recently, Alexander Wynne, taking a cue from K.R. Norman and Richard Gombrich has argued on the basis of certain internal evidence that the Pāli Canon had an early pre-Aśokan closure.⁷

If we accept this framework proposed by Wynne we can trace the trajectory of these oral texts. In the first phase we have the creation of the discourses which were then disseminated verbatim, recited, taught and learnt by heart. In the next phase this memory had to be contextualized, each memory

thread had to be reiterated with reference to specific settings. As we shall see, this process started with the coming of organised monastic Buddhism and the attempts of the saṃgha to link itself to temporal events. This would initiate the process of narrativisation of memory and appropriate doses of stylization. The narrative context, framing of the content and mode of delivery had to be kept flexible and variable to highlight interchange of views in different situations, reaching out to an expanding and ranked community. Thus, even before the compilation of the suttas and the making of separate collections the process of narrativisation had begun. These early attempts of narrativisation would leave its imprint on finished ‘texts’, where successive phases of narrative patterns are found in fossilized forms.

Up to the middle of the twentieth century the situation as far as Buddhist studies were concerned were relatively simple. Everything seemed cut and dried- When the Buddha lived and died, what he had preached and how he had preached and how his followers recited his words and handed them over to the next line of preachers and also about the three joint recitations were held during the two centuries or more after his death. What stirred up this intense interest in Buddhism was the status of Buddhism as a ‘world religion’. The Orientalists were excited to discover a large Asian religion, with a specific founder, a verifiable history and a concrete geographical presence. They were also enraptured to find a seemingly integrated body of texts instead of scattered sacred fragments not welded together by any logical thread and with dispersed ideological contents.

In general, books about Buddhism written at that time tended to be based exclusively on Pāli source material, partly because of the chequered history of British involvement in Sri Lanka and Burma, which had brought British missionaries and civil servants into close contact with Theravāda Buddhism. With the publication of Pāli canonical texts and commentarial

literature and with the enterprise of en masse translation of the texts in English set in motion, it seemed that all problems in Buddhism had been solved. The dominant propensity was to think that the Pāli sources gave the most reliable picture of early Buddhism, being the oldest and the most complete. While Sanskrit sources, being mainly Mahāyāna, were late and suspect. This view has been made untenable by the discovery of Sanskrit non-Mahāyāna material in Gilgit and Turfan and the recognition the merit of the works of schools preserved in Tibetan and Chinese translations from Sanskrit. The most exciting discovery of all, the oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts originating in Gandhāra have now come to light, dating back to 1st century BCE.⁸ As the collection is still being processed, it is difficult to access full texts for comparison. So far, only individual suttas are accessible. Thus, building a general frame of analysis for different modes of addresses and analysing the functions of separate Nikāyik collections is not possible. As larger parts of the texts begin to come to light, new vistas will open in the field of textual studies and new cultural material is bound to surface as well.

In E.J. Thomas's third edition of *The Life of The Buddha* attention was drawn to the fact that Buddhist study should also focus on establishing the fact of a Sanskrit canon parallel to the Pāli. He was the first to make a plea for determining the actual relations between Pāli scriptures and the recensions of the other Indian schools.

Outside Britain the situation was quite different. There was less emphasis on Pāli sources. Etienne Lamotte's *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indie* was based upon Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese as well as Pāli sources. In Germany, a strong school of Sanskrit Buddhist studies was surfacing based mainly on materials from Turfan. Since the middle of the twentieth century this material is being published and is being translated into German. The most

influential being Heinrich Luder's *Beobachtungen uber die Sprache des buddhisichen Urkanons* by Ernst Waldschmidt in 1954 with its collection of eastern dialect forms in Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit, where observations were made on the morphological features identified as belonging to the Urkanon.

In this case too, the problem is that full texts are not accessible. Apart from the Dharmapada genre, any comparative investigation cannot be undertaken systematically. The comparative study of individual suttas of the prose Nikāyas can be made, as more and more material of the Turfan collection is published. The field however, is so enormous that mostly collaborative efforts can yield concrete findings.

Prior Researches

All prior researches on the Pāli collections while very exhaustive and analytically sound, have been concerned with the stratification or the authenticity of the utterances or have focused on facets of Buddhist thought. Outside the boundaries of Pāli literary tradition, Laurie Patton, Brian Black, Alf Hiltebeitel and Michael Nichols have done sterling work to project face -to -face conversation and dialogue as defining features of South Asian traditional texts, rituals and practices. All of them have foregrounded the phenomenon of multi-vocality in the domain of religion and emphasized on the role of performed and written dialogues. Our present research has tried to adopt these models and broaden the framework of analysis. Apart from looking at the modes of the addresses themselves and their constructive principles, this study focuses on the disseminator of the addresses, the addressee or the recipient and tries to situate them within

the communicative space where these addresses are assembled and disseminated.

Laurie Patton in a recent article titled ‘The Frogs have Raised Their Voice: *R̥g Veda* 7.103 as a Poetic Contemplation of Dialogue’ (2015), has picked a single dialogic unit from the *R̥g Veda* and has argued that the said unit is a commentary on the act of conversation itself and thus reveals the mechanisms of the creating and articulating multiple voices both within and beyond the textual ambience.

Brian Black’s work entitled *Priests, Kings and Women in the Early Upaniṣads* (2014), is itself a fascinating exploration into the conversations carried out between various scholastic groups as a distinct discursive practice. He has focused principally on the phenomenon of public debate as a social and cultural phenomenon. All these conversations are argumentative in tone and encapsulate contemporary social tensions. At the same time, he has brought in conversations with women which are mostly placid and toned down, excepting one exceptional conversation featuring Gargī Vācaknavī. Yet, Black argues that these conversations with women though seemingly insipid are actually laden with tension and reveal the ideological scaffolding of male subjectivity that the texts were aiming to prop up.

Alf Hiltebeitel in an article (‘Dialogue and Apostrophe: A Move by Vālmīki?’, 2015), has made a comparison between the complex dialogic network of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* and argues that the *Rāmāyaṇa* has a dialogic frame which is as complex as the *Mahābhārata* and are addressed to multiple listeners on several plains.

Michael Nichols in his article ‘Bowing to the Buddha: The Relationship between the Literary and the social dialogue in the Nikāyas’ (2015), picks

out Buddha's conversation with the Brāhmaṇas, deities and the Jainas to analyse different rhetorical strategies adopted by the Buddha in the Nikāya texts. He has focused on some handpicked conversations as the scope of the article had to be narrowed down. But this article has brilliantly captured the saṅghic ambience within which the dialogues took shape and identified the presence of the speaker and the addressee within this context. The analytical framework of looking beyond the literary dialogues and identifying them as models of social conversations has been adopted as an interpretative tool in the present study.

K.N. Jayatilleke in his ground-breaking work, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (1963), has traced the development of the institution of debate and verbal duel in the early Upaniṣad. He further traces a correspondence of these dialogic devices with the ones in the early Theravāda Pāli texts.

As far as the early Theravāda texts are concerned, two very important works on the composition and transmission of the texts have worked out the theoretical aspects of the formation of literary genres within the Theravāda collection. The first one is Mark Allon's study of the pericopes and mnemonic devices in the Dīgha Nikāya. In an article entitled 'The Oral Composition and Transmission of Early Buddhist Texts' (1997) he mainly discusses the formulaic expressions and mnemonic devices within the Dīgha Nikāya. The pericopes or building blocks were the compositional elements of the oral texts of the Buddhist collection. By studying the pericopes and mnemonic devices and comparing them with the Homeric compositional units Allon points out the propensity and compulsion for verbatim transmission within the early Buddhist tradition. The second article is by Alexander Wynne who again elaborates on the issue of transmission. He has stressed upon the collaborative effort of the Saṃgha to ensure the continuity of the texts as authentic utterances. He uncovers

internal evidence from the texts themselves as they convey the history their own transmission and circulation and opines that after an initial breathing space the texts were transmitted within the Samghic network in a mostly non-performative mode.

Recently Bruno Galasek in his unpublished dissertation has done a very interesting study ‘On Presenting Characters and the representation of Persons: A Narratological Study of the Characters in Narrative Suttas of the Majjhima Nikāya’ (2016). He identifies the archetypes and the literary characters and analyses the phenomenon of after-images they create. But he has deliberately chosen a narrower scope and basing his work exclusively on the Majjhima Nikāyas does not look at the Nikāyik programme as a whole.

An unpublished thesis by Tyson Joseph Yost on ‘Anthologizing the Buddhists: A Study of Avadāna Narratives and the Communities that Read Them in Early Medieval China’ (2013), sought to explore the functions of the Avadāna genre in Buddhist practice and also tried identify the ambience within which these anthologies were created. In trying to delineate the communities which translated and compiled the texts he has brought in the notion of a wider interpretive community who not only read and interpreted the texts but also participated in shaping the texts. This ‘reader-oriented’ perception of the texts has helped us to attempt to identify the contours of similar interpretive communities as far as the early Theravāda texts are concerned. Using this theoretical frame-work we have tried to understand the notion of the extended communicative space within our scope.

Naomi Appleton in her book *Jataka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism: Narrating the Bodhisatta Path* (2010), has brought in the issue of the audience in texts, as well as the theoretical framework of narrativisation,

but she has focused exclusively on the Pāli Jātaka collection. Her main contribution is foregrounding the role of the saṃgha, as a collective entity, as the custodians and disseminators of the stories. She literally breaks the stereotype of looking at the narratives as conduits of communication with the laity and shows how the stories could be invested with multiple meanings and could have multifarious roles to play within the saṃgha. Recently, in an article, ‘Buddha as Storyteller: The Dialogic Setting of Jātaka stories’ (2015), she has developed her argument further. This time she has depicted the hegemonic position of the monks within the early Buddhist order as the recipients of the stories. She has also brought in the issue of the exclusion of the bhikkhunīs from the charmed circle of the audience.

Kumkum Roy, in various articles has sought to develop a new methodology for retrieving lost voices of history. This has prompted her to look at unconventional sources from unconventional perspectives and also to read conventional texts from a new and unconventional perspective. She has not gone into piecemeal reconstruction of events or sought to draw out nuggets of historical information from a given text. Instead, she has worked on a methodology of understanding particular literary genres and their multiple contexts. She has focused on the familiar collection of Pāli Jātakas and the not so familiar collection of Therīgāthā to understand broader social structures and institutional edifices like the issues of political authority or gender relations. The issues of visibility and silence in the sources that she has brought in, as far as the marginal sections of the society are concerned, especially women and the labouring people, have been adopted as working models by researchers who work with early Indian texts. The way she has fleshed out the interpretative process of identifying

voices within ancient texts, especially in the Therīgāthā, has been particularly enlightening for our research.

This research has used analytical frames of works on social processes to understand the context of the addresses.

Uma Chakravarti, in *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (1987), has probed into the social context of early Buddhism and has sought to analyse it from multiple perspectives. Equipped with a thorough reading of the Pāli sources Chakravarti on one hand looks at the various social categories on a micro level, on the other hand, she very deftly sifts through the ideational constructs projected in the texts. She also very effectively combs the sources for a reconstruction of the ordinary and the quotidian within the broader framework of relations of production.

Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett in their work *The Sociology of Early Buddhism* (2003), veer away from the mainstream take on Buddhism and look beyond the confines of the texts to argue that Buddhist texts took shape in a context where change was slow and gradual within an expanding society and a comparatively stable and prosperous economy. Their main contention is based on the question of the social anchorage of early Buddhism. They further argue that the period of the rise of Buddhism was one of expansion as the rising city-based kingdoms were reaching out to encroach upon hinterland communities. Major cultural adjustments had to be made as the inhabitants of outlying settlements found their lives encroached upon by traders, tax gatherers and war bands. Sometimes they were linked by some cultural factors, sometimes they were not. Here they argue that the figure of the peripatetic holy man, who had rejected any stake in the institutions of power and authority and could straddle both the worlds, emerged as the alternative symbol of power and an agent of

acculturation. Thus, the original message of Buddhist texts which pleaded for an austere simple way of life and complete detachment, where the monk was asocial even anti-social, became a mediator between the urban state and remoter local cultures.

Jeffery Samuels in his article ‘Views of Householders and Lay Disciples in the *Sutta Piṭaka*: A Reconsideration of the Lay-Monastic Opposition’ (1999), has argued that at least in the formative period of the Theravāda texts, the boundaries between the monastic community and the lay followers were hazy and volatile, with the lay community playing an almost equal participatory role on the intellectual forum. In our study, we have tried to show that rather than collapsing the boundaries between the monastic and lay circles, an authoritative discourse was evolved particularly in the Aṅguttara and Saṃyutta Nikāyas, as well as in the Vinaya Piṭaka, to reiterate the difference between the communities. However, as a broader communicative space was curved out, moral and intellectual agents were nurtured, who were co-opted from the monastic as well as the lay community. The figures of these agents who straddled both the worlds, percolated and disseminated certain cultural mores which had a wider resonance.

Kunal Chakrabarti’s seminal work entitled the *Religious Process: The Purāṇas and the Making of a Regional Tradition* has furnished us with dynamic interpretative tools to be utilised within different contexts. Chakrabarti has investigated the Upapurāṇas taking shape in Bengal and its surrounding areas within a time-bracket of 8th to 13th century C.E. and has very adroitly put together a compelling historical narrative which captures the process through which the existing practices and ideological systems of the people within a given region interacted with an authoritative Brahmanical tradition. As far as our study is concerned, the most

interesting facet of this account has been the illustration of how these texts operated at multiple levels as conduits of authoritative utterances.

Apart from the above-mentioned works we have drawn from seminal works on the Pāli suttas as a distinctive genre nurtured within the monastic order and the interaction of this tradition with the bigger processes of history.

Romila Thapar in her monumental work on Early Indian historical traditions (*Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India*, 2013), has embarked on an extremely important theoretical exposition. She has made a comprehensive analysis of all kinds of genres spanning over the wide horizon of Early Indian textual forms with excursus into unconventional and unfamiliar sources. She has argued very convincingly that such genres could contain an embedded awareness about the past, that has to be prised open with newly honed interpretative tools. In a lengthy discussion on the records of the Buddhist saṃgha which had a volatile yet tangible engagement with historical processes, she foregrounds the role of the community of monks in preserving and disseminating a sense of the past based on logical reconstruction. This sense of the past goes against the grain of Buddhist understanding of impermanence and passage of time, philosophically speaking. Yet, paradoxically as Thapar argues, this sense has a root in the Buddhist notion of dependent origination, according to which nothing takes place in complete isolation. Thus, a hidden demand for sequential narration was combined with the imperatives of the organized community of monks and its engagement with temporal events.

G.C. Pandey's voluminous work *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism* (1957), adroitly handles the problem of stratification of the four major Nikāya texts. The complexity of the source is brought out in sharp relief as

Pandey discusses the texts from a micro level and carries out an analysis of individual suttas. From his work it becomes clear that not only do the separate text the real contribution of multiple layers but individual discourses themselves contain several layers and are amalgamations of older and newer materials. The study of the composite suttas underline the real contribution of the author. A study of the context and the doctrinal aspects of the Buddhist religion gives the study a historical perspective. But the real strength of the work is meticulous textual study and delineating a chronology of the suttas. Any study that tries to look at the addresses from a historical point of view needs to start its investigation from this work as it helps one to understand the archaeology of the texts, the functions of the separate collections and evolution of the modes of address.

K.R. Norman in *Pali Literature* (1983) does a meticulous textual study and explores the problem of authenticity of the utterances. In a later study, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism* (1997), he has focused on the problem of the transmission of the discourses. The issue of orality and literacy in defining the precise moments within the process of the formation of the texts is of utmost importance. He has also explained the idea of the canon and the process of canonization of the discourses. Major theoretical issues concerning the creation of the collection is dealt with by Norman in a way that is succinct, yet has deep engagements with the processes of history.

Richard Gombrich in *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (1988), has foregrounded the practices and precepts of Theravāda Buddhism and stressed the importance of relating Buddhist texts and practices to other Indian religions. This delineates an intellectual context but the context is mainly seen through the prism of the doctrines.

Research Questions

The present research will focus on the composition of certain modes of address in the early Theravāda Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka. However, rather than delving into the constructive principles of the addresses, the emphasis will be on the modes and methods of the addresses. The speakers and the recipients of these addresses are also to be identified and situated within an expanding communicative space during the period between 4th century BCE to first century BCE. The notion of a wider interpretive community which read, interpreted and directly and indirectly shaped the addresses, has been foregrounded in this study.

This communicative space delineated in the Theravāda Pāli texts is very complex and multi-layered. The discourses and dialogues contained especially in the Nikāyas break free from the confines of the ritualistic domain or the royal courts. They take place in the monastic set up as is only to be expected, but also in obscure villages, city-halls, local shrines and roadside groves. However, the understanding of this communicative space goes beyond the physical plane and delineates an intellectual arena involving the ranked community of monks and intellectual agents and recipients outside the order of the monks. This, as we shall see, distinguishes the intellectual vista of the Pāli texts from the early Upaniṣadic one. The oldest Upaniṣads are tentatively the Brhadāraṇyaka and the Chandogya. Both were largely pre-Buddhist and have been placed within a time-bracket of 7th-6th century BCE and are supposed to have engagements with a broadening geographical horizon. The interactive dimension of the two Upaniṣads is reflected in the discourses, pedagogic dialogues and narratives that revolve round one or more discursive axes. As we shall see, the phenomenon of the public debate broadened these discursive frames further. Yet, the content and context of the Upaniṣadic

discourses are exclusive. The exclusivity of the Upniṣadic discourse that involved the chosen teacher and the pupil (even though the teacher and the pupil were terms that connoted a broadening framework) was replaced in the Buddhist texts by speech-acts that were essentially public and tentatively speaking, universal.

The speaker and the addressee were also complex constructs. The speaker represented the differentiated scholastic community of the monks and could be posited in multiple congregations and assemblies. The texts further project an intellectual vista that was realistic and relatable. The early Buddhist Nikāyik discourses and also the Vinaya encapsulated a speculative approach which was geared to contemporary social and moralistic concerns more directly.

Elaborate norms of individual and social behaviour were also fleshed out in the four extant Dharmasūtra texts of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vaśiṣṭha. According to Patrick Olivelle, these four texts, which represented a distinctive literary genre, can be placed within a time bracket of c.3rd century B.C.E. to c.1st century C.E. This roughly tallies with the time-frame of Theravāda Nikāya and Vinaya compilations. The connotation of 'Dharma' in these texts within a wider spectrum of meanings focused on appropriate behaviour in ritualistic as well as in moral/social domains. A notion of jurisprudence is also immanent in the texts. Transgressions of Dharma entailed all kinds of sanctions. The Dharmasūtra tradition is not monolithic or static. They encompass dispersed and divergent ideological materials and marks of complex negotiations are visible within the body of the texts. Being normative texts, they depicted the ideal rather than the real, which is well-known. However, it is necessary to reiterate that the discourses were directed towards the higher caste male, especially a Brāhmaṇa male audience, who were also

the creators of this tradition. The Buddhist texts, on the other hand, as we have seen, have a broader and multi-layered scope. The seemingly organic ties between the author and the audience in the Dharmasūtra texts were replaced by a more purposive and thoughtfully crafted communicative space envisaged within the universe of Buddhist texts.

The Nikāyik programme as a whole has been explored tracing separate function for each text and shifts in modes of communication. G.C.Pande's exhaustive work on the Nikāyas has illustrated that the suttas were made up of heterogenous material and the texts thus were stratified. He has also shown how a meticulous examination of the material concerned can help us to identify the order and various strata of the text.⁹ But the scheme of fashioning out an overarching structure which accommodated different models of address are laid out in the texts. Following Roland Barthes, it can be said that, each address can represent a model.¹⁰ But the texts sought to create a great structure which obliterated the difference between these various models of communication. This process was adopted by the Buddhists through the creation of a hegemonic ideological framework. For the present study, the texts are the sites where the addresses are laid out. It intends to explore the Nikāyik programme as a conduit of moral ideology, a reservoir of authoritative utterances, on the other hand, these utterances were blended into a format of polite discourse which sought to engage with the wider society on different levels through different forms of speech act. From a very early phase, we have authoritative utterances coming from a clearly defined community of propagandist monks, in the next phase we have intensifying notions of power, underlining moral leadership and on the next level, we have carefully crafted authoritative discourses, particularly in the Samyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas.

The Vinaya Piṭaka also was rooted in institutional morality - Outward morality cultivated by training had been laid down for the monks in a network of relationships with other monks, the laity and the wider society as a whole. While the Sutta Piṭaka was preoccupied with the subjective states to be experienced, the Vinaya reflected an objective attitude. It has to be asserted that the Vinaya articulated a propensity for positive conduct and thus sought to delineate a wider fabric of appropriate behavior. This phenomenon was embedded in the sense of a self-aware and well-defined community, rooted in a specific spatial-temporal context and it emerges as a tangible category in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The nature of the Buddhist order as a custodian and disseminator of authoritative speech acts has been understood and investigated from this perspective.

As a fold on this comes the phenomenon of inter-generational intellectual networks forged under conditions of creative rivalry, which created and sustained the social and institutional edifice of the intellectual systems themselves. This creative rivalry was articulated internally within the Buddhist order and also spilled out of the order to engage with a wide range of intellectual systems. The texts present the act of public speaking as a distinct moral practice that exudes calmness even in polemical situations. Throughout the authoritative utterances were cast into a polite mode of delivery. The emphasis is on speaking in a pleasant manner to various social groups. This is to argue that, the early Buddhist texts were pleading for a polite mode of discourse and were trying to underscore specific patterns of cultural behavior, which could be emulated and consumed in a broader context. We shall also see that this plea resonates in later texts like the Jātaka collection, the Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā in distinctive ways.

Methodology

Firstly, Analysis of specific modes of address in the four principal Theravāda Nikāyas and Vinaya Piṭaka. On the micro-level, it involves, identification and analysis of the addresses and an assessment of the mode of delivery and content. Here, by ‘addresses’ we introduce the general term to indicate all forms of communication- discourses, dialogic devices and narratives. Let us be very clear, that in the present study the term ‘discourse’ has been used as a distinct form of verbal communication and connotes a formal and orderly articulation of ideas. When we emphasize the notions of performance and action, the term ‘speech-act’ has been used. This term projects a verbal utterance in terms of the speaker’s intentions and also the impact it has on the recipient.

Secondly, Historical method which involves a critical analysis of the primary source and assessing the cultural information contained in them. The addresses in the early Pāli collection have an array of precursors in the narratives and dialogic devices in the ṚgVeda Saṃhitā and in the pedagogical devices, discourses and dialogues in the early Upaniṣads. A comparative analysis with the earlier compositions has been undertaken to situate the early Pāli addresses within a broader framework of early Indian compositional history, on the macro level. The delineation of a socio-religious context helps to delve into the purposive nature of the authoritative utterances contained in the texts. Later texts, also within the Theravāda collection, especially the Jātakapāli, the Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā have been considered to assess the spill-over and the resonance of the utterances in the later compositions.

Thirdly, Tools of cultural Anthropology and folkloristics has been used to understand the process of oral composition and dissemination. The element

of performance in the early oral texts can be assessed by these tools. However, in our work, the phenomenon of verbatim transmission within religious contexts is more important. These two methods of oral transmission in the creation of accretive texts have been explored to understand the context and constructive principles of the addresses.

Western Theories on Oral Composition and Dissemination and the Early Indian context

In the study of genres in ancient societies one cannot evade the question of verbal quality of the early genres and the primacy of oral speech. It is problematic to talk about ‘preliterate’ societies sweepingly. But even in a partially literate society the spoken word is still alive and the written texts have to be enmeshed into a world of sounds.

Walter Ong has asserted that, there is a distinctiveness of the spoken language and writing does not simply represent the spoken language in visible forms.¹¹ Some characteristics of orality- based thought and expressions can however be gleaned from the written texts as we receive them.

However, one must keep in mind that the notion of a primary oral culture is very difficult to grasp with the flow of time. Malinowsky has argued that within primary oral cultures language and word are embedded in action more than with thought. This comes with the belief that the spoken words have great potency and power.¹² In a primary oral culture, to solve the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought accurately, the thinking has to follow a mnemonic pattern, which is rhythmic and proportioned, laden with repetitions and antonyms,

alliterations and formulaic expressions. According to Malinowsky, the context of any oral text has to be understood, as the context comes before the text. In the study ancient oral texts which sprouted from a long-vanished social ambience, the real problem lies in reconstructing the context by looking through the prism of the text. Thus some common structural features of an oral text have to be understood at the very outset.

Non-formulaic, non-patterned thought in a primary oral society could of course exist. But it is impossible to retrieve. All thought is formulaic in a sense, putting experience into words. But the formulas characterizing orality are more elaborate. Thus, there are some characteristic features that mark out the oral composition.

- i. The compositions are more integrative than analytical because analysis or breaking up thought without a system of writing is not feasible. It is also highly repetitive, though done aesthetically. Since in primary oral societies knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes, oral societies invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously for years. This need can stifle innovations, though new narrative devices are brought up to relate to the audience in various situations. This does not entail that the oral and the aural was prelogical, even illogical. Oral thought can conceptualize and express causal relationships or produce lengthy sequences, but these sequences are not analytical.
- ii. Arranging knowledge in a written form involves a distance from the lived experience. Oral cultures must conceptualize or glean knowledge with more or less close reference to the lived experience. Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for objectivity. The narrator, audience and characters are

so inextricably bound together that the process of narrating and listening, telling and learning becomes participatory and empathetic. It is true that the oral societies preserve archaic notions and words. But they also chop off the memories thought to be redundant. Thus, as an oral 'text' is uttered in performance through the ages some of the ideas are lost forever. Some archaic notions and words are weaved into and retained in the text because they can be imbued with current usage. Thus, meanings are altered and imageries are infused with new significance.

- iii. Foley has argued that spoken word forms people into close-knit groups. When a speaker is addressing his/her audience, the audience becomes a unity and identify with each other and the speaker.¹³ The community thus has an internal homogeneity yet also has an awareness of its distinctiveness. According to Foley, this phenomenon is more pronounced within religious communities. The force of the oral world relates in a special way with the sacral. In most religions the spoken word functions explicitly in ceremonial and devotional articulations. Even when sacred texts in written form develop within organized religious systems the primacy and the authenticity of the oral are manifested in many ways.

Verbal memory skill is without any doubt a valuable asset in oral cultures. It operates in different way than memory would work in a literate society. In a literate society the act of memorization is done with reference to a written text. Time and again it is possible to go back to the text and to check if the memorization is really verbatim. In an oral culture with no written text to fall back on, the only way to test the accurateness of any

transmission was to arrange simultaneous recitation by two or more persons and becomes a collaborative effort. These feats of memory by ancient narrators are remarkable and cannot be compared to memorization of the texts.

In assessing more realistically the nature of verbal memory in primary oral cultures, ground –breaking work had been done by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. Parry’s work with the Homeric epics demonstrated that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were primarily oral creations. But this discovery does not underline verbatim memorization. Parry discovered that virtually every distinctive feature of Homeric poetry was enforced on it by oral method of composition. The two epics were strictly metrical. Parry showed that all the hexameters were made up of formulae, each formula was moulded to fit the pattern of the meter. Thus, metrically tailored formulae controlled the composition of the Greek epics and were the actual ‘building blocks’ of the composition. The poet had a vast repertoire of these building blocks and could fabricate correct and apposite metrical lines. These formulae could be shuffled conveniently without interfering with the story-line or with the tone of the narrative.¹⁴

Lord’s field-work among the illiterate bards in former Yugoslavia demonstrated that renditions based on oral memorization are by no means stable. Rendition can vary from one recitation to another even in the case of recitation by the same individual.¹⁵ Thus, this theory of performance was the model that was used to explain the problem of oral composition and oral transmission.

However, later works of Sherzer and others underlined instances of more exact verbatim memorization within a ritual context, although the spread and length of the formula is not comparable to earlier examples,¹⁶ it

represents a single feat of verbatim memorization. Thus, the importance of the ritual context came to be recognized and buttressed through Sherzer's own field work and a different working model could be evolved.

In the early Indian context, these two methods of oral transmission could only make sense if we take into account the chequered history of accretive oral texts from the earliest period. The R̥gVedic narrative verses which were supposed to have been composed, uttered and transmitted within the ritual context of a sacrifice, originally may have been created and circulated by the itinerant kavis, Māgadhas and Sūtas through performance, each rendition being different from the other. As the narratives passed into the repository of śrotriya priests, they were incorporated into the ritual cycles and were fitted into the format of verbatim memorization and were uttered and disseminated as stable oral texts. On the other hand, as far as the textual evidence suggests, the Theravāda Nikāyas and especially the Vinaya Piṭaka originated in a situation where verbatim memorization and transmission were essential, amidst a sense of acute anxiety that the original discourses of the Teacher will be lost. This was mostly true in the formative period, as will be discussed, when an organised and well-defined community of monks and nuns were identified as the custodians and disseminators of the discourses. The question can also be raised, whether some of the later genres, especially the Jātaka narratives opened up opportunities for further experimentation and innovation and whether a performative element could be associated with the specialised reciters of the genre- the Jātaka Bhāṇakas.

As we try to identify the precursors to the early Pāli tradition in the Vedic Dāna Stutis, Gāthās, Nārāsaṁsīs and Ākhyānas, we must take into consideration, that they were composed within a very different socio-

cultural milieu, in which the public sacrificial rituals were of pivotal importance. U.N. Ghoshal has asserted that contrary to conventional opinions, these narratives were not simply fillers between separate ritual cycles, rather they were embedded in the rituals and were essential components of the texts. The arena of the sacrifice was not simply a forum of religious articulations or even a ritualized forum of economic exchange. As we shall see, Romila Thapar, in a recent article has delved into the functions of these distinctive genres of communication and commented at length on their connections with the emerging contours of power.

2. The Precursors: The Tradition of Communication

Narrative Units in the ṚgVeda

Statements are often made about verbatim oral memorization of the Vedic hymns in India, presumably in complete independence of any texts. The ṚgVedic Saṃhitā represents a lengthy collection and is composed and then compiled within a time range of 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE. The original settings of the hymns, prayers and liturgical formulae that make up the text have no correspondence with our times. In the light of recent researches, the questions crop up as to how this enormous feat of verbatim memorization could have been accomplished without the existence of written texts. In point of fact however, the Vedic texts have a complex history and many variants, which suggest that they most probably did not crystallize from an absolutely verbatim oral tradition.

The Vedic corpus too was transmitted within a ritualistic context where the power of the oral utterance held sway. Because the words uttered were laden with such power these compositions were the special preserve of the

Brāhmaṇas. For long periods these hymns were transmitted orally, as a compendium of manuals for rituals and exegeses.

Michael Witzel opines that, verses were finally compiled and edited in various recensions in the early 1st millennium BCE, like the Śākalya recension which is now in common use.¹⁷ These recensions could have chronological overlaps with some sections of the later Vedas.

Regardless of their chronological uncertainties, Witzel asserts it can be fairly safe to attribute a wide geographical horizon for the compositions comprising northern Afghanistan, Pakistan, north-western India, with the riverine plains of Punjab as its core.¹⁸ The corpus was compiled keeping in mind possibilities of interactions with people of diverse origins. The societies reflected in the corpus were not homogenous and evolved in tune with multilingual situation. The presence of non Indo-European elements in Vedic Sanskrit testifies to that.¹⁹

Theoretically, there was a close scrutiny as far as inclusion of the Vedic reciters was concerned. Because the texts were acclaimed to be divinely revealed, only priests of high birth and those speaking the superior Indo-Aryan tongue could recite the hymns. However, there are references to low born Brāhmaṇas, who were probably co-opted from the non-Vedic people.²⁰ This presupposes a comingling of people and an entry point for cultural notions and practices from various sources.

Even with multiple recensions and interpolations and the theoretical possibility of a certain openness of the ṚgVeda, they were ritual texts their transmission and preservation had to be carried out within a relatively closed circle, where in theory few interpolations could be allowed. As an oral tradition this was in contrast to the more open oral tradition of the later epics.

The ritual content of the ṚgVeda apparently made it inevitable that the authors would be the priests who performed the rituals and these were the Brāhmaṇa śrotriya priests, individuals and families, who had become ritual specialists. Romila Thapar argues that overlapping of authorship is discernible as far as the priests and the poets are concerned. Mention is made of the *kavi* who was most probably the priests or the bard (*sūta*). Many of the eulogies were composed by the poets who have been mentioned by name. Some of them were poet and śrotr combined.²¹

The *Dāna stuti* hymns of the earliest sections of the ṚgVeda and the *gāthās*, *nārāśaṃsīs* and the *Ākhyānas* are narratives that are constructed to sing praises of the chief. Though they occur mainly within a ritual context, as they unfurl genealogies of particular descent groups or eulogize a king, they encapsulate contours of distinctive social postulates through recollections of the past within a specific context.

The narratives praising the king could have been uttered within two different contexts. One was the arena of the sacrifice where a large clan gathering could be expected. Another context could have been the court of the chief where the more prominent members of the clan would be present.

The *dāna stutis*, *gāthās* and *nārāśaṃsīs* of the ṚgVeda foreground a tradition that claim and seek to connect with persons and events in the past and communicate this in a convincing manner and acceptable format. The *ākhyāna* on the other hand represents a set of legends which could be retold and reasserted in different contexts for legitimization of appropriate authorities separated temporally. Later this particular tradition would be dominated by the Kaṇvas and the Bhārgavāṅgirasa Brāhmaṇa families, ousting the *sūtas* and the *māgadhas*, who were marginal to the ritualistic

tradition. As Romila Thapar asserts, earlier, the emphasis was on the hero-lauds. Later it would shift on to the yajñas.²²

In the clan society of the ṚgVeda remembering the past heroes as ancestors was important and the past was perceived in the listing and arranging of descent groups. It symbolized a very distinctive kind of ordering and arranging the past. The locus of this arranging the past was of course the arena of the public rituals. This is the site where the past was brought up again and again to legitimize the contemporary notions of authority and privilege. Those who carried out the largest and most profitable raids were also the patrons of the largest sacrifices. This provided scopes to contemporary warrior chiefs to be bestowed with a kind of identity steeped with power and privilege and cemented the bond between the Brāhmaṇa and the Rājanya.

Pargiter opines that, the tradition of the narratives lauding the rājanyas and the chief and acted as fillers between ritual cycles, most probably had a set of separate custodians, though whether it was a separate non-Sanskrit compilation, which was incorporated in the Vedic corpus is a matter of debate.²³ Though these narratives are believed to be incidental, fillers between ritualistic cycles, U.N.Ghoshal asserts, that the narratives were embedded in the rituals and were essential components within the texts.²⁴ But it can be asserted that the narrative tradition was always on the margins of the Ritualistic compendium. Maybe it was absorbed into the Vedic tradition to forge a connection with a past, because past imbued the present with power-laden identities.

This can be discerned in the Dāna Stuti of the ṚgVeda, which are mostly clustered in the eighth maṇḍala of the text. There are other compositions of this kind which are found in the First and the Tenth book of the text.

These are narratives in the sense that they look back to earlier chiefs and events centred round the ritual performance and the phenomenon of lavish gift-giving to the Brāhmaṇa. The principal themes permeating these eulogies are the motifs of battles and gifts. Here the erstwhile kings are singled out as ideal figures of authority and paragons as far as showering the Brāhmaṇas with gifts was concerned. Sudās Paijavana was one such generous soul. His praises have been sung in the seventh book of the text.²⁵ He was the conqueror and routed the Ten Kings in a pitched battle with the help of the Sṛñjayas. The vanquished kings were decried because they shied away from ritual performances and were evidently tight-fisted as far as dakṣinā to the priests were concerned. Though the notion of sacrificial fee was still nebulous in these early sections. Here the poets and the priests praise the current chief for his valour as well as for his munificence.

Discourses and Narratives in the Later Vedic Texts

The motif of giving and getting and the device of invoking past rulers to legitimize current actions find deeper expressions in the later Vedic texts. In texts like Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, continuity is forged by developing on the theme of dāna. On the other hand, the context of dāna had changed somehow in the later texts. The gāthas of the later Vedic texts shift further away from the battlefield and are more closely linked to the domain of yajña

The oldest prose narratives are found in the text. In fact it is a vast reservoir of narratives. Apart from the eulogies, the myth and the legend blossom in the Brāhmaṇa text, as the domain of ritual performance came to be foregrounded and yajñas were perceived as setting into motion the world processes both cosmic and material. The cosmogonic myths were related

to some ritual act or other. Each addition relating to the ritualistic paraphernalia required a story to elucidate and explain it. Thus, the old dialogue verse of Urvaśī and Purūravas appears again in the Brāhmaṇa text. The king struggles through all the travails of being separated from Urvaśī, but ultimately learns a new form of fire sacrifice from the Gandharvas which transforms him into a Gandharva. Thus he transcends the mundane world to be reunited with Urvaśī.²⁶

The early Upaniṣads were composed within an enormous land mass stretching from the Kuru-Pāñcāla region to the Kośala-Videha region. Witzel has opined in a study that the literary activity in the later Vedic period shifted east, mostly to the Kuru-Pāñcāla region, some of them even to the Kośala-Videha region.²⁷

The oldest Upaniṣads are tentatively the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chandogya. Both were largely pre-Buddhist because they contain earlier source materials. But tentatively these two texts have been placed within a time-bracket of 7th-6th century BCE ²⁸. Localization of these early texts is problematic because they are based on earlier compilations. However, the focus of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad seems to be the Videha region, where king Janaka plays an important role as does the sage Yajñavalkya. It is interesting that apart from the sections associated with Yajñavalkya, the text revolves round the Kuru-Pāñcāla region. In the text however, Videha becomes an important site of contestation for various schools of Vedic pedagogy. The triumph of the seer Yajñavalkya over all the seers of Kuru-Pāñcāla region underlines this phenomenon. On another level, the text also encapsulates the tussle between metaphysical preoccupations and rationalistic forces.

This was not simply due to large scale migration, but rather represents the movement of specific schools of Brāhmaṇas who aligned themselves with newly emerging ruling groups. While these elite groups could provide fresh opportunities of patronage for these Brāhmaṇical schools the Brāhmaṇas could give the aspiring kings claims to authority through ritual. According to Witzel the final portions of the Brāhmaṇa, which give the most elaborate descriptions of the royal rituals like aśvamedha and rājasūya were composed here.²⁹ The reorganization of the Vedic material in the east is reflected in the formal structure of the early Upaniṣads. What is novel is the presentation of the discourses as instructions of specific individuals. This can be explained in this movement to the east as the priestly groups were trying to make Vedic material relevant to a new kind of audience through dialogues and narratives. The other most interesting aspect of the narratives and the dialogues is that they still often have a sacrificial context, but focus on a completely different set of practices in contradistinction to the sacrifice. The practices fully developed by the narratives are teaching, debating or advising the king. It is not plausible that the sacrifices died out but yet its central importance in the texts is lost. The Brāhmaṇas in the texts survive by these new practices and criticize those who flaunt their Brāhmaṇahood through family ties and association with sacrifices.

The narratives in the texts are not just a way filling up the gaps between various cycles of rituals but they foreground direct transmission of knowledge, its context and the persons involved. This is not to say that it directly represents the historical situation. But it is the kind of literary realism that the narratives radiate that brings philosophy within the realm of the ordinary. In the doctrinal sections the philosophy is described in universal terms, the narrative frame situates philosophical knowledge within specific social situations. In order to attain knowledge and to

achieve the goals in this world and the next the individuals have to enter into dialogic relationship with others. Thus, this interactive dimension of the texts is very noticeable.

Though the Upaniṣadic texts are viewed as an extension of the broader Vedic corpus they were also products of a historical moment which saw shifting bases of power and new relations of production.

The issue of the authorship of the earliest Upaniṣads is also complicated. These texts were based on earlier anthologies and must have existed as independent texts before they were given shape as parts of the Vedic corpus. Some source texts are replicated in more than one Upaniṣad. The source texts included a plethora of dialogic devices, discourses and narratives and these are fleshed out by Brāhmaṇa promulgators like Yajñavalkya and Uddālaka Āruṇi. But some of these speech acts are attributed to prominent kings some of them from the Kośala-Videha region, such as Janaka, Ajātaśatru and Pravāhana Jaivali. Thus some of the most important discourses trace their origins to the kṣatriya groups. The Brāhmaṇa origin of the texts can hardly be refuted. Thus the construction of narratives and episodes to rope in the ruling groups who are attributed with direct authorship is a phenomenon to be carefully considered.

It can be argued that the new intellectual impetus came from active interaction between the priestly classes as well as the nobility of the newly emergent states. For historical analysis it is not that important to pin down which doctrine originated from the kṣatriya groups and which doctrines could be attributed to the Brāhmaṇas exclusively. The new religions like Buddhism and Jainism emerged roughly within the same geographical zone hardly a century later and the founders of these religions according to several traditions came from the royal classes. What we can definitely say

is that a new religious and intellectual ambience had evolved in the Kośala-Videha region and reflection of it could be seen in the new doctrines of the Upaniṣads.

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is closely linked with the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa thematically, ideationally and also through formal characteristics. The name itself indicates that the text is an Āraṇyaka and an Upaniṣad rolled into one. The text had gone through several editorial phases. Primarily it took shape as a loosely tied bundle of stories and dialogues pertaining to separate groups. Later various editors at various points of time must have made three separate collections out of them each having developed along a distinct trajectory. In the third phase, these three separate texts were stitched together and got more inflated and expanded. The first two sections have internal coherence and consistency of thought, while the third has dispersed content and can be identified as the supplementary part of the text.

In the text the narratives have come up with a disseminative purpose. That is why the stories cannot be mythical in complete sense of the term but mythic because it operates within the scope of the real.

Some of the figures who feature most prominently in the early Upaniṣads like Yajñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad were already around in the earlier texts. The Upaniṣadic narratives further develop these characters. Specific teachings accrue to the figure of these teachers. Some of the teachings are also downplayed, mostly of those who profess the values of sacrificial rituals. Figures like Yajñavalkya have a kind of life story attached to them. Yet this life embodies his teaching. He challenges the life of a priest who lives the life of a teacher and debates in court³⁰. Eventually he also walks away from his home without male heirs.

Satyakāma, who rivals Yajñavalkya on many occasions on the other hand, lives the life of a teacher and remains a married householder. Yet they both attain superior knowledge and develop as paradigmatic figures. Satyakāma is associated with the social space of the household, while Yajñavalkya is closer to the royal court and develops through his performance in the Brahmodya. Brahmodyas in the earlier texts like the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa were framed as a ritual dialogue and embedded in sacrificial performance. In the early Vedic parlance this dialogic device is vākovākya, or speech and counter-speech. As part of the ritual, these are ceremonial utterings to be memorised and enunciated as conventional performances.

This distinct practice of the debate in the early Upaniṣads on the other hand, is competitive and aggressive. The context of the debate frames the narratives whether it is a competition between two priests or a public tournament involving several people. Verbal contests reflected in earlier literature in the form of a riddle or a ceremonial utterance got dramatized in the early Upaniṣads and the focus is equally on the enigmatic question posed as well as on the incident of the debate itself. The brahmodyas emerging out of a ritual context are described in the Brāhmaṇa texts but in the Upaniṣads these are less of a scripted exchange as they are no longer a part of the ritual context. Also, they are more unrehearsed impromptu performances framed in analogical reasoning. The magical and ritual aspect of the dialogues is transcended in the Upaniṣads and becomes more empirical.

The economic dimension is also an undercurrent surfacing at intervals within the narratives. In every competition the stakes are high. Not only one loses his/her face and reputation, loads of material rewards also slip through the fingers once one loses a battle of wit. The narratives present the competitions as an arena where one could elevate his/her intellectual

authority and wealth. Thus, it is also more profitable than the practice of sacrifices. Thus, apart from being tactical orators these people were also cunning negotiators.

The other literary trope of the narratives is of course the Kṣatriya teaching the Brāhmaṇa. Rather than being a literal claim it is a narrative feature that makes the stories directly appealing to the ruling elite. Apart from being knowledgeable the king is also very generous to the Brāhmaṇa and in no way strives to break away from him. Even Yajñavalkya who is overbearing and ruthless to the contestant Brāhmaṇas is friendly with king Janaka. In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad the king is seen formally initiating Brahmanas, in other texts like Chāndogya this does not happen. Here again composed in the region of Videha and being somewhat removed from Kuru-Pāñcāla orthodoxy explains this trope in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. It is in this text that the motif of the brahmodya and the relationship between the king and the court priest gets more attention. We have to understand that this is the region which was the cradle of incipient territorial states where new notions of authority were emerging and being articulated through new forms of speech-acts.

The other set of dialogues set in the narrative pattern with a clearly fleshed out context is of course between teachers and students. The prototype of the teacher surfaces in these texts. Many of these teachers are known in the Brāhmaṇa texts and are associated with sacrifices. However, in the Upaniṣads as already discussed, they are linked to specific discourses. Thus, these teachers and students reappear in the texts within a broadened narrative frame.

Throughout all the dialogues between the teacher and the students the most important teachings concern the self. The teachers have their own

understandings of self and employ different pedagogical methods. Uddālaka teaches Śvetaketu through observation and demonstration , Naciketas has to go through difficult tests to learn from Yama. All these methods reinforce the importance of a proper teacher and a proper pedagogical lineage. The pedagogical dialogues reiterate particular modes of address and behavior that regulates the flow of knowledge. The interesting thing is that learning from unconventional sources is not always ruled out.

The most unlikely teacher-student pairs are paraded before the Upaniṣadic audience and the most varied forms of modes of imparting knowledge are adhered to. Naciketas learns the meaning of death from Death himself.³¹ Yama and Naciketas are separated by birth, caste, traditional norms of pedagogy and inhabit separate worlds. Yet he is welcomed as an honored Brāhmaṇa guest in the abode of Death and receives answers to his three questions. The Upaniṣadic pupil is not only persistent and steadfast in his enquiry, the main characteristic feature that distinguishes him is the element of curiosity that drives him to the farthest regions and motivates him to seek knowledge from unconventional sources. On the other hand, Satyakāma, who has no inkling about what his lineage might be, is still able to learn from a conventional source and establish himself as an authoritative teacher.³²

Transmission of knowledge in the Upaniṣads involves definitional utterances and explanations that would percolate certain moral culture and practices in the world and not only be churned around in the sphere of thought. This phenomenon can only come about through correct transmission. In the two earliest Upaniṣads, the true knowledge was to be imparted only to the putra or the antevāsin.³³ In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad full lists of pedagogical lineages were given.³⁴ Thus, while there

is an awareness in the Upaniṣads that one is moving away from traditional knowledge, the pedagogical lineages are traced to Prajāpati and Brahma and a long line of teacher-pupil pairs are traced back to them. In the case of Śvetaketu, Uddālaka Āruṇi is both his father and his teacher. However, he is not Śvetaketu's first teacher. Uddālaka asserts that one is not a true Brāhmaṇa merely through birth but attains Brāhmaṇahood through hard-earned knowledge.³⁵ This involves taking up the life of a celibate. Śvetaketu studies traditional Vedic knowledge and returns home full of himself. It is only then that Uddālaka trains him in the knowledge of the self, because he perceives that his son's education is incomplete without it. Brian Black has argued that the dialogue between Uddālaka and his son simulate the formal initiation of a student into Vedic training, the ceremony of upanayana.³⁶ Yet what he is taught is entirely new. What is also new is the teacher as an authoritative figure who is attached to specific definitional discourses and embodies a body of teaching. The attention is drawn to the act of teaching as well as to the contents of the teaching. Pedagogical ties transcend familial ties that defined the earlier Vedic utterances and teaching is foregrounded as a social and moral practice.

Creation and Transmission of the Nikāyik Discourses: The Formative Period

The Buddha too is associated with a body of authoritative utterances. Alf Hiltebeitel has asserted that the term 'dhamma' within the Buddhist discursive universe has many connotations, but the primary and more apparent meaning that is denoted is that of 'teaching'.³⁷ This meaning is what primarily distinguishes it from the Brahmanical tradition in the shared notion of 'Dharma' which is the pivotal concept through which the two

traditions enter into a nuanced dialogue. These utterances essentially convey the notion of a body of teaching, not a set of philosophical articulations. Speculation or musing are not worthy exercises as far as early Buddhism was concerned. What was left behind, was a set of teachings, some of which were to be understood literally or at face value while some others had to be interpreted through accepted methods. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* the Buddha says that he did not assure his disciples that he would teach them whether the world is finite or infinite, whether a meritorious person lives on beyond death or not, because these kinds of knowledge were not conducive to peace or enlightenment. Instead, he taught them the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. Therefore, what was not revealed by him would be unrevealed and what was revealed by him would be made known. Thus, whatever was superfluous to the attainment of the goal was left unsaid.³⁸ This however does not exclude the co-existence of metaphysical thought, but what was foregrounded almost through all the layers of the discourses was not whether what was uttered was of philosophical interest or not, but rather a body of teachings that delineates an array of spiritual practices. The wisdom or insight that is needed to attain liberation is hinged onto this set of practices and behavioral pattern.

The phenomenon that sets the Buddha apart as a teacher is that words of the Buddha or *Buddhavacana*, which supposedly radiated from the teacher himself, could accrue further authority because it operated within the frameworks of an organized religious system. It would be operative within the self-regulating institution of the *saṃgha* and could also make its way into the outer ring of followers or the laity. The *Vinaya* and especially the kernel of the collection, the *Pātimokkha* section is one of the earliest portions to have been composed and already it indicated a notion of

regulatory principles in a most emphatic and apparent way. The Pātimokkha sets forth norms based on deviant conduct and spelt out specific punishments for such conduct. Hinuber says that the precepts or the paññati regulated the conduct of the monks and nuns in a clear-cut fashion. Paññativajja was the term that denoted that a particular act was forbidden for the monks because a precept has been laid out. On the other hand, there is another term, lokavajja, that prohibited certain actions universally. Like taking of life was lokavajja and was applicable to everybody.³⁹ In the four principal Nikāyas too, the hegemonic discourse can be traced, that sought to inculcate a moral culture that would rearrange the basic mores of public behaviour. This involved a systemized but diversified body of discourses that could communicate with multifarious groups or people.

Thus, the discourses and dialogues contained especially in the Nikāyas break free from the confines of the ritualistic domain or the royal courts. They take place in the monastic set up as is only to be expected, but also in obscure villages, city-halls, local shrines and roadside groves. The exclusivity of the Upniṣadic discourse that involved the chosen teacher and the pupil (even though the teacher and the pupil were terms that connoted a broadening framework) was replaced in the Buddhist texts by speech-acts that were essentially public and tentatively speaking, universal.

From the earliest period, the *Dharma* was transmitted not only by the Buddha but was also transmitted directly from disciple to disciple. Both monks and nuns internalised the teachings of the Buddha and reached out to initiate others into the order. Thus, Sāriputta imbibed the teachings of the Master from Aśvajit, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha and in his turn summarised it for his fellow ascetic Mahāmoggallāna. As it turned out, these two Brahmins soon became foremost disciples or

śrāvakas of Buddha and played a major role in the dissemination of the discourses. Likewise, Purna Maitrāyaniputra was hailed by the Master himself as being the principal elucidator of the Doctrine, while Katyāyana was the one who could explain the discourses most lucidly. Senior nuns like Dhammadinnā and Pātācarā mastered the Dharma and the Vinaya respectively and were projected as celebrated preachers. All of these disciples were outstanding orators apart from having the wisdom and insight to recognise the truth. These orators were therefore leaders who could delineate a path towards peace and enlightenment that eluded the monks on a lower level of awareness, as well as the laity.

It has been argued that recitation and oral transmission had been prevalent since the time of Buddha. Again, there are many references to the monks reciting the *patimokkha*. In the *Saṅgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* there is a vivid portrayal of Sāriputta teaching the monks just as he had learnt from the Master. Next the monks repeat in unison what they had just learnt.⁴⁰

Oldenberg refers to the teachings of Buddhism rather than the teachings of the Buddha in very carefully chosen words.⁴¹ He implies that the discourses containing the important ideas of the tradition cannot be traced back to the figure of the Buddha with any certainty and the discourses as learnt by the first generation of Buddhist monks could be dissimilar to the extant discourses. It is clear from the extant Pāli texts that an acute anxiety for the accurate transmission of Dharma surfaced from an early period. In the *Saṅgīti Sutta*, Sāriputta makes a numerically arranged summary of the Doctrine and relates these to the monks. He further asserts that, the teaching should be remembered just as it had been pronounced and monks should recite them in unison, without disputation. There is no doubt that the texts sought to spell out very clearly what constituted the authoritative utterances from a very early period. According to the texts, the words of

the Buddha were reasserted in the councils. The councils in the early Buddhist parlance mainly mean the phenomenon of communal recitation or saṅgīti. Thus, this conveys the primacy of memory, recapitulation and reiteration. In spite of these councils, disagreements regarding what constituted the authentic body of teaching continued. On the occasion of the First council the monk Puraṇa did not join the recitation as he wanted to remember what he had learnt directly from the Buddha accurately. This indicates that there was a sense of losing the original teachings even in the earliest stage of recapitulation and compilation.

It is possible that *Buddhavaṇana* could have a broader connotation and could include not simply the sayings of the Buddha but also utterances that the Buddha would have made, or utterances about the Buddha and incorporated discourses from the foremost disciples who would have interpreted a situation like the Buddha did and accordingly fashion their discourses.

Thus, there would also have been a time when the Theravāda collection was still open. Some portions of the texts had an early closure. This might have been the case with the Theravāda *Vinaya*. It describes the events that led to the convention of the Second Council most vividly but is totally silent about the Third Council held approximately 150 years after the death of the Buddha. Presumably, the *Vinaya* of the Theravadis was open up to the Second Council but was closed by the time the Third Council was convened. Hence, though the first century after the Buddha may not have witnessed the formation of a complete body of teachings but at least a basic pool of texts for a canon must have been formed.

According to the tradition of the chronicles, a complete canon of sacred texts was compiled on the occasion of the third council, at the time of

Aśoka.⁴² It is certain that, at that time the saṃgha was divided into several schools. This was a period of ideological contestations and therefore it is possible that the need for holding on to a notion of a fixed body of texts became more important and also claims to uphold the original utterances of the Buddha had become more palpable.

The Theravāda tradition is unanimous that after the first recitation clear-cut measures were taken to ensure the continuity of the body of teachings. What constituted the Buddhavaṇṇa at that point of time was categorised and given to separate groups for memorisation and safe keeping. Thus, Upāli and his disciples took charge of the Vinaya, just as Ānanda and his pupils were the custodians of the Dīgha Nikāya, Sāriputta's disciples were associated with the Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta with Mahākassapa and Anuruddha with Aṅguttara.⁴³ This tradition of dividing up the discourses and assigning separate custodians for them probably signalled the emergence of the bhāṇaka system or the system of separate reciters for specific textual tradition.

However, K.R. Norman asserts that this takeover of the textual tradition by the bhāṇakas could not have been a simple matter at that juncture, because the 'texts' as we know them were still in an incipient form and several issues had to be ironed out, before the collections could be given distinct crystallised forms.⁴⁴

1. A homogenization of the dialect
2. Historical issues that impinged on the doctrines had to be sorted out
3. Classification and exegesis had to be carried out

So, it can be argued that the *bhāṇaka* did not immediately take over as the custodians of a fixed body of texts and there was a brief period of free transmission, when the dialogues, discourses, stories and anecdotes were

remembered, compared and discrepancies were glossed over. This brings us to a particular moment in Buddhist history when the undifferentiated *bhānaka* system was crystallizing itself and striving towards a more cohesive and structured textual tradition.

It is clear from the way that the Nikāyas had been formulated that there were differences between them presumably because they were remembered differently by the different groups. Nevertheless, as recent researches suggest these discrepancies were not too serious.⁴⁵ Considering the disparate nature of the material with which the *bhānakas* must have started this is puzzling. Still there are verses and utterances which differ if we compare the various Nikāyik traditions, there are also different takes on stories from the Buddha's life and subtle differences as far as historical issues were concerned.

From our perspective however, the issue of the language is far more important. Pāli-Bhāsā literally means the language of the texts, for our understanding, it is the language of the Theravāda canonical texts. Generally, it is accepted that the language of the canon was created out of a number of Prākritis spoken in the Middle Ganga Valley during the time the Buddha and the first generation of monks were preaching within that area. The appearance of the several dialects of the Middle Indo Aryan in the early period is indirectly proved by the fact that Pāṇini came up with his grammar as early as 4th century BCE to fix the form of Sanskrit immutably and to stop infiltrations of the dialects of MIA into Sanskrit. Patañjali in 2nd century BCE, was still pleading for certain forms to be avoided, which had distinct MIA characteristics. But when we are talking about 5th-4th centuries BCE, we can never be certain about the dialect map in North India and can not definitely pin down which dialect was spoken in which region. It is reasonable to assume that the Buddha was not

speaking in Sanskrit even if we have early Buddhist texts in Sanskrit as well as in various dialects of the Middle Indo Aryan. As the Buddha was veering away from the liturgical culture of the Vedas and starting afresh, it is natural that he would also have moved away from the language of the Vedic rituals and use local vernaculars to reach wider cross-sections of the population. In the Vinaya Piṭaka, some Brāhmaṇas who had converted to the ways of the Buddha requests him that Buddhavacana should be translated into Sanskrit.⁴⁶ But the word ‘chandaso’ that has been taken to mean Sanskrit could also mean to arrange the discourses ‘metrically’.⁴⁷ Thus, there is no clue as to what language the Buddha was actually speaking in. The linguistic background being this obscure, it has been assumed that the Buddha preached in the old form of Māgadhī, which could be the dialect spoken in the area around Magadha, where the Buddhists were most active. The commentaries also point out that Pāli was originally Māgadhī. The extant canon however, contains more traces of the western dialect than the features of Māgadhī, with some anomalous features. However, all these features are determined from texts much later than 5th century BCE. What we can assume safely is that the discourses were being formed in an area where several dialects were being spoken simultaneously. In the Magadha region forms of western dialect or even forms of the Gandhārī dialect could have been in use. This could be explained by fissions in the tribal groups and large- scale migrations. Thus, the Pāli-bhāsā was not purely what we call Māgadhī or a western dialect of the later period or the literary form of any one particular type of the MIA, but a translated and homogenised version of several dialects of the MIA spoken in North India around 5th century BCE. This translation could have been carried out over a number of years, while the bhāṇaka tradition was in operation. With the coming of writing however, the language would have been more or less standardised.

Thus, in the first phase we have the oral discourses which were disseminated verbatim, recited, taught and learnt by heart. Then we have an intense process of categorisation, comparison and compilation into separate collections, also carried out orally. In this phase the issues of language and the issues related to the biographical units were also being sorted out. In the next phase, this memory had to be contextualized, each memory thread had to be reiterated with reference to specific settings. As we shall see, this process started with the coming of organised monastic Buddhism and the attempts of the saṃgha to link itself to temporal events. This would initiate the process of narrativisation of memory and appropriate doses of stylization. The narrative context, framing of the content and mode of delivery had to be kept flexible and variable to highlight interchange of views in different situations, reaching out to an expanding and ranked community. This phase could overlap with the process of gradual writing down of the texts.

The literary tradition would incorporate the principal building blocks of a long oral tradition. Yet some redactions were almost certainly carried out when the texts were finally written down. But as the oral compositions had an aura within the religio-moral edifice that sustained the basic fabric of Buddhist culture and emitted a notion of insurmountable authority which curtailed the possibility of major improvisations. The addresses, speeches and dialogic devices had a connection with the public sphere from the early period, these were honed further to fit the needs of a broadening geographical and cultural orbit. Early Buddhist texts sought to understand and forge harmonious links with landscapes and people on the micro level. The minutely detailed descriptions of the landscape as well as the understanding of peoples' connections with these natural and cultural markers made the addresses flexible yet palpably purposive.

We have to recognize the essential difference of the Buddhist discursive practices interspersed with illustrative narratives from the Brahmanical traditions. The records of the Buddhists had a more concrete engagement with the sequences of history. This stemmed from the belief of the order in the Buddha as a historical person. His life and actions were not only seen as an example to follow but also as a life that had a deep impact on the broader canvas of history. Thus, it became imperative for the Saṅgha as an institution to weave together the dispersed content of the Teacher's discourses and to collate and preserve it as historical memory.

3.Salient Issues Discussed in the Consecutive Chapters

Chapter One: The Historical Context

In the First Chapter entitled '**The Historical Context of the Early Buddhist Theravāda Texts**' has two components. In the first part, the geographical/cultural context within which the rubrics of the discursive exercises were taking shape during the course of several centuries have been explored.

The texts describe a vast land mass—the Majjhimadesa. The Buddhist delineation of Majjhimadesa differed from the Brahmanical perception of the *Āryāvarta* or the *Madhyadeśa* in the sense, that in the Buddhist texts the Eastern boundary of Majjhimadesa stretched up to lands situated further East of Campā and included the craggy terrains of the Himalayan foothills, while the contemporary Brahmanical texts stopped near Prayāga. The region east of the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā was not considered Brahmanical territory even when complex political systems like

empires were taking shape within that very region. It implies that the Brāhmaṇas inhabiting these lands were not considered to be of a superior variety or the Brāhmaṇas were not regarded as the predominant social group in this region. In this part I have tried to investigate how the Buddhist texts sought to engage with this landscape in a very distinctive way and tried to look at it through the records of journeys undertaken by the first generation of Buddhist monks as contained in the texts.

According to the texts the Buddha and his first followers moved within a circumscribed area and took the same orbits again and again, the texts show a familiarity with the natural landscapes as well as the social landscapes. Apart from the fine cities, the texts repeatedly mention hillocks, lakes, fresh water tanks, rivers and local shrines by name. We have to remember that, the knowledge about the wider landscape was acquired through direct experience and was not ‘received knowledge’, handed down by tradition. Though in course of time, it became a part of tradition. Thus, the created landmarks are not to be understood in the ideational sense only but also as something embedded in the material context. Reading between the lines, the texts give ample indications that there was a drive on the part of the travellers to forge some links with the local land or community and to find a foothold within the local landscape.

The interesting thing is that rather than turning non-space into space the texts sought out spaces which were already occupied, spaces which can be perceived as affirmative categories and had significant affective values. Thus, while recording a journey, the texts also recognize and memorialize familiar landmarks and imbue them with new meanings. The integrated multi-temporal landscape is not simply an inert backdrop to human activities but involves a symbolic re-arrangement of space.

The other interesting thing is that the Buddhist religion is seen as to have arisen partially as a response to the incipient state and the urban forms. Yet the Buddhist texts while they record stories of movement and travel relate more emotively to places and spaces tucked into the grey areas and the narrative of the state takes a back seat. In the texts there are the notions of infiltration and appropriation but also a sense of rapport with the community, which does not surface in the narratives of the state.

In the second part, the ideological backdrop has been explored. I have tried to analyse it by examining it through the prism of the peculiar position of Videha and Kosala in the intellectual landscape prior to the Buddha. This area hosted a common culture of critical questioning and was a hotbed of debates and discussions. The act of public speaking, as a specialized skill was being honed as well as a communicative arena for public speaking was also being prised open in the chieftain's court at Mithilā. The Paribbājaka tradition, which was steeped in this culture of conversations emerged in these very regions roughly a century later. Against this very complex backdrop the various dialogic devices and communicative modes delineated in the early Buddhist texts emerged not merely as the idiot's guide to the world at large but as a distinctive way of making sense and explaining the world and fleshing out their own parts in it.

Chapter Two: The Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāyas

In the second chapter entitled **Communicative Modes in the Early Theravāda Buddhist Canon: The Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāyas**, the principal modes of address have been discussed at the outset. The Suttas of the Dīgha and the Majjhima are all narrative suttas in the sense that they contain sermons, discourses, dialogues and so on but all of them have an

overarching narrative structure. All of them consist of rhetorical acts of somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose that something happened. To be very precise, all the Suttas in the two collections share a structural feature which is a doubled communication situation, where the narrative work does not merely narrate but also represents an act of narration. But of the two or more frames and narrative surfaces they project, none are supposed to be fictional.

Initially, I have tried to argue that an evolved mode of communication surfaced in the Sūta Nipāta and can be identified in specific layers of the text. The initial attempts to take conversations into the public domain can be also traced. These budding forms of communication with a narrative framework could be taken as precursors to the more developed dialogic modes in the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas.

I have separately identified and analysed the various narrative forms within the two collections. The forms that are predominant in the two collections are-

- i. The Dialogic Narrative
- ii. Manufacture of legends
- iii. Mythic narratives with parabolic telling
- iv. Biographical units

The Importance of the Nidāna or the Context

This device of delineating a context to conversations was important in the Dīgha and also to a lesser extent in the Majjhima Nikāya. The texts mention the conversations of the Buddha with various people in various cities where he preached, such as Rajāgrha, Śrāvasti, Campā, Vaiśālī, Vārānasī or Kapilavastu. The conversations are with a wide range of people – monks, householders, heads of clans and kings. The context has a three-fold

significance- it posits the speech-act in a specific spatial-temporal context and also clarifies the reason behind the particular utterance. The factor of causality that is the premise of Buddhist perception of reality, permeates the fundamental texture of the Suttas.

Purposive Nature of the Addresses in the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas

In the next part, the distinctive functions of the two texts within the Nikāyik collection has been analysed, which helps us to ascertain the nature of the audience to which the texts were geared to. While both the Dīgha and the Majjhima are replete with narratives, dramatic turns and imaginative flights, the two texts served different purposes within the ranked community of monks and the laity. It has been argued that, the Dīgha embodies the imaginative and narrative aspects of the Nikāyik texts and was probably geared to reach out to a larger audience, the Majjhima looked inwards and was current within the inner ring of the monkish community. I have tried to propose a more nuanced reading of the narratives as purposive addresses and tried to delineate wider functions for both the collections. As far as the narrative elements are concerned the Majjhima collection, is strikingly similar to the Dīgha but on the whole the suttas are shorter. The themes of the suttas are also more varied. I have tried to argue that, Majjhima Nikāya foregrounds the narrative strategies and communicative devices of the early Buddhist texts more clearly as it has a wider variety of suttas addressed to various groups and individuals

Chapter Three: Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas

The third chapter, attempts to unravel the development of an authoritative discourse in the Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas.

While the Dīgha and the Majjhima are replete with narratives, dramatic turns and imaginative flights, the suttas of the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara Nikāyas, with some exceptions, appear with no frills and are dry and scholastic. The narrative trapping is mostly done away with here and only minimal circumstantial background to the discourses is given. A background story or nidāna is almost completely absent as the introduction is a perfunctory one which states the discourse was delivered by the Blessed One or one of his prominent disciples in such and such location. The shifting of the narrative perspective and creation of two or more narrative axes are devices that have been rejected. Sometimes the Buddha lets out a direct proclamation to a single monk or a group of monks regarding some finer points of the doctrine. These suttas were intended for those who were already steeped in the ways of the saṃgha and immersed in its study and practice. Despite these similarities, I have tried to argue, that the two collections had different roles to perform within the Nikāyik collection and also within the community who were the direct and indirect recipients of the utterances.

In the first part, the various forms of address have been identified and analysed separately.

In the next section the separate functions of the two collections have been fleshed out. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the terse pronouncements on the doctrine, gathered and laid out with a thematic arrangement however superficial, point to a repository of suttas which catered to the doctrinal specialists and the disciples with an intellectual bent of mind who sought to explore the weighty topics like dependent origination, the five

aggregates, the six basic senses or the Four Noble Truths. In this collection specific suttas dealing with specific aspects of the doctrine is a ready reckoner for the specialist.

The Aṅguttara Nikāya on the other hand contain large numbers of numerical lists or flow chart like suttas. These suttas underline a phase in Early Indian textual history when writing was not used to articulate religious utterances. Memorization and preservation of the discourses were aided by the numerical method.

As we have seen the notion of Buddhavacana and the anxiety for its preservation surface from an early phase of Buddhist history and all the four Nikayas with their variegated content each had a specific role to play in conveying the words of the Buddha. If we look at the individual suttas this inner purpose is not at all apparent or crystal clear. To understand the role of the specific Nikāyas it is necessary to look at the collection as a whole. The Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara collections have quite a few overlaps and mostly contain terse suttas laid out in a numerical format and foreground quick and radical insights on some of the points of the doctrine. The Saṃyutta would serve as a ready reckoner for the doctrinal specialist or for the monk/nun who were preoccupied with the notion of attaining absolute truth. The Aṅguttara on the other hand, has the kind of structure which would facilitate pedagogic exercises. Thus, it has a more practical orientation conducive to teaching and edification. In this collection more than the others suttas are compiled which valorize the practice of learning. According to the suttas the learned are esteemed by all their fellow men. It is not only glorifying learning but actually foregrounding the proper ways to learn and to teach. Emphasis is on how to listen attentively and to retain correctly. Thus, the authenticity and authoritative quality of an utterance is underscored.

The scope of the suttas however, have to be examined against the backdrop of the imageries of multifarious congregations and assemblies that come up in the texts again and again. This has been done in the last section. The idea of the congregation broadens the scope of the discourses and reveals a communicative space that is complex and heterogenous.

Chapter Four: The Vinaya Piṭaka

The Fourth Chapter explores the development of various narrative forms in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The Vinaya Piṭaka also symbolize a phase when narrativisation of discourses is a dominant feature. In the first part, an analysis of the structural features and thematic content of the suttavibhaṅga and the Khndhaka portions of the Theravāda Vinaya Piṭaka.

Just as Dhamma sought to arrange the inner life of the monks, Vinaya sought to order their outer life. Outward morality cultivated by training had been laid down for the monks in a network of relationships with other monks, the laity and the wider society as a whole.

Basic Narrative format in the Suttavibhaṅga

The Suttavibhṅga is arranged according to a set pattern.

- a) A story leading up to a rule
- b) A Pātimokkha rule stating the penalty for breaking it
- c) The Padabhājanīya- defining each rule word for word
- d) More stories dealing with deviations from the rule

The Khandhakas

Just as the first part of the Vinaya Piṭaka is concerned with the individual as a member of the saṅgha, the second part of the Vinaya Piṭaka, the Khandhakas, touch upon the saṅgha as a whole.

The structure and arrangement of the narratives in the Khandhakas are different. Here the stories are embedded in the history of the order. The Mahāvagga opens with the days preceding the foundation of the order. For the most part the stories are told in the context of the biography of the Buddha.

In the next section, I have tried to flesh out how the notion of an integrated community, including the lay followers, had taken shape in the Vinaya and individual lay followers have been projected as moral agents on display in the public sphere. The location of various categories of women within this integrated community has also been discussed. The figure of the Buddha had emerged as presiding over this integrated community as the supreme moral arbiter. Thus, in the Vinaya, the rules do not simply have the force of law but usher in the notion of an overarching dispensation or *sāsana* and projects a way of life that is more powerful and potent than the rules and sanctions. The Buddha thus, is not a mere codifier of laws but a moral leader and the promulgator of a distinct moral culture.

In the last section, the nature of the Buddhist organization and its engagements with historical processes have been foregrounded. Especially the saṅgha's engagement with the political edifices had churned out new forms of discursive practices preserved in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

At the very outset, it has been said, that the discourses in the Vinaya Piṭaka reflect more tangible imprints of narrativization. None of the stories told in the *Vinayas* are unresolved, but they are more open-ended and conjure up multiple closures. The stories are apparently not closed but are conclusive and omnipotent. I have also tried to argue throughout the chapter, that underneath the moral packaging of the Vinaya Piṭaka, a subterranean current of critical commentary on the idea of morality represented in the

Vinaya flows constantly and the notion that the moral scheme of the Vinaya is somehow incomplete and inadequate is a sub-text that surfaces again and again.

Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, the problem of dissemination of the speech acts has been discussed again and the ranked community of the monks as well as other in-text audience outside the community of monks have been brought into the picture again. Who were the disseminators? Who were the recipients? Did the mode of address change with the changing category of recipient?

In the Nikāyik programme the Buddha dominates as the authoritative figure, yet it also has the underpinning that the disciples are to realize and experience the truth by themselves. In the Vinaya Piṭaka it has been underlined again and again that the Dhamma had to be taught energetically and in full detail. The teaching had to be carried out in the form of suttas, both in the prose and verse forms. The epithet of *sāttthā* applied almost exclusively to the Buddha. The *sāttthā* is more than a teacher or a master. He is the one who sends a message or śāsana, which is authoritative in the sense that it produces an effect.

The Disseminators: The Community of Monks

It is also important to note that the message was to be disseminated within an integrated but ranked community and the custodians and disseminators were various categories of monks who made up the scholastic community. Though in the Nikāyik world the notion of the samagra saṃgha comes up again and again it necessarily connotes the notion of a harmonious order

with fixed hierarchical alignments. The saṃgha as the universal order or the order of the four quarters incorporated all disciples and transcended time and space. But the saṃgha which is located in history and in a specific temporal and spatial context included five groups of mendicants. Here I have tried to understand the scholastic community of the saṃgha from the texts and have also tried to bolster my findings by drawing corroborative evidence from the early corpus of inscriptions of Sanchi and Bharhut. Here it has been argued that even if we leave the Buddha aside, we come across a large group of speakers and disseminators, who operated inside and outside the order and tried to fashion distinctive modes of public speaking.

The Recipients

If we look at the in-text audience the number of sermons directed towards the laity was not insignificant. In many suttas lay followers came to the Buddha of their own accord and asked for advice. A common refrain can be found in the four major Nikāyas, where the laity approaches the Buddha and declare their this-worldly and other-worldly desires.

As we analyse the presence of the various social groups as in-text audience we are aware that each Nikāya text had a different role to play and were geared towards different social groups as audience. Thus, in the Dīgha Nikāya majority of the suttas directed towards the laity had upper caste individuals or groups as audience. In the Dīgha, a major part of the suttas are addressed to the Brāhmaṇa audience and deal with the phenomenon of conversion. Thus, the in-text audience would be essentially Brāhmaṇa ideologues who would be won over from a prior world view. In the Aṅguttara on the other hand, most of the lay suttas are directed towards the vessas and householders, who are already adhering to the teachings of the

Master and most the suttas are oriented towards leading people to a good rebirth.

As far as the lay suttas are concerned, a meagre number of sermons are directed towards women. Roughly 26 suttas can be winnowed out as having lay women as audience. In the Dīgha again, we do not have a single sutta addressed to a lay woman. In the Aṅguttara on the other hand, we have the highest number of suttas being addressed to women. It can be argued that women could be present as in-text audience even when they were invisible. As the householders came for consultation, they could bring their wives along though their presence has not been noted in the texts. In the king's retinue also, women were present, though the texts merely mention them and present them as silent listeners.

We can identify three main types of addresses- sermons, debates and consultations. Most of the sermons are unsolicited sermons where sequential instruction is given by the Buddha. This type of address does not arise from a challenge or a question. Sometimes a sermon is given in response to request by an individual or by a group. Sometimes the mode of address is made further complex when the Buddha leads the listener through a series of questions. Sometimes the teaching is prefaced by or is included in a story.

Unsolicited sermons of this kind were more common in the Aṅguttara and the Saṃyutta. Storytelling and dialogic devices were more common in the other two major Nikāyas. The element of consultation when a question is asked or the element of debate, when a challenge is posed is more frequent in these two collections, as the suttas were longer and more elaborate. At the same time, it can be said that the interlocutor as a high caste male is perceived as most appropriate in the texts. The Dīgha and the Majjhima

having the bulk of the higher caste male as the addressee thus would spin out more stories and dialogic devices as well as addresses in the format of a debate or a consultation.

On the other hand, generally the low caste and the women were recipients of sequential plain sermons. Women were instructed on issues of generosity, marriage and domesticity while the vessa householders would be lectured on how to fulfill the goals in this life and to achieve a good rebirth in a heavenly realm. Thus, changes in modes of address and content while reaching out to various social groups can be discerned as we make an analysis of the four major Nikāyas.

The interesting thing is, that within these literary dialogues there are extra-textual referents that indicate broader frameworks of historical interactions and social dialogues that may have existed outside the universe of the texts. The texts present the act of public speaking as a distinct moral practice that exudes calmness even in polemical situations. The emphasis is on speaking in a pleasant manner to various social groups. I would like to argue that, the early Buddhist texts were pleading for a polite discourse and trying to underscore specific patterns of cultural behavior, which could be emulated and consumed in a broader urban ambience. Here the notion of an interpretive community has been foregrounded, involving the composers, reciters and audience of the addresses, who not only read, interpreted and acted out the norms underlined in the texts, but also directly and indirectly shaped them. This presupposes the presence and operations of intellectual and moral facilitators both inside and outside the Saṅgha.

This authoritative voice cast into a polite mode of discourse, evolves further in later texts like the Jātaka collection and the Theragāthā which have also been discussed in the last portion. As a distinctive and purposive narrative genre, the Jātaka collection took shape over a longer period of

time than the Nikāyas. Some of the narratives at the core, may have been extant since Buddha's times, as many of them are found in the Nikāyas, often in a proto-Jātaka format. The Gāthās, original and oral, are generally held to have been completed by 2nd century BCE, most probably with an earlier commentary attached to them. The Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā, the final form in which we find it today crystallized much later, around the middle of the first millennium A.D. and were frozen into the written form. The Jātaka collection constitutes a distinctive narrative genre, which reasserts the hegemonic role of the Buddha as a speaker and underlines that different components of the narratives had a distinct role to play and were geared to different addressees.

The Gāthās of the Theras and the Therīs as finished texts, also had a long drawn-out biography. Some of them were composed long after the Great Demise of the Buddha according to conventional in-text evidence and were not even composed before the time of Aśoka, let alone become the part of a collection. The Gāthās were embedded in a 6th century C.E. commentary without which some of the shorter utterances would become quite cryptic. A very refreshing investigation into the two texts by Kumkum Roy has brought out the different flavours of the texts with ample clarity. According to her, the Theragāthā has a more systematized content and might have catered to a monkish audience. The Therīgāthā being more subjective and context-specific had a different role to play.⁴⁸ If we look at some of the addresses in the Theragāthā, they verge on to being authoritative, almost normative utterances, ascribed to individual Buddhist monks. These utterances resonate the hegemonic discourse of the Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka and reflect conventions of public speaking that could permeate broadening orbits of social conversation.

Notes

¹ ŚB, 11.5.7.5.

² Dip XX.20–21.

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⁴ Norman, K.R., *Pāli Literature*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1983, p.36.

⁵ Gombrich, R., *How Buddhism Began*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006 (2nd Edition), p.11.

⁶ Schopen, G., *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, University of Hawaii Press, 1997, p.23.

⁷ Wynne, A., ‘The Oral Transmission of the Early Buddhist Literature’, in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol.27, No.1, 2004, pp.97–128.

⁸ Saloman, R., *The Buddhist Literature of Ancient Gandhāra: An Introduction with selected Translations*, Wisdom publications, Kindle Edition, 2018.

⁹ Pande, G.C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, (1957) pp.27–50.

¹⁰ Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, Blackwell Publishing Limited, Oxford, 1990, p. 3.

¹¹ Ong, Walter J., *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 17.

¹² Malinowsky, B., ‘The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages’ in C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards (eds.), *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, Keagan Paul, London, 1923, Supplement I.

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¹⁴ Parry, Adam, Introduction, pp.ix–xii, in Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971.

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the Vedas, ed. M. Witzel, Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora, Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1997, pp.258–266 pdf.

¹⁸ Witzel, M., ‘On the Localisation of Vedic Texts and Schools’, in *India and the Ancient World: History, Trade and Culture before A.D.650.*, ed. G. Pollet, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 25, Leuven, 1987, pp.175–176 pdf.

¹⁹ Witzel, ‘The Development of the Vedic Canon and its Schools: The Social and Political Milieu’ pp.261–266.

²⁰ Kosambi, D.D., ‘On the origin of the Brāhmaṇa gotras’ in *The Combined Method of Indology and Other Writings*, ed. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp.117–118.

²¹ Thapar, Romila, *The Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, pp.92–95.

²² Thapar, *The Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India*, pp.140–41

²³ Pargiter F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishing House, Delhi, 2016 (4th Reprint), pp.58–59, Sheldon Pollock on the other hand downplays the notion of non-Sanskrit collections. Pollock, S., *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, University of California Press, 2006.

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²⁵ *R̥gVeda*, 7.18.

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²⁹ Witzel, M., ‘On the Localisation of Vedic Texts and Schools’, pp.200–204.

³⁰ BU, 4.4.22. Olivelle, 1998, p.123.

³¹ KaU.1.20. Olivelle, p.379.

³² CU.4.4. Olivelle, p.219.

³³ BU.6.3.12. Olivelle, p.155.

³⁴ BU.6.5. Olivelle, p.163.

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³⁷ Hiltebeitel, A., *Dharma: Dimensions of Asian Spirituality*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2010, kindle Edition, Loc.187.

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⁴² Dip.V, 27ff.

⁴³ Sv.13.23–24.

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⁴⁸ Roy, Kumkum, ‘Of *Theras* and *Therīs*: Visions of Liberation in the Early Buddhist Tradition’ in *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power: Explorations in Early Indian History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 21–22.

Chapter One

The Historical Context of the Early Buddhist Theravāda Texts

The early Buddhist texts delineate a wide geographical horizon, the focal point of which was the *Majjhimadesa* or the Middle Country. This was the cradle of Buddhism and the Buddha and his intrepid followers travelled widely and repeatedly across this vast land mass, moving to and fro between the wilderness, the villages and the capital cities of the chiefdoms and kingdoms. The texts show a familiarity with natural landscapes as well as with the social landscapes. The distinctiveness of the texts is that they gaze outwards and encompass the landscapes and the diverse groups of people who inhabited it. Before we come to an understanding regarding the land mass known to the Buddhists as *Majjhimadesa*, it is necessary to clarify at the very outset, that the texts were familiar with the entire tract of from Gandhāra- Kāamboja to Vaṅga, Puṇḍra and Kaliṅga on one side and from Kaśmīr to Assaka, Vidarbha and Māhissati on the other. But these areas were considered as outlying and peripheral, sometimes even remote and shadowy. They were mentioned incidentally, in reference to their links with the *Majjhimadesa*.

Majjhimadesa: Changing Contours

In the Pāli canon, *Majjhimadesa* is the country *par excellence* and is elaborately described with vivid imageries. Apart from the fine towns and cities, the parks and gardens, lakes and rivers have been mentioned again and again. The villages and the cultivated fields, the grazing grounds and the sacred groves, the dense forests on the fringes of teeming settlements conjure up the image of a dynamic patchwork of contrasting landscapes.

It was in the Eastern parts of the *Majjhimadesa* that the Buddha attained enlightenment. During his lifetime he moved within a circumscribed area, on foot, either alone or with his disciples and had no occasion to step outside the boundaries of *Majjhimadesa*. Knowledge about the bordering regions was handed down by tradition rather than by direct experience. The first generation of converts to the Buddhist order, hardly ventured out of the Middle Country.

A comprehensive description of the *Majjhimadesa* can be gleaned from the Vinaya Piṭaka, one of the oldest texts within the canonical corpus.¹ Other Nikāya texts are also replete with references to the Middle Country.

In this respect the early Buddhist texts veer away from the Brahmanical texts more or less contemporary to them. In the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras, Āryāvarta which encompasses the Madhyadeśa stretches from the region where the river Saraswatī disappears in the west to the Kālakavana in the East; and from the Himālayas in the North to the Pāriyātra in the South.²

Almost all the Bramanical sources give an elaborate description of Madhyadeśa or Āryāvarta and hardly mention the four remaining divisions.

It is interesting that in the Brahmanical sources the eastern boundary of Madhyadeśa thus excluded the entire region of Magadha. The region east of the confluence of the Gaṅga and the Yamuna was not considered Brahmanical territory even when complex political systems like empires were taking shape within that very region. It implies that the Brāhmaṇas inhabiting these lands were not considered to be of a superior variety and the Brāhmaṇas were not regarded as the predominant social group in this region. After the decline of the Mauryan Empire, Brahmanism slowly gained ground in this region. As Johannes Bronkhorst has suggested, the region East of the confluence of the Gaṅga and the Yamuna , comprising Magadha and its surrounding regions, from Śrāvastī in the North-West to Rājagṛha in the South-East, was culturally distinct from when looked through the prism of Post-Vedic Brahmanical perceptions.³

This was also the region where the monks of the Buddhist order including the Buddha himself had been most active. This was also the provenance of the greater *paribbājaka* tradition, the hotbed of explorative thought and new spiritual movements. It is only logical to expect that in the Buddhist texts the Eastern boundaries of *Majjhimadesa* would expand to include Kaśī, Śrāvastī, Bodhgaya, Rājagṛha and all the other sites associated with the historical memory of the Buddha.

The boundaries of the Buddhist *Majjhimadesa* as given in the Vinaya Piṭaka extends upto the town of Kajaṅgala beyond which is the city of Mahāsāla; in the South-East to the river Salalavatī and in the south to the town of Satakaṇṇika. In the West it stretches upto the Brāhmaṇa settlement of Thūna and in the North to the Usīradhaja Mountains.⁴

Ironically this was roughly the geographical landscape within which according to the Pāli texts complex political formations were taking

shape. The *rājya* with its gradually perspicuous notion of hereditary kingship and the *gana* with its varying notions of collective authority were engaged in an ever-changing almost kaleidoscopic process of contestation, consolidation and absorption. This process was determined through newly emerged economic compulsions which encapsulated strategic and cultural concerns. These complex formations linked to an expanding resource base was mainly bolstered by an agrarian surplus but also connected intrinsically to a series of movements involving people and goods (foodgrains and other items). The emergence of metallic money, new forms of exchange and the beginning of concerted trading activities with terms like *saṅgha*, *seṇi* and *puga* and well defined trade routes escalated a process of urban growth. Market towns cropped up along the routes. Ranabir Chakravarti has very clearly stated in this context that the processes of state formation and urbanization were at intrinsically linked at that juncture and also described the *mahājanapada* type polities emerging at the crest of these twin processes. He further asserts that this was not a pan-Indian phenomenon and the regions that did not see the proliferation of urban centres, did not experience the pulls and pressures of the stratified state society.⁵

This phenomenon was articulated socially and culturally through the notion of a stratified society the contours of which were described quite clearly in the texts. Uma Chkravarti argues that the term *gahapati* in the early Pāli texts are defined by the large amounts of property they managed and controlled. Their assets consisted of cattle, slaves, gold as well as large tracts of land and orchards. On the other hand, the *dāsa*, the *kammakara* and the *porisa* denoted the labour force who were engaged in domestic labour as well as in processes of social production but had no control whatsoever over the means of production. She further agues that

the samanas and the Brāhmaṇas who opted out of the process of social production were in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the labouring categories as they were drawing heavily from the limited surplus that was being alienated from the primary producers.⁶ Being alienated from the surplus meant degrees of poverty among the labouring groups, down to those who had not enough to eat and went without clothes to cover their bodies.

Of the sixteen Mahājanapadas mentioned in the Pāli texts thirteen are within *Majjhimadesa*. They are Kāśi, Kosala, Aṅga, Magadha, Vajji, Malla, Cetiya, Vatsa, Kuru, Pāñcāla, Maccha, Sūrasena and Avanti. Gandhāra and Kamboj are said to have been located in the Northern Division or Uttrāpatha and Assaka was situated in Dakkhiṇāpatha or the southern division.⁷

The most important monarchies listed as the mahājanapadas were Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avantī. All four were locked into conflict with each other as all were looking to expand their resource base and tap new sources of wealth, which signified territorial expansion. At the same time this also implied a modicum of centralization and consolidation of authority as expressed through administrative apparatus and coercive machinery. The amātyas become important agents in this phase. The monarchies were also competing with the gaṇas on a different plane. As these were closed systems which could not expand due to their distinctive political structure based on principles of kinship, the monarchies sought to crush them completely as illustrated in Kośala's massacre of the Sākyas.

The kingdom of the Vatsas is mentioned as one of the sixteen Mahājanapadas in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Its capital Kausāmbī has been

identified with modern Kosam, on the banks of the river Yamuna, near Allahabad. In the Dīgha Nikāya it has been enlisted as one of the six great cities where the Buddha could attain Mahāparinibbāna.⁸ The Pāli texts recount that this city was a hotbed of dissent within the Buddhist saṅgha. In the Simsapāvana the monks had certain disagreements over issues concerning monkish discipline. The recalcitrant monks contested the advices of the Buddha and the Buddha left the place in a huff, alone and unattended and passing through several villages and settlements came to Pārileyyaka. Adjacent to this settlement there was a forest sanctuary and the Buddha sought peace and quietitude there.⁹ The schism edict of Aśoka was also erected in Kosambi. It might be assumed that the tradition of dissent in this particular place continued up to a later period.

Kosāmbī emerged as a transit point for the flow of merchandise at the time of the Buddha. Goods from the west and the south were deposited here prior to their transportation to Kośala or Magadha. It was also an important point of intersection as far as the riverine routes were concerned. Goods and travelers could sail upstream from Magadha and reach Kosāmbī. Apart from being a nodal point in the Utraāpatha from Taxila to Sāvathī, Kausāmbī was also situated on the south-bound route towards Māhissatī.

The river Sarayū divided the Mahājanapada of Kośala into two parts north Kośala and South Kośala with the twin capitals of Sāvathī and Sāketa. The Buddhist texts are replete with references to the city of Sāvathī as the Buddha spent many rainy seasons in the city and preached most of his sermons at the Jetavana.¹⁰ Apart from the two great cities of Sāvathī and Sāketa we have references to numerous smaller towns. There are mentions of several villages inhabited by Brāhmaṇas, who were some of the earliest converts to Buddhism.¹¹

For the first generation of Buddhist monks the bigger circuit always had Sāvattihī as the nodal point. The monks undertook arduous journeys often cutting across several geo-spatial zones. During the monsoons however, the circuit would be smaller, hugging the contours of a settlement. It seems from the Buddhist texts that before the Buddha, Kāśī was the greatest power in *majjhimadesa* and its capital was bigger and grander than either Mithilā or Indapatta. The Jātakas recount constant friction between Kāśi and Kosala.¹² During the entire period that the Buddha travelled across the Middle Country Kāśī had lost its suzerainty and was sometimes under the sway of the kings of Kośala . Varāṇasī was a great centre of crafts and trade, situated on the banks of the Ganga. It was connected with Sāvattihī and taxila through land routes and all the kings coveted Kāśī. Kośala was thus expanding southwards to gain access to the river and Magadha was similarly expanding northwards by shifting its capital to Pāṭaliputta and trying to control the commercial traffic on the Ganga. The city arose as a centre of administrative and economic importance and developed mechanisms to extract surplus raw material from the countryside. Later of course, it would take on multiple functions and emerge as a centre of culture and also of pilgrimage. The Buddha was linked to the mahājanapada of Kāśī because his first sermon was preached in Isipatana near Vārāṇasī.

In the Buddhist texts the territory of the Śākyas was contiguous to the kingdom of Kośala. Though the Śākyas were governed by their own *santhāgāra* upto the time of the massacre of the people by Viḍuḍābha, the Kośalans had some kinds of political control over the Śākyas as some of the texts mention the Śākyas as subordinate to the Kośalan king Pasenadi.¹³ However, this story comes from non-Nikāyik sources. The Kośalan territory stretched from a point quite close to Kapilavatthu and

sort of hemmed in the Śākya territory from the southern and the western sides. The boundaries between the two territories were sometimes clearly marked. For example, in a Jātaka story a huge and shady banyan tree marked the border between the two territories.¹⁴ Sometimes the boundaries were blurred and the two principalities were not properly demarcated.

Some sources claim that the Śākyas were already subservient to the king of Kośala during the lifetime of the Buddha.¹⁵ Other sources state that they exercised their sovereign rights within their own territory and conducted their political and administrative functions through a collective assembly of the gaṇa type, until they were brutally crushed by the Kośala king Viḍuḍābha. The territories of the Śākyas extended up to the Terai regions touching the borders of modern Nepal. The river Rohini has been marked as the eastern boundary which separated the Śākyas from their south-eastern neighbours, the Koliyas. The Koliyas were oligarchic like the Śākyas and were on tolerably good terms with them, except for some bickerings over the use of river water for irrigation.¹⁶ The Śākyas controlled a thin strip of land tapering towards the top.

The Buddha visited the Śākya towns like Cātuma and Devadaha and dwelled among his own people. Nigrodhārāma near Kapilavatthu was the favourite resting place of the Buddha. He stayed here when he first visited Kapilavatthu after his enlightenment. He came back here on several occasions and new Vinaya rules were promulgated here. This was the spot where prominent figures of the Śākya clan assembled to meet the Buddha. The Mahāvana or the great forest was close by and sometimes the Buddha ventured into it in the daytime for rest and solitude.¹⁷

Before Buddha's time, Aṅga was one of the most powerful principalities in the *majjhimadesa*, with its capital at Campā. The capital was built on the banks of the river Campā and close to the Ganga. It comprised the modern districts of Bhagalpur and Munger and probably in its heyday stretched up to the river Kosi. Campā had been incorporated within the kingdom of Magadha as is attested by the evidence that the king of Magadha was donating land to a Brāhmaṇa of Campā.¹⁸

In the early Buddhist texts we often come across dyads, one emergent state closely linked to another emergent state in historical memory, through notions of rivalry, sharing of resources and geo-spatial contiguity. Thus Kāśī is linked to Kośala and has a shared history. The Mallas and the Vajjis form a dyad. The story of Aṅga and Magadha follows the same trajectory. According to George Erdosy, this phenomenon of interstate rivalry and scramble for resources led to further development of state society in the Middle Ganga Valley.¹⁹

Ancient Magadha roughly corresponds to the modern Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar. Its earliest capital was Giribbaja near modern Rajgir among the hills of Gaya. The river Ganga delineated the boundary between the kingdom of Magadha and the gaṇa of the Licchavis and the two powers had rights over the river traffic which sometimes led to frictions. Similarly the river Campā to its east marked the boundary with the kingdom of Campā. In the Samyutta Nikāya there is a detailed account of the war between Pasenadi of Kośala and Ajātasattu of Magadha.²⁰ In the end, Ajatasattu annexed Kośala to become the most powerful force in northern India. During Ajātasattu's reign Magadha came into conflict with the Licchavis of Vesāli. Scraps of information which describe the circumstances leading up to the conflict are scattered throughout the Pāli sources.

Magadha during the early phases associated with Buddhism was also a great centre of trade and commerce and people from all parts of north India thronged to the cities of Magadha. Rājagaha was primarily important because it was the capital city of the burgeoning kingdom of Magadha and merchants and traders flocked to the city because it drew a considerable amount of surplus from the surrounding regions. Accumulation of resources and the factor of connectivity attracted the traders.

In terms of importance Rājagaha comes as a favorite for the Buddhist texts, it was one of the six great cities of the time, the name of the city had cropped up again and again in the texts, second only to that of Sāvattihī .

Rājagaha was connected with different parts of north India through different types of roads. A high road connected Rājagaha with Vesālī. One branch of the grand road to Taxila passed through Vesālī and then to Sāvattihī and Kausambi.

The most striking cultural marker that distinguishes the city of Rājagaha was the arrangement of the defensive structures also attested by archaeological findings. The earliest urban forms that took shape in the middle Ganga Valley were based on their mechanisms to extract surplus from the surrounding countryside. The primary urban centre as a locus of surplus accumulation and concentration of coercive force, had little to demarcate them from the surrounding rural settlements in terms of physical features. Thus the earliest urban centres had massive ramparts as the principal cultural markers. K.T.S. Sarao has argued that as we analyze the pattern of Ganga Valley urbanization we must consider primary urban centres like Rājagaha as centres of administration and surplus extraction. However, as soon as the primary urban centres struck deep roots, it could

acquire other secondary attributes. Smaller settlements clustered round the primary city, linked to it through an intricate network of services. An incipient expansionist state like Magadha was interspersed with such secondary settlements clustering around Rājagaha at the initial stage, for purposes of defence, trade, camping, surplus extraction and religion.

In the time of the Buddha there surfaced in the course of time, sets of human settlements with distinctive functions and dimensions. Some were of non-agricultural character like the *nigama*, *nagara*, *pura*, *pattana*, *rājadhānī* or the *mahānagara*. Some had distinctive agricultural functions like the different kinds of *gamas*. Sometimes again the *gama* had more specific functions relating to the needs of a primary urban centre. The *dvāragāma*, close to the gates of a capital city and the *paccantagāma*, near the border regions, could provide labour and resources to the big town or perform important defensive functions.²¹

The propagandist activities of the Buddhist spread to the land of the Vajjis. Many discourses of the Buddha were delivered in the mango grove of Ambapālī in the outskirts of the city of Vesālī or at the *kūṭāgārasālā* on the fringes of the Mahāvana, a great and dense forest which stretched to the foothills of the Himalayas.

At the time of the Buddha the Licchavis were the most powerful confederating clan of the Vajji confederacy and Vesālī was the centre of their power. Around this time they were competing with the rising monarchy of Magadha for greater access to the river traffic on the Ganga and the natural resources of the river valley. The Licchavis had what is called in early Indian texts a *gaṇa* or a *saṅgha* system, where a considerable portion of the population was vested with the ultimate authority.

The term Vajji comes up more frequently in the Pāli texts though in later literature the term Licchavi is more frequently applied. J.P. Sharma argues that in earlier times the area north of Ganga was probably dominated by the Vajji clan, later during the time of the Buddha this same area came to be dominated by the Licchavis. When a confederacy was built to counter the onslaught of the expansionist Magadha Vajji became a political entity while Licchavi was the most prominent constituent clan. It is possible that the Vajjis still existed as a tribal collective but had dwindled into a minor power. Their area was now overrun by the Licchavis with Vesālī as the centre. The other clans who joined the confederacy were probably the Videhas of Mithilā, the Mallas of Kusināra and Pāvā and the Nāyas of Kundapura. Cross checking the sources it can be said that the Licchavis occupied the south-west portions of what was called the Vajji-land, north of the Ganga, directly facing the Magadhan monarchy across the river. On the western side it was bordered by the Little Gaṇḍaka river. The Videhas were spread across the northern tracts extending upto the Terai region while the Nāyas were actually located around the northern suburbs of the city of Vesālī. The entire area occupied by the three clans was most probably demarcated as the land of the Vajjis.²² If we accept this as a tentative hypothesis the political landscape becomes a little more comprehensible.

The city of Vesālī according to this hypothesis now becomes not only the capital of the Licchavi clan but also a metropolis of the entire confederacy. The area dominated by the Licchavis covers the modern districts of Vaishali and the southern parts of Muzaffarpur district in Bihar. Vesālī has been identified with the modern Basarh in Vaishali district.

Vajjian Vesālī was located at a nodal point on the Uṭṭrāpatha and linked the city of Rājagaha with Savatthī and Taxila. This was a well trodden trade route at the time of the Buddha and the Pāli texts describe small settlements as well as the forested tracts, small rivulets, groves and cetiyas on the route. The riverine routes along the Gandak and the Ganga were also utilized by the people of this region.

As in the case of Rājagaha, Vesālī was not simply an enclosed area within the ramparts. It included the suburbs and the mention of smaller settlements and rural units are made.

Vesālī had a prominent place in Buddhist history because it was associated with Buddha's life and it surfaces in the literary sources at crucial junctures. It is particularly associated with the last journey of the Buddha. In Vesālī Buddha announced his impending death to Ānanda at the Cāpāla cetiya.²³

Apart from being a centre of administration and of commercial exchange Vesālī had a history with strong religious underpinnings, The settlement hierarchy so easily perceptible around Rājagaha in the textual representations is not so vivid in the case of Vesālī. References to agrarian villages are not so numerous. The *gahapatis* and farmers who are markers of a strong agrarian economy and big holdings are few and far between. It seems obvious that in the gaṇa territories different forms of landholding were practised and different patterns of labour mobilization were in vogue.

It has been argued that the agrarian growth of the region around Vesālī was 'stunted' and that is the reason why the Vajjian countryside was not as productive as Magadha as far as alms collection was concerned. Evidence of regular assessment and collection of dues by the state are

scanty and often garbled being juxtaposed with later traditions. The regular coercive forces that were a palpable adjunct of the Magadhan state, are made up of the Kṣatriya kin members in Vesālī, who alone had the right to bear arms. That is the reason the Pāli texts are comparatively silent about the Vajjian countryside. This is also the reason why Vesālī could not be designated as a Mahānagarī in the Nikāyik literature. The agrarian base was not strong enough to trigger a full-fledged urban growth.²⁴

An urban centre of the early historic period has to be understood in its specific contexts, in its linkages with the hinterland. It is evident that the city did not have a planned growth and different sectors came to prominence at different phases and interacted with the surrounding areas accordingly. Unlike Magadha the mechanisms for extracting surplus were not developed to a great extent. It was a nodal point on the Uttarāpatha, but its commercial importance could not outstrip its function as an administrative centre. It further enhanced its importance on the pilgrimage map of the Buddhists and Jains because of its close links with the founders of the two religions. Furthermore, it had direct contact with the Terai region cutting across the Videhan tracts in the north, where some of the other gaṇa systems like the Śākya, Mallas and Koliyas were clustered. Thus Vesālī was at a strategic point to regulate the movement of people to and from the Terai region.

Unlike the Licchavis, their northern neighbours the Videhas are frequently referred to in the Brāhmaṇa literature. In these texts they are closely associated with the people of Aṅga, Kāśī, Kośala and Magadha. They were among the *Prācyas* in the Brāhmaṇa lists and were held in low esteem by the people of Kuru and Pāñcāla. They were depicted as a monarchy in the Brāhmaṇa period but in the Pāli texts often appeared as a

non-monarchical gaṇa system. The Buddhist evidence remains fuzzy as far as the Vidahas are concerned. In the Dīgha Nikāya as well as several Jātaka stories refer to the kings of Videha. In the *DN* the king Reṇu establishes the city of Mithilā with the help of his associate Mahāgovinda. There are hints that the settlers came from somewhere else, the mythical land of *pubba-videha* (former Videha).²⁵ This agrees with the statements in the earlier Brāhmaṇa literature and the story of Videgha Māthava.²⁶

The Landscape: The *Janapadas* and the Grey Areas

The Mahājanapadas were ‘raṭṭhas’ with more or less tangible boundaries and could have multiple fortified urban centres through which they were supposedly being defined. As George Erdosy has pointed out the first urban centres that came up in the middle Ganga valley were administrative centres in the sense that they extracted surplus from the outlying regions and were in a position to regulate and control the flow of the surplus.²⁷ The urban centres in the middle Ganga valley around 500 BCE were little more than rural settlements, some were marginally bigger in size as attested by archaeological excavation. The physical marker that differentiated the urban settlements in this phase were the rampart and the relatively complex defensive structures that have been described again and again in the texts²⁸ and also been corroborated by archaeological findings. This physical marker also had a symbolic significance as it embodied cultural distancing from the community of primary producers and an alienation of the surplus from the actual producers.

Accumulation of surplus in the primary urban settlements started to unfurl a notion of hierarchy among the settlements. This has been articulated in the texts and summarized succinctly by K.T.S. Sarao.²⁹

While the gāma with all its variations denoted the rural settlement, the nigama (a centre of exchange), the nagara (the fortified settlement and the outskirts), the pura (fortified settlement), the pattana (place of commercial exchange), the Rājadhānī (the locus of political power) or the mahānagara (locus of multiple activities) were settlements with varying degrees of 'urban' traits.

Buddhism, with its multifarious socio-cultural as well as intellectual dimensions has been explained as having its roots in the culture of the city. Not only is it integrated in the life of the cities but also has originary links with the city. Starting from Max Weber a long line of scholars have claimed that Buddhism was the creation of a city culture and a product of the time of urban development. It arose at a time of rapid social change when new political and economic forces were unleashed. In the early days Buddhism depended very heavily on the donations and generosity of the rich and the influential in more than one way. It has been said that whereas pre-Buddhist literature had almost exclusively a rural milieu as its context, the early Pali literature lives and breathes a new urban spirit. The texts on the surface agree with this surmise. In terms of frequency of references, urban centres far outnumber rural settlements. The urban character of Buddhism is further buttressed by another such statistical information, which shows that of all the persons mentioned in the Vinaya and the Sutta Piṭaka, whose native backgrounds have been mentioned most came from urban places. The prominent social figures of early Buddhism or the heroes are the rich merchant-bankers and the new kings. Uma Chakravarti has argued that the new religion had a dialectical relationship with the contemporary society. On one hand, it produced a narrative that legitimized the rising urban state and the commercial ethos associated with it and on the other hand it offered a spiritual balm to those

groups who suffered from the effects of urbanization.³⁰ But the Pali sources are rather tricky. It is interesting that the earliest layers of the principal Nikāyas and the Sutta Nipāta, the common frame of introducing the suttāntas by the names of big towns like Sāvatthi or Rājagaha is absent. Instead we have place-names identifying and locating medium-sized nīgamas and villages where the first generation of monks stopped and preached. These early locations very soon faded into oblivion and were overshadowed by the prominent cities foregrounded in the later layers of the texts. Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett on the other hand, veer away from the mainstream take on Buddhism and argue that Buddhist texts took shape in a context where change was slow and gradual within an expanding society and a comparatively stable and prosperous economy. They further argue that the period of the rise of Buddhism was one of expansion as the rising urban-based kingdoms were reaching out to encroach upon hinterland communities. Major cultural adjustments had to be made as the inhabitants of outlying settlements found their lives encroached upon by traders, tax gatherers and war bands. Sometimes they were linked by some cultural factors, sometimes they were not. They could either open the pandora's box of infinite opportunities, otherwise they could be a source of unimaginable dangers. Here they argue that the figure of the peripatetic holy man, who had rejected any stake in the institutions of power and authority and could straddle both the worlds, emerged as the alternative symbol of power and an agent of acculturation.³¹ Thus the original message of Buddhist texts which pleaded for a austere simple way of life and complete detachment, was asocial even anti social, became a mediator between the urban state and remoter local cultures.

In this context, I would like to argue, that the texts reveal multiple faces of Buddhism. The original message was not erased from the corpus of Buddhist utterances and on the other hand there were also public forms of articulation as a certain section of the monks were drawn into a web of social interaction and negotiations. Some major discrepancies between the Nikāyik texts and the archaeological findings have prompted a lack of faith in the veracity of the texts as sources of history in recent times. The nagaras, Mahānagaras and Rājadhanīs mentioned in the texts do not tally with smallish settlements with unimpressive archaeological profiles of the early Ganga Valley urban sites. Transition from Painted Grey Ware Culture to Northern Black polished Ware as a cultural marker of urban milieu is also untenable according to Erdosy as according to him marking a cultural transition through the single denominator such as pottery is problematic but also a comparative analysis between the two wares reveals that technological innovation is meagre as far as the NBPW is concerned and based on this premise the argument of changing cultural alignment also falls through.³² But what is important here is that the notion of the ‘urban’ that we project today and aspire to discover in the Middle Ganga valley around 550 BCE might not have been immanent in the texts concerned. The hierarchical pattern of settlements might have had nothing to do with the size or the physical structures of the settlements, rather it might have had different connotations in the Pāli texts. By going through the texts it can be said that among many others, a settlement could become important if it was located within a vortex of movement of groups of people and because of the presence of articulate conversationists inside and outside the settlement. That is why the texts are so emotively engaged with the smaller landscapes both inside a settlement and in the peripheries of a settlement. Thus if we try to glean

meanings from the texts by looking at them through the lens of journeys and conversations they might yield certain answers.

Understanding the Landscape: Narration of Journeys in the Early Pāli Texts

The early Pāli texts of the Buddhists, especially the Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka relate to the landscape known as *Majjhimadesa* in a unique way, mostly through the records of the journeys undertaken by the first generation of Buddhist monks. The travellers, mostly in groups and under a teacher, traversed a huge land-mass, the *majjhimadesa* of the texts, widely and repeatedly, in search of resources and also for exchanging ideas. Sometimes these journeys would cut across political and geo-spatial borders, along well-trodden trade routes. At other times, mostly during the rainy seasons, a shorter seasonal route would be followed.

As the Buddha and his first followers moved within a circumscribed area and took the same orbits again and again, the texts show a familiarity with the natural landscapes as well as the social landscapes. Apart from the fine cities, the texts repeatedly mention hillocks, lakes, fresh water tanks, rivers and local shrines by name. Often these spaces are mentioned together and are connected in historical memory. It has been argued recently that the purely ‘local’ has been avoided in the early texts and as the landmarks were ‘created’, they were only to be understood in the ideational sense.³³ But we have to remember that, the knowledge about the wider landscape was acquired through direct experience and was not ‘received knowledge’, handed down by tradition. Though in course of time, it became a part of tradition. Thus the created landmarks are not to be understood in the ideational sense only but also as something embedded in the material context. Reading between the lines, the texts give ample indications that there was this drive on the part of the travellers to forge some links with the local land or community and to find a foothold within the local landscape.

The interesting thing is that rather than turning non-space into space the texts sought out spaces which were already occupied, spaces which can be perceived as affirmative categories and had significant affective values. Thus while recording a journey, the texts also recognize and memorialize familiar landmarks and imbue them with new meanings. For example, a local *cetiya* could be incorporated in Buddhist tradition through its association with some momentous event, historical or imagined. Thus a landmark becomes stable and is endowed with a history.

These perspectives and engagement with their surroundings really collapse the divide between the natural and cultural landscape. The integrated landscape is not simply an inert backdrop to human activities but involves a symbolic re-arranging of space. The other interesting thing is that the Buddhist religion is seen as to have arisen partially as a response to the incipient state and the urban forms. Yet the Buddhist texts while they record stories of movement and travel relate more emotively to places and spaces tucked into the grey areas and the narrative of the state takes a back seat. In the texts there are the notions of infiltration and appropriation but also a sense of rapport with the community, unlike the state.

The historical Buddha himself was always on the move right from the story of his miraculous birth. He was born on a journey from Kapilavatthu to Devadaha and died on a journey from Rājagaha to Kusināra. Roughly he spent half a century travelling to and fro within the limits of the *majjhimadesa*. However, these journeys were rhythmic, regular and repetitive. Very early on, the need was felt to fix the religious landscape and the movements were thought to cover a known orbit with Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Saranath and Kusinara as the pilgrimage sites. These

sites were mentioned by the Buddha himself and sought to give a directional thrust to the wanderings.³⁴ That did not mean that the monks were going round and round in the same spot. There were lateral and vertical movements into zones which were linguistically and culturally different. But the religious landscape was sought to be fixed in the texts. This situation was further bolstered by trapping of the relics of the Buddha in specific locations, which set into motion a new pattern of rhythmic journeys.

In the texts, the tangible markers of the Buddhist presence the āvāsa, the ārāma and later the stūpa barely reveal a fraction of Buddhist cultural practice. Memory and cultural identity were played out and reinvented within the affective surfaces pertaining to these ‘non-Buddhist’ landmarks. While the Buddha and his disciples were travelling they often compared landscapes with other landscapes they knew and had emotive connections with. Another aspect of these tales is of course the device of interlinking past and present within the ‘marked’ spaces and infusing it with fixed intended meanings. Thus past is omnipresent in the marked landscapes and they become multi-temporal. It does not matter that these pasts were imagined or created, what matters is that these pasts were thought out and recalled in a particular way and uttered in a specially crafted purposive narrative context.

For example, a vivid imagery is created in the Book of the Great Demise when the Buddha, weary and ill, crosses the Hiranyavatī and reaches the *śāla* grove of the Mallas at Kusināra. He beseeches Ānanda to arrange a couch with its head to the north between the twin *śāla* trees and rests peacefully on his right hand side. From this couch he would rise no more.³⁵ This imagery is the most powerful and affective imagery in the discursive universe of the early Buddhists and later in Buddhist visual

culture. But what is interesting is the next bit. The Mallas try to lift the couch and take it to the south of the city for cremation. But the couch would not budge an inch. The *Devas* had got the couch in a stranglehold and it could not be moved. It seemed that the couch had to be carried to the north gate of the city and then had to cut across the entire town to the east side, to the old Mallian shrine of Mukuṭavandhana. Only here it was fit to cremate the Buddha.³⁶ This entire episode of the procession, the initial hesitation of the Mallas to carry a dead body to the middle of the city and the story of how they succumbed to the wishes of the spirits underlines the importance of the ancient Mallian shrine, which had been ‘marked’ as the site where the last journey of the great wanderer would culminate. It does not really matter whether the episode was historical, or whether there was actually an old shrine which was the final resting place of the Buddha. The story of the procession through the heart of the town could be a mere figment of imagination. But what is important is the insistence that the Buddha had to be cremated not at a non-space, which is physically and affectively empty, but at an already occupied site with distinctive affective values and the story transforms the space within the textual framework and permeates it with new meanings.

According to the texts, Kusināra is a wretched branch town of wattle and daub.³⁷ Tall stories are invented to justify the apparently whimsical wish of the Buddha to die here. The site of Kasia in Uttar Pradesh had been identified with Kusināra in the 19th century. Alexander Cunningham in his report of 1861-62 uncovered numerous mounds to the north east of the stūpa where the relics were supposed to have been placed. Cunningham had a hunch that these mounds were old reliquaries. He had them opened up and found them empty. However, he felt it in his bones that these were old burial mounds and had this nagging regret that he

should have dug deeper.³⁸ In a later excavation his hunch was proved to be right. It is not clear whether these mounds are old enough to be pre-Buddhist.³⁹ Xuanzang makes no mention of other mounds of earlier or later date. He simply says that the ground of the city was of a peculiar greyish tinge as the dust of the city mingled with ash and charred bones. He further says wherever one digs in the city the relics of Tathāgata surface.⁴⁰ The point is that pockets of the landscape are transformed into an elaborate mortuary landscape and the earlier affective qualities came into play in the process.

The device of linking past and present is further testified in the various early Buddhist texts describing Isipatana where the wheel of law was first set in motion. The Buddha in his wanderings is never seen in Vārānasī but comes to Isipatana repeatedly.⁴¹ It is described as a natural clearing, close to the Migadāya. Sometimes these two place names are used conjointly, sometimes as separate entities. Etymologically Isipatana means a port of call for the sages. In the Dīgha Nikāya however, this place has been associated with a long line of Buddhas who all preach their first sermons in this delightful place, amidst the shaded and well-watered meadows, where the deer roam free. It is one of the four unchanging places and one of the four sites of pilgrimage for the diligent Buddhist.⁴² That Isipatana could be a very old stopping place for sages, nodal point in a very ancient route from the north to the river Gandak and the Videha region has been suggested recently by Vidula Jayswal as she identified the recently excavated site of Aktha with the ancient Isipatana. Aktha is a small village just 1 km south-west of Sarnath or Migadāya. It has a substantial number of water-bodies and washed by perennial streams. It is situated in a lush green natural clearing with patches of wood. The deer park could easily have been a part of the natural

landscape. Archaeological horizons stretch to an early layer dating to the Later Vedic period with 1200BCE as the lower limit. While the site identified with ancient Vārānasī, Rajghat dates back to a modest 800BCE as the upper limit. Aktha could be an older site with a significant position at the confluence of major routes.⁴³ Yet it never developed into a significant trading entrepot, with prominent urban characteristics. It always remained in historical memory as a sanctuary for the sages. Remnants of Vedic ritual activities from the earliest period further buttress this notion.

Buddha skirted Vārānasī and came directly to Isipatana according to the texts. Was it because in historical memory it was remembered as a very old centre of intellectual activity and was a landmark on the route towards Videha, the hotbed of critical tradition? It symbolizes the Construction and fabrication of a non-verifiable past and transplantation onto a pre-existing cognitive context. The acts of generosity of the Deer king who brought about a change of heart in the cruel king of Kāśī, Brahmadatta, was played out on this very surface of land and the Miigdāya was the gift of the king where the deer roam fearlessly through the ages.⁴⁴ Thus the story of the pre-Buddhist sages was replaced by a flood of canonical claims of association.

A similar pattern of association comes up in connection with the mango grove of Makhādeva in Mithila.⁴⁵ The mango grove was pointed out by the Buddha to his disciples as the place where the great king Makhādeva detected his first grey hair and forsaking his kingdom abounding in wealth and happiness, went forth from home to homelessness. This happened from generation to generation, with one king after another. The realization of impermanence and the act of renouncement symbolized by the shaven head came when the king was relaxing in the pleasant shade of

the mango trees. The Buddha delineated the spot as containing powerful affective values for the ascetic tradition and identifies himself as Makhādeva who inaugurated the spirit of asceticism in the remote past at that very spot. The funny thing is throughout the Pāli texts, the Buddha makes an extensive tour of Videha only once and the wealthy Brāhmaṇas of Mithila are brought into the fold of Buddhism by the agency of the Buddha himself.⁴⁶ Though according to the texts the Buddha seems to be rather well known in the region, the currents of Vedic praxis had taken deeper roots, with Buddhism making small but steady inroads. The intellectual leadership that had marked the Videha region had probably shifted at the time of the Buddha, moving further south where sizeable chunks of the social surplus were being accumulated and the process of state formation had gained momentum. Yet the texts still retained the historical memory of the Videhas as people who were culturally important and being a stronghold of Vedic tradition, posed a stiff challenge for the Buddha and his troop of five hundred monks. The texts sought to root them in the local landscape by playing with memory and time and imbuing the landscape with a renunciatory past and an age-old association with the doctrine of impermanence.

The last journey of the Buddha is marked with a very emotive association with the city of Vesali and the local shrines within and without the city.⁴⁷ The Buddha crosses the Ganga and enters the city from the south. He stops and spends a night at the Cāpāla cetiya and describes the beauty of Vesali which is enhanced by the presence of the cetiyas within the landscape. Buddha mentions a number of cetiyas like the Bahuputta, Udena, Sārandada and the Gotamaka. The cetiyas of Vesali were most probably pre-Buddhist, with local traditions of worship. However, these spots were chosen by the Buddha and his followers for spending a few

days in the vicinity of the city. In the morning they often entered the city for alms-collection. In Bhognagara, near Vesālī the Buddha stayed at the Ānanda Cetiya.⁴⁸ The name of Bhoganagara/ bhogagama/ bhogagamanagara comes up again and again in the texts and is described as a beautiful spot. The Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā has a clue that gives us the scope to ponder upon the import of the cetiyas in the cultural landscape of the Buddhists. The commentary says that it was a vihāra built at the dwelling of the Yakkha Ananda. The Buddhist literature is replete with stories of conquest over various spirit deities through ethical means. Most of the yakkhas and naga s who had canonical connections had been linked to big towns in the texts. Some of the cult sites could be local, others could grow into trans- local cults. As the monks came into contact with wider society they encountered the laity, who were seeking solutions to mundane problems through supernatural means. They could recognize and relate to some of these cults. The scheme of re- ordering the landscape with the older cetiyas was an important part of the early Buddhist discursive practice itself, where the monk endowed with new spiritual authority was trying to engage with their surroundings in a unique way , had left a lasting imprint on their cultural utterances.

While basking in the beauties of Vesālī the Buddha was also remembering the beauties of Rājagaha, a city he had just left. He was at the same time recalling and memorialising the varied landscape of the city, which evoked feelings of pleasure. The city had delightful parks, beautiful forests and fields. The Venuvana was a beautiful grove surrounded by bamboo and was gifted by Bimbisāra to the Buddha. Jivakāmbavana was a mango grove gifted by the physician Jivaka to the Buddha and his followers. The body of the city integrated many natural elements like the royal park of Bimbisāra, the deer park and the water

tank near Gijjhakuṭa on the bank of which the peacocks were fed. There were landscapes which evoked fear and awe, like the cora-papāto precipice from which the thieves were thrown down or the Paṭibhānakūṭa which had a sheer drop. There were solitary caves which were refuges of hermits and sometimes the Buddha and his followers sought shelter in these caves. One such solitary cave was the Sattapaṇṇi where the First Buddhist Council was convened. Sitavana was a place where dead bodies were disposed of, to be eaten by the animals. This was an enclosed place with gates.⁴⁹

Thus a space, laden with affects conveys different meanings to different people or to a single viewer in different moments. But in the Buddhist texts they were being loaded with fixed meanings though they could also change as the narrative context changed and evoke contradictory emotions. In this scheme of things there is a hierarchy of space, but there is no uniform or homogenous space, nor one privileged central space but a multiplicity of spaces and networks, whose contours would shift again and again.

The Intellectual Context

i. Videha: The Shift in the Intellectual Tradition and the Beginning of Conversation

Interestingly, In the Later Vedic texts, Videha, a region in the north-east part of the Madhyadeśa had emerged as the founthead of critical tradition and contesting ideologies and close to circa 7th century BCE embodies the palpable shift within the Vedic intellectual orbit. In the court of the

legendary king Janaka a stylistic shift is perceived in the dialogic and polemical devices that sets the stage for a wider and layered structure of thought and spirit of enquiry.

This is the intriguing question pivoted to the emergence of Videha as the principal geo-spatial context of critical enquiry. The real puzzle seems to emanate from a story related in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which has been pinned down to a pre-Buddhist context. This involves a movement of Videgha Māthava, a royal person, with the sacrificial fire and the Vedic priest across the river Sadānīra , identified as the Gandak dividing the territories of the Kośalas and the Videhas.⁵⁰ The story of this journey would symbolize infiltrations of the Brahmanical ritualistic practices into a socio-cultural setting far removed from the Kuru-Pāñcāla region, the heartland of Vedic orthodoxy.

In this respect, the evidence of the of the post-Vedic texts is at variance with the Later Vedic texts like the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa or the early Upaniṣads. The Later Vedic texts include the region of Videha within its purview, hailing it as the birth place of the ‘new doctrine’, while the post-Vedic Dharmasūtra literature excludes it from the hallowed circles of Madhydeśa. Here the disappearance of the Videha region from the intellectual-cultural map can be explained by the essential difference in the nature of the two genres of texts.

Some scholars have argued that the early Upaniṣads were contemporaneous with the Pāli texts but the texts are riddled with conscious gaps and omissions. In general the entire Vedic corpus displays a very tangible antipathy towards city-life and all its trappings. Scholars like Michael Witzel and Johannes Bronkhorst argue that the Later Vedic texts intentionally left out the contemporary urban forms and way of

life.⁵¹ It has been further argued that the Vedic texts remain silent on the new urban centres because this spate of urban development was altogether independent of Vedic society. This argument has been buttressed by the theoretical underpinnings provided by George Erdosy that one must recognize the possibility of political institutions developing outside the sphere of Vedic society and the monopoly of the literary accounts to project a comprehensive view of the society.⁵²

While we should entertain the possibility that at least some of the Vedic texts intentionally abstained from mentioning the developments that were taking place within the middle Gaṅga Basin, the complete erasure of all references pertaining to city-life and complex societies needs to be taken seriously too.

Patrick Ollivelle argues that the earliest Upaniṣads took shape around circa 6th century BCE and asserts that they reflected an environment which was not yet urban but was on the threshold of urbanism.⁵³ One of the cultural markers that distinguished the society of the Upaniṣads was the imagery of the expanding society and broadening horizons. A vast land mass was known to the early Upaniṣads and the texts recount long journeys undertaken by groups of people not only for the sake of commerce but also for dissemination of ideas and knowledge. An arduous journey from Gandhāra to Videha and vice versa would signify the intellectual imperatives behind such long-distance travel. Ollivelle also argues that the dominance of craft metaphors in the Upaniṣadic texts would Brahmanical suggest a subtle transition from village and agriculture to court and crafts.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that region of Videha was part of the *Majjhimadesa* in the perceptions of the early Buddhist texts. It seems that during the time

of the Buddha, Videha was a non-monarchical gaṇa system. But apart from the Upaniṣads some of the Jātaka stories also denote Videha as a flourishing and prosperous kingdom, with the splendid city of Mithilā as its seat of power.⁵⁵ In the Nikāyik literature proper however, the Videhas were depicted to be under the dominance of the Licchavis, their territories merging, being contiguous. At the same time, at certain junctures of the narratives they appear as an independent political entity. One of such historical moment can be pinned down. This being their appearance as one of the constituent principalities of the Vajjian Confederacy, along with the Licchavis of Vesālī. It seems that while the areas under the domination of the Licchavis lay along the northern bank of the Ganga, The Videhas during the time of the Buddha were settled further north adjacent to the foothills of the Himalayas. This is a palpable shift from the territory delineated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where the older monarchical Videha stretches from the Sadānīrā (presumably modern Gandak) in the west, to the Kauśikī in the east and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the river Ganga in the south.⁵⁶ The territory of the Videhas had dwindled noticeably in the Buddhist texts. A separate Videhan territory existed around Mithilā but the Licchavis had emerged as the major players in the older Videhan territory and were successors to the older Videhan kingdom.⁵⁷

Videha was identical with the later Tirabhukti, that is modern Tirhut and Mithila has been identified with Janakpur, a small town on the Nepal border. The Jātaka stories present a glittering imagery of Mithilā, which was a huge city, protected by three moats. The four gates of the city each had a *nigama* just outside and all of them were called Yavamajjhaka.⁵⁸ Yet in the Nikāyik tradition glory is associated with the monarchical Videha. The Buddha makes an extensive tour of Videha only once,

though his fire-sticks were deposited in Mithilā.⁵⁹ In Mithilā the influential and wealthy Brāhmaṇas are brought into the folds of Buddhism by the agency of the Buddha himself. The source also mentions that at that time the Buddha was well-known in the region. However, it seems that the currents of Vedic praxis that had infiltrated into the Videhān territories had taken deeper roots, with Buddhism making small but steady inroads.⁶⁰ While the Buddha embarks on his last journey and takes leave from the disconsolate Licchavis, he however, skirts the Videhān territories and entered the lands of the Kalamas of Kesaputta.

The intellectual leadership that marked the Videha region, had probably shifted at the time of the Buddha, moving further south where sizeable chunks of the surplus were being accumulated and then channelized following the orbits of the Uttarāpatha. In north Bihar the Licchavis had stolen the show with their most convenient location on the most fertile tracts of the Videha region, which also had gentle gradients to prevent flooding. The area around Videha was probably cut off from the mainstream economy of the middle Ganga Valley and the process of state formation was stalled. But still the historical memory of the Buddhist texts retained the cultural importance of the Videhas as a group of people, settled in a region which was now overrun by a host of other players.

Thus it can be argued that the Buddhist delineation of *Majjhimadesa* differed from the Brahmanical perception of the *Āryāvarta* or the *Madhyadeśa* in the sense that in the Buddhist texts the Eastern boundary of *Majjhimadesa* stretched upto lands situated further East of Campā and included the craggy terrains of the Himalayan foothills. This underlines the importance of Videha in the cultural landscape of the Early Buddhists.

This is where the speculative principle gained upper hand and according to evidence was also the bedrock of the paribbājaka tradition.

ii. The Ideological Context of Early Buddhist Modes of Communication

As we search for the possible roots of the Paribbājaka tradition we have to consider the many shades of Later Vedic Asceticism and a turning away from productive endeavors linked to the generation of social surplus. It can be ascertained from the textual evidence that during the Later Vedic phase the phenomenon of Asceticism was developing outside the orbits of Vedic sacrificial rituals. It is more than possible this process was aided by simultaneous existence of Non-Vedic ascetic principles. But we can have no conclusive evidence of this process of cross-fertilization and it takes us into realms of conjecture.

The Later Vedic texts saw the coalescence of political control in the Middle Ganga Valley. This was possible in the context of an increase in agricultural resources and the need to deploy labour on a systematic basis, with heightened the element of coordinated labour. This is reflected in the intensification of varṇa hierarchies with the acute need of distancing laboring groups like the Śūdras. In kāśī, Kośala and Videha, the settlements were expanding and there was a steady accumulation of resources, which formed the necessary basis of incipient states. The Upaniṣads tell us that the royal courts were the real place of origin of the ‘new doctrine’. The narratives tell us that the secrets of the doctrine were imbibed by the Ksatriya kings of Kaśī, Kuru-Pañcala, Kekeya, Kośala or Videha. The Upaniṣads were exploring the paths of salvation from the bonds of birth and death equipped with knowledge that could be derived

from intuition and analysis. The dissemination of knowledge also took a course quite removed from the archetypal preceptor-pupil mode of transmitting knowledge. The teachers were as we have seen mostly Ksatriya rulers and the pupils were also picked most carefully. The pupils could be those Brahmins who were excluded from the domain of sacrificial rituals- those of uncertain social origin like Satyakāma or argumentative women like Gārgī . The family-lineage was supplanted by the pedagogical lineage. However, it would be presumptuous to say that the Upaniṣadic doctrines were the preserve of the Kṣatriyas. We can perhaps visualize a new intellectual class that comprised a section of the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas, because the texts were Brahmanical and were preserved and circulated by the priestly classes. That the Ksatriyas were at the forefront of a group of intellectuals who first explored the mysteries of the new doctrine signified a subtle shift away from the sacrificial rituals, which consumed a large chunk of the surplus wealth and could be diverted for the sustenance of the emergent states.

Some of the Brāhmaṇas who were very keen to wade into the new waves of Upaniṣadic knowledge were described as *Mahāśālā Mahāśrotrīya*, very wealthy and very learned. However, all the Brāhmaṇas interested in the ‘new doctrine’ were not Mahāśālā Brahmanas. Some of them had small hermitages deep within the forest, some had cohorts of disciples ,others sought solitude. Some would charge exorbitant fees to teach the new doctrine and amassed tremendous amounts of movable property, while some would withdraw into the depths of the forest and teach those chosen few who were receptive to new ideas. These last groups of ascetics were the ones who opted out of society as a conscious choice and distanced themselves from the processes of social production. This distancing from all social concerns signifies the collapse of collective

rituals and ritualistic exchanges as well as the collapse of the kin-based society and gift economy. There was a perceptible shift from the clan to the individual who sought liberation from the karmic cycle and the bonds of saṃsāra.⁶¹

In the Later Vedic literature we come across terms such as tapasvin, śramaṇa, saṃnyasin, parivrājaka or yogī. Some of the terms apart from a withdrawal from social obligations and embarking on a life of hardships, also signified a peripatetic life and perpetual mendicancy. This phenomenon is distinct from the yajamana of the Vedic sacrifice who embraces the life of a wanderer for a brief period of his life and settles down to the life of a householder when this period is over. In the Later Vedic texts mendicancy and the life of a wanderer are often seen as permanent conditions.⁶²

Around the mid-first millennium BCE some of the Parivrājakas were roaming alone, while others went about in groups, often under a teacher and loosely forming a sect. Some of these groups travelled far and wide cutting across villages and urban settlements. Some of these groups never moved far away from the towns and would congregate at some nodal location to engage in debate and intellectual exchanges with each other.

Romila Thapar has argued that the renouncers who moved about in groups were distinct from the lone ascetic in the sense that the renouncer not necessarily symbolized a religious sect but an order constituting an alternative life-style. She has further argued that, the renouncer after a period of isolation, resumes his function in the society. At that point, his influence on society becomes both powerful and positive. A palpable split between the political and the moral authority makes the latter a censor of the former.⁶³

The ideological backdrop of Buddhism developed in the dynamic ambience of the Middle Gaṅga Valley where a large assortment of worldviews constituted a broader spectrum of Śramanic tradition. Buddhism derived ideological impetus from this bigger ‘movement’ and at the same time also started to veer away from it, delineating the contours of its distinctive cultural markers. Rhys Davids has argued that the intellectual movement that nurtured the seeds of Buddhism was largely a ‘lay movement’, not a priestly one.⁶⁴

The distinctive features that made the *samaṇa* stand out was their state of homelessness (*anāgāriyū* in Pāli). What united the *paribbājakas* was their unambiguous opposition to the tradition of the sacrificial cult presided over by the Brāhmaṇa. Though the Brāhmaṇas did not have a homogenous set of ideals they had the recognizable pattern of sacrificial rituals to act as markers. Before the rise of Buddhism the *paribbājaka* tradition on the whole became anti-Vedic and anti- Brahmanical, denying the Brahmanical claim of special knowledge of the revealed texts handed down for generations within the exclusive confines of their caste.

The renouncer unlike most of the ascetics shed all symbols of Vedic culture including the sacred thread (*upavīta*) or the tuft of hair on the head (*śikhā*) The Vinaya Piṭaka has a graphic description of the jaṭila Uruvela Kassapa shaving off his matted locks and throwing away his fire-worship implements into the river.⁶⁵

The word *samaṇa* first appears in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad as a person engaged in religious endeavours.⁶⁶ Significantly, in the later Upanisads and the Dharma Sūtra texts the term ‘aśrama’ surfaces and ‘śramaṇa’ disappears from the Brahmanical vocabulary. In the Buddhist texts however, *samaṇa* becomes a generic term to describe the *titthiyas*,

the *paribbājaka* orders. On the other hand, the word *samnyāsin* was used to designate the followers of Brahmanical sects or others closely associated with the Brahmanical orders.

It can be assumed that in the age of the Buddha, the Brāhmaṇa was mostly seen as a house holder. Contemporary Brahmanical literature also hail the state of gṛhasthya as the best. In the Buddhist textual universe also the Brahmaṇas are always advocating the life of the who pursued the only life that was worthwhile, while the recluse achieved nothing.⁶⁷ In the Dīgha Nikāya the king Ajātaśatru asks about the fruits of the life of a recluse. He poses his question before six leaders of various sects. None of them represented a Brahmanical order.⁶⁸

In the early Pāli texts this contradiction between the *samaṇa* and the *Brāhmaṇa* is brought out in vivid imageries. The imagery of the Brāhmaṇa is posited in sharp contrast to the noble *bhikkhu*. In the Sutta Nipāta the Buddha articulates his contempt for contemporary Brāhmaṇas. According to him in the earlier days the Brāhmaṇas practised restraint and refrained from amassing wealth. The contemporary Brāhmaṇas on the other hand, coveted all kinds of material wealth and this led them to conduct large public sacrifices and they embarked on a killing spree.⁶⁹ This indicates a sense of moral degradation of the Brāhmaṇas who were being sucked into the materialistic vortex of social existence. This progressive decline of the Brāhmaṇas imagined in the Buddhist texts show the ploy of the Buddhists to gain a toehold within the Brahmanically oriented society.

In the Pāli texts the Brahmaṇas are depicted as grounded in the productive functions of the agrarian society. Only a handful of them lived on alms, some would retreat into a hermitage make ends meet through

pedagogical practices. But in the Pāli texts we have umpteen references to affluent Brāhmaṇas, those hailing from Kośala and Magadha possessed vast tracts of *brahmadeya* land and had considerable property in the countryside. Often in the Buddhist texts the Buddha is chastised by a landowning Brāhmaṇa, engaged in managing his estate, because of the unproductive nature of the *paribbājakas*' existence. The Buddha is peremptorily advised to work the fields for his food.⁷⁰

Unlike the *paribbājakas* who moved about from one place to another and engaged in philosophical discussions with other teachers, the Brāhmaṇas were sedentary. They were more preoccupied with the question of the pre-eminence of the Brāhmaṇas as a social group as well as the question of receiving gifts for specific ritual functions. They often claimed that they deserved better gifts as sacrifices benefitted a lot of people while the Buddhists were only concerned with individual salvation.

In the Pāli texts however, the term Brahmaṇa is not always used in a pejorative sense. The combined term *samaṇa-brāhmaṇa* may have represented mutually antagonistic categories in the Pāli texts. The same understanding resonates in Patanjali's Mahābhāṣya.⁷¹ But to the common lay people the conjoined term most probably conveyed a sense of spiritual value that set these two categories apart from all and sundry, which is also reflected in the Aśokān edicts. These two categories were revered because of the special knowledge they were supposed to possess, as well as for their extraordinary merits. These parameters of virtue were pivoted to the notion of non-attachment. Thus it can be said that in popular imagination at least, the *samaṇas* and the *brāhmaṇas* were considered as similar in spiritual qualities. In the Pāli texts the notion of the brāhmaṇa often comes across as a normative term, associated with an ideal value that could be practised by anyone.

While the Buddhists painstakingly spelt out a set of distinctive cultural markers to set them apart from the rest of the *paribbājaka* order, the texts also have a notion of shared history and common culture. The motif of wandering teachers living on alms was already well established at the age of the Buddha. The earliest suttas of the Sutta Nipāta like the Khaggavisāṇa Sutta, Muni sutta and Uraga Sutta emphasised on the conduct of the Bhikkhu or the muni who is portrayed as a lone wanderer. In fact the ideal conduct of the muni is bound up with his solitary status. This is a far cry from the well populated monastic context or the teacher travelling with five hundred followers and encountering questions from the community itself or from external interlocutors. the emphasis is on the Muni or the Bhikkhu in the earliest sections, not on the persona of the Buddha or on the saṃgha. The historical Buddha with his exclusive epithets like bhagavā, satthā or tathāgata is an elusive figure in the earlier sections.⁷²

This way of life also had a legitimacy in the civil society that had to be built up by years of persuasion and practice. The image of the *samaṇa* had to be dissociated from the ordinary beggar and tinged with a spiritual quality. The theoretical underpinning was that the *samaṇa* had gone forth from ‘home to homelessness’ to pursue certain spiritual goals. The wider society at this particular juncture in history began to endorse these goals.

The wanderers shared a common culture of critical questioning and often sought to engage in debates and discussions. This spirit of active engagement with philosophical queries was a striking feature prior to the Buddha. The Buddha himself had to go through several stages and had to engage with other thinkers while still grappling with the shadowy contours of his own doctrines.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, describes a public debate between Uddālaka Āruṇi and Svaiddāyana Gautama.⁷³ This foreshadows the motif of public debates staged in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which came a bit later, around 700BCE, and in which the more formal features of public interchange of views on metaphysical issues were foregrounded.

The scene of discussion in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad appears to open up more clearly as a series of argumentations are described. Notably, this was set in the court of Janaka, on the occasion of a sacrifice, where all the noted brāhmaṇas from Kuru - Pāñcāla regions had flocked.⁷⁴ Yājñavalkya here takes on a number of challengers – Aśvala, Jārtkāraṇa Ārtabhāga, Bhujyu Lāhyāyani, Uṣasta Cākrāyaṇa, Kahola Kauṣitakeya, Gārgī Vācakanvī, Uddālaka Āruṇi, Vidagdha Śākalya, with Gārgī coming twice to confront him. The argumentative axis rotates along varied shades of two principal polemical positions- the idealist and the naturalist. This episode where Yājñavalkya emerges victorious is in tune with the general tone of the Śukla Yajurveda School, as is the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where also the figure of Yājñavalkya towers over everybody else. What is interesting however is that, that all the contestants present their arguments in a particular way within a formal framework of the conventions of a public debate.

The court of Janaka which is the locus of the debate opens up more interesting possibilities. With the geographical horizons being broadened, the spatial context suggests new groups of people to converse with who were far removed from the heartland of Vedic praxis. Thus it was essential to develop new ways of speaking and engagement with local traditions of public conversation. This tradition might have some bearings on the dialogic devices developed by the new sects like the Buddhists, Jains and Ājīvikas who would preach in the Kośala-Videha-Magadha

region roughly a century later. Thus the milieu of the Vedic sacrifice is marginalised in this context and a new arena of public conversation comes into being.

The early the Buddhist Nikāyik discourses however encapsulated a speculative approach which is geared to contemporary social and moralistic concerns more directly. The spirit of debate and argumentation was favoured by the early Buddhist, couched in the distinctively ethical tone. The practice of debates and discussions and finally coming to a concord was part of the political convention of the Ganga valley gaṇa systems. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta the Buddha condones the institution of the Licchavi assembly which was the locus of debates and discussions finally leading to concerted action and advises the monks to follow that pattern.⁷⁵

This format of public debate also surfaces as the Buddha assesses and critiques social institutions like the system of caste. The proclamations are not monologic but develop in a dialogic format and establishes superiority of wisdom and ethical conduct over the factor of birth.⁷⁶

In the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas, the Buddha grooms his disciples for public speaking and ironing out complicated ethical issues within the framework of formal preaching. This would not only chalk out what to speak about and how to speak but also how not to speak. Thus both the Brahmajāla Sutta⁷⁷ and the Kathāvatthu Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya⁷⁸ fix the correct themes of discussion and define useless idle chatter.

These worthless topics include “....diverse sorts of aimless talks about such things as: Rajahs, robbers and great ministers; talk of armies, panic and battle; talk of food and ‘animal talk’, drink, clothes, beds, flowers, garlands and perfumes; talk of relatives, vehicles, villages, townships,

cities and districts; talk about women and champions, about streets and gossip at the well; ghost stories, desultory talk and fables about (the origin of) land and sea; and talk of becoming and non – becoming.⁷⁹ The last refers to the sceptics who are taken down quite ruthlessly in the Buddhist texts.

This tradition of debates and of trying to comprehend each others points of view was propped up by the the existence of spaces earmarked for holding impromptu sessions of discussion. The term *kutuhalasāla* crops up in the Saṃyutta Nikāya and denotes a special space for debates.⁸⁰ It would seem to be any place close to a settlement, where the prominent thinkers of the age gathered and were invoked to speak in turn on a given topic of philosophical importance. It could be a splendid hall or a garden or a sacred grove out in the open which could serve this purpose.

The Pāli mention natural elements like fresh water tanks(*pokkharīṇi*), sacred groves with shrines(*cetiya*), gardens and orchards on the fringes of the city. These transitional spaces between the fine settlements and the forested tracts surrounding them are associated with the *paribbājaka* teachers in the Pāli texts.

This phenomenon of gathering in a park where the in the vicinity of Rājagaha is brought out very vividly in the *Majjhima Nikāya*.⁸¹ At the crack of dawn, the wanderers gathered in the sanctuaries and advocated the eminence of each sect. The serene landscape where the squirrel were fed was abuzz with the hum of voices. This phenomenon of exchange of views not only induced cross-fertilization of ideas , but also helped to generate a common culture.

Uma Chakravarti argues that this practice of renunciation and mendicancy was condoned by the wider society to the extent that even the

strands of thought that turned away from all kinds of spiritual phenomena and rejected all kinds of extra-sensory perceptions, had to adhere to the idea of renunciation to make any impact on the society. Ajita Kesakambali who relied on reasoning and speculation and recognized the physical world as the only reality, took recourse to ascetic practices to drive home the main principles of his teaching and did this naturally, as a matter of course.⁸² That demonstrates the power and legitimacy of the wandering tradition coupled with ascetic principles. The idea that rigorous asceticism had more impact on the people was also becoming a potent force within the *paribbājaka* tradition. This is very clear from the early Buddhist texts as they had to contend with this idea from its very inception. The Buddha had dispensed with the idea of extreme self-mortification and thus accusations poured in. The aspersions cast on the Buddhist order for moral laxity could sway peoples' opinions.

As the doctrines of the new orders were still nebulous with hazy contours there was always the anxiety that monks would defect from and move on to embrace a new order. The early story in the Vinaya Piṭaka⁸³ which describe the defection of the Buddha's cousin Devadatta and his followers reverberate with this anxiety of defection and schism. This movement of monks across the wide spectrum of the *paribbājaka* tradition and its impact on the lay population was the principal impetus behind this unfurling of cultural markers which set out to articulate the distinctiveness of the early Buddhist order.

This phenomenon of defection would have also affected the structure of patronage adversely. Any erosion in their ranks would have made the king and the commoner to look askance on that particular order.

On the other hand , these cross-movements of monks were often tolerated and further legitimized through brief narratives. Sāriputta and Moggallāna were allowed to join the Buddhist order only after they had declared their intention and received permission from the *gaṇācariya* Sañjaya Belatṭhiputta. It is further stated that Sañjaya tried to stall the process of defection through various means. Among these was the offer to share the leadership of the order with the two monks. However, this offer was declined and Sāriputta and Moggallāna joined the Buddhist order.⁸⁴ This story illustrates the slightly underhand dealings of the other teachers to keep their ranks intact. Stories of this sort abound in the *Vinaya* texts. When the *jaṭila* Uruvela Kassapa decided to go over to the Buddhist saṅgha he gave his followers the option to remain in the folds of the *jaṭila* order or to follow him in embracing Buddhism.⁸⁵ All these stories were related to the integrity of the saṅgha and differences on doctrinal matters.

However, tensions also brewed around matters relating to high philosophical questions.

Against this very complex backdrop the speech acts emerge not merely as an expression of a more sophisticated cognitive process for the logical operation of systematic thought but as The Buddhists' very own way of making sense and explaining the world and fleshing out their own parts in it. The other thing is that these utterances required multifarious and coherent contexts to describe the world more clearly and through the interplay of ideas and experiences emulate real life. These speech-acts as sources of history might not contain direct comments on the past but leave imprints of circumstantial evidence. Engaging with them on various levels and understanding specific functions of these utterances could help to improvise new interpretative tools for reading and understanding the

genre within its specific contexts. This spatial dimension of the scope of intellectual disseminations conveys the idea of a shared space and also foregrounds a notion of multi-temporality. The landscape cradles many pasts. As the Pāli texts describe and relate to the specific landmarks, the refracted utterances of these ‘pasts’ were also imbibed and assimilated.

Notes

¹ Vin.I.197; Horner, 2007 (Reprint), p. 266.

² BaudhDhS. 1.2.9., VaṣDhS.1.8–12.

³ Bronkhorst, J, *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India* (2007), Brill, Leiden.Boston, 2007, pp.4–5.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Chakravarti, Ranabir, ‘State Formation and Polity’ in Abdul Momin Chowdhury and Ranabir Chakravarti eds., *History of Bangladesh: Early Bengal in Regional Perspective up to c.1200 CE, Vol-I*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2018, p. 860.

⁶ Charavarti, Uma, *Social Dimension of Early Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987, pp.26–27.

⁷ A.I.13., Woodward, F.L.1932, p.192

⁸ D.II.146, Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.161.

⁹ Vin. I.342 Horner, 2007 (Reprint), pp.503–504.

¹⁰ A.V.54

¹¹ D.I.87, Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.108.

¹² J.V.515, Francis, H.T., 1905, p.31.

¹³ J.IV.465, Rouse, W.H.D., 1901, p.91.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ S.V.348

¹⁶ J.V.536, Francis, H.T., 1905, p.219.

¹⁷ M.III.110., Horner, I.B., 1999 (Reprint), pp.152–162.

¹⁸ D.I.112., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.144–146.

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- ¹⁹ Erdosy, G., 'The Origin of Cities in the Ganges Valley' in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol.28, No.1(1985), pp. 38–40
- ²⁰ S.3.15.
- ²¹ Sarao, K.T.S., *Urban Centres and Urbanisation*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 2010 (Revised Edition), pp. 51–52.
- ²² Sharma, J.P. *Republics in Ancient India*, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1968, pp.78–83
- ²³ D.II.104–107 Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.110–113.
- ²⁴ Chakravarti, Uma, op.cit., pp.12–16.
- ²⁵ D.II.235., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.268–269.
- ²⁶ ŚB.1.4.1.14–17.
- ²⁷ Erdosy, op.cit., pp. 81–109.
- ²⁸ For example, SN.IV.193.
- ²⁹ Sarao, 2010, pp. 41–52.
- ³⁰ Chakravarti, op.cit., pp.49–55.
- ³¹ Bailey, G. and Mabbett, I., *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp.24–29.
- ³² Erdosy, op.cit., pp.85–86.
- ³³ Schopen, G., *Indian Monastic Buddhism*, Motilal Banarasidass publishers, Delhi, 2010, pp.23–24. Schopen has commented upon the discrepancy between the textual and material evidence in the study of Buddhism and the primacy given to the texts, in spite of the rarefied world they project.
- ³⁴ D.II.140., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.153–154.
- ³⁵ D.II.137., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.149.
- ³⁶ D.II.159–160., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.180–181.
- ³⁷ D.II.147., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.161.
- ³⁸ Cunningham, A., *Four Reports made during the Years 1862–63–64–65*, Vol.I, Archaeological survey of India, Simla, 1871, p.79.
- ³⁹ Carlleyle, A.C.L., *Report on Tours in Gorakhpur, Saran and Ghazipur in 1877–78–79 and 80*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 2000(Reprint), pp. 17–28.
- ⁴⁰ *Si-Yu-Ki*, (Beal), Vol–II.p.39.
- ⁴¹ A.III.320, M.II.57, D.II.141, S.IV.111–12.
- ⁴² D.II.141., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.154.

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- ⁴³ Jayswal, Vidula, *The Buddhist Landscape of Varanasi*, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2015, pp.22–24.
- ⁴⁴ Jātaka 12, Fausboll, pp.145–153.
- ⁴⁵ M.II.74., Horner, 2002 (Reprint), p.267.
- ⁴⁶ M.II.133–134., Horner, 2002 (Reprint), p.318.
- ⁴⁷ D.II.102–103., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), pp.110–111.
- ⁴⁸ A.II.167., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.174.
- ⁴⁹ D.II.116., Rhys Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., 2007 (Reprint), p.123.
- ⁵⁰ ŚB, 1.4.1.10–17;Eggeling, 1882, pp.104–106.
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Chapter Two

Communicative Modes in the Early Theravāda Buddhist Canon: The Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas

The four principal Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Theravāda collection are all as we have seen, originally oral literature- dating roughly from the third century BCE, when they were taking shape as recognizable ‘texts’ and set down in writing around the beginning of the common Era. Buddhism, with its multifarious socio-cultural as well as intellectual dimensions has been explained as having its roots within the cultural orbit of what we call the Majjhimadesa. As we have also seen Majjhimadesa is not a homogenous category and an inert land-mass but an important conceptual and cultural category comprising layers of historical memory with changing contours. Buddhist texts explore their connections with this land-mass when important socio-political processes and systemic changes were taking place within its orbit involving new forms of resource mobilization, emergence of state-based societies, movement of people and sprouting of many features of city-culture.

Starting from Max Weber a long line of scholars have claimed that Buddhism was the creation of a city culture and a product of the time of urban development. It arose at a time of rapid social change when new political and economic forces were unleashed. In the early days Buddhism depended very heavily on the donations and generosity of the rich and the influential in more than one way. It has been said that whereas pre-Buddhist literature had almost exclusively a rural milieu as its context, the early Pali literature lives and breathes a new urban spirit. The texts on the surface agree with this surmise. The Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas, show that in terms of frequency of references, urban centres far outnumber rural settlements. The urban character of Buddhism is further buttressed by the which shows that of all the persons mentioned in the Vinaya and the Nikāyas, whose native backgrounds have been mentioned, more than 90% came from urban places. The prominent social figures of early Buddhism or the heroes are the rich merchant-bankers and the new kings. Uma chakravarti has argued that the new religion had a dialectical relationship with the contemporary society. On one hand produced a narrative that legitimized the rising urban state and the commercial ethos associated with it and on the other hand it offered a spiritual balm to those groups who suffered from the effects of urbanization.¹

In the four major Nikāyas roughly three hundred suttas are directly addressed to different groups of the laity, For example ,the gahapatis top the list with 121 suttas directed towards them, followed by Brāhmaṇas (99), king (36), Brāhmaṇa students (18), headmen, ministers, Lay women (18) etc. The Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas have the more elaborate frame -stories and the background is easier to assess.

Pasenadi, the king of Kosala is the most prominent individual to be addressed directly, 30 suttas have been addressed to him. Not surprisingly, the most prominent householder anāthapiṇḍika follows with 23 suttas to his name. Mahānāma the Sakyian (17) and Visākhā Migāramātā(6) are the other personalities who feature as in-text audience.

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But the Pali sources are rather tricky. It is interesting that the earliest layers of the principal Nikāyas and the Sutta Nipāta, the common frame of introducing the suttāntas by the names of big towns like Sāvatthi or Rājagaha is absent. Instead we have place-names identifying and locating medium-sized nīgamas and villages where the first generation of monks stopped and preached. These early locations very soon faded into oblivion and were overshadowed by the prominent cities foregrounded in the later layers of the texts.

The Buddhist texts took shape in a context where change was slow and gradual within an expanding society and a comparatively stable and prosperous economy. This was also a period of assimilation, contestation and negotiations, as the state-based societies with their new types of personnel and ideological emissaries were interacting with remoter cultures on multiple plains. The figure of the peripatetic monk, who is a loner and has forsaken all connections with either world, was on the other hand a negotiator who was conversant with the ways of both the worlds and could help to evolve all kinds of strategic rhetoric. In the earliest

layers of the Sutta Nipāta, we can trace the earliest utterances of these rhetorical devices and the first attempt of creating a voice that would permeate local communities as well as having a wider appeal.

In this context, the texts reveal multiple faces of Buddhism. The original message was not erased from the corpus of Buddhist utterances and on the other hand there were also public forms of articulation as a certain section of the monks were drawn into a web of social interaction and negotiations. It has been argued that, in its essence and core, Buddhism is a movement of the monastic ascetics. But if we look at the in-text audience the number of sermons directed towards the laity, were not insignificant. The Sutta Nipāta foregrounds the earliest archetypes as far as the new kind of conversation is concerned.

The Budding of Narrative Forms in the Sutta Nipāta

The Sutta Nipāta of the khuddaka Nikāya is like all Nikāyik texts a combination of older and younger material. Internal evidence put forward by Chalmers and later analysis of the content by K.R. Norman agree that though the two vaggas Aṭṭhaka and Pārayana preserve oldest material, other vaggas are also interspersed with material from the same stratum.² These last two vaggas probably had a separate existence before the closure of the collection as they have been mentioned in various Pāli works and as they were embedded in very old commentarial material which itself had been incorporated within the canon at some point of time before the collection took its final shape. Apart from linguistic evidence, the principal factor for determining the time range of this compilation was the trajectory of doctrinal difference which has a close link with the development of the narrative forms that will be foregrounded in the

following analysis. The most important external evidence for pinning down the time range of this compilation is of course the Bhabra Edict of Aśoka which mentions individual suttas but had no reference to the collection as a whole.

From the aspect of form too the text is a combination of verse and prose. While the Suttas of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga and the Pucchās of Pārāyana Vagga are entirely in verse, the suttas of the other vaggas contain both prose and verse. Though the language of the prose is similar to the prose of the Nikāyas, the prose are not really essential. The prose is important because it illuminates the context or the nidāna and is in this way an aid to the unfurling of the narrative element. The narrative element manifests itself in prose and verse.

The narrative elements in the Sutta Nipāta are unfurled in three distinct layers, which can be traced temporally and also through a corresponding evolution of forms each having its specific purposive intent of communication. Temporally speaking the narrative ballads of the Aṭṭhaka Vagga and the thematically connected ballads in the Uraga Vagga which focus on ascetic ideals are among the oldest of the narrative sections. On the first level we have the didactic poems of the first three vaggas, where discourse or speech is narrativised. Then come the dialogue ballads of the Uraga Vagga and the Yakkha ballads, followed by Pabbjā, Padhāna and Nālaka Suttas of the Maha Vagga where we have narrative ballads interspersed with dialogues. This third layer of compositions also contain important biographical units connected with the historical Buddha.

It has to be noted that in the earliest sections mentioned above a sectarian character had developed. Specific terminology imbued with essentially Buddhist connotations appear. Yet the emphasis is on the Muni or the

Bhikkhu in the earliest sections, not on the persona of the Buddha or on the saṃgha. The term ‘muni’ abounds in the early gāthas, with the Buddha being described as a muni.³ Similarly, Bhikkhu is the commoner term in the Uruga Sutta.⁴ The term samaṇa is used in general sense and refers to the wider śramaṇic tradition. The historical Buddha with his exclusive epithets like bhagavā, sathā or tathāgata is an elusive figure in the earlier sections. Thus the early sections show doctrinal development but is still unfamiliar with what would become foundational in monastic Buddhism. In keeping with this shift the narrative forms would also change in the latter portions of the collection.

From a universal ascetic ideal a trajectory can be traced to specific Buddhistic ideals, then to cut and dried Buddhist ecclesiastical utterances and would branch off into the domains of popular Buddhism and manufacture of legends. The narrative forms would shift accordingly.

The earliest suttas like the Khaggavisāṇa Sutta, Muni sutta and Uruga Sutta formed the foundation of this collection. These are didactic ballads with regular refrains running through them. These are discourses narrativised for didactic purposes. The emphasis is on the conduct of the Bhikkhu or the muni who is portrayed as a lone wanderer. In fact the ideal conduct of the muni is bound up with his solitary status. This is a far cry from the well populated monastic context or the teacher travelling with five hundred followers and encountering questions from the community itself or from external interlocutors. Just as it becomes necessary to portray variations in the context or nidāna to foreground interchange of views in different situations, the context has to be more clearly delineated and the narrative element is valorized. These suttas have no context or nidāna to speak of and are entirely in verse. The Khaggavisāṇa Sutta for example, has striking lyrical qualities. It unfolds

itself as a soliloquy and foregrounds the merits of the wanderer who roams the forest like some wild beast, unfettered and in total control. The life of the householder is a curse, enmeshed in domestic relationships a man is weighed down, even as a branch of a tree is weighed down by creepers. The wanderer is encouraged to seek out one trusted mate who is his equal and if he is not to be found, to set out all alone.⁵ This is a fragment crafted out of the wider paribbājaka tradition, steeped in the tradition of enduring all kinds of hardships, the larger than life figure of the Master does not figure in these utterances. Here the wanderer is a lonely male who after setting forth feels like a king who has given up his kingdom. The woman wanderer is almost absent in the text. In the earliest layer, the wanderer is exclusively male. The format of these speech acts are relatively simple as the dialogic or argumentative devices associated with the latter suttas are absent. The notion of the ‘other’ or the in-text addressee or interlocutor is also not immanent in these suttas. The split between the reciter and the protagonist is also not clearly delineated. Thus breaking up the speech acts by splitting into various persona and creation of various narrative surfaces is a technique not resorted to in these particular suttas. These reiterate the distinct identity that the wandering preachers had crafted out for themselves.

The next stage in narrativization is characterized by the dialogue ballads of the *Uraga Vagga* and the *Yakkha* ballads. The dramatization of the dialogue ballad is exemplified by the *Dhaniya Sutta* where the Buddha is being questioned by the herdsman *Dhaniya*.⁶ This composition is more complex in the sense that a narrative context and one in-text interlocutor is present, though a separate *nidāna* section is absent and the entire composition is in verse. Here the crux of the dialogic device is that the Buddha plucks out a word of the interlocutor and inverts the

connotations. The dialogue is unfurled in an easy pace and the higher truth is articulated in mundane and quotidian terminology. As the conversation oscillates between two or more persons and the reciter appears in the background, a performative aspect of the gāthas are hinted at, though there is no concrete evidence, in the Sutta Nipāta itself there is a reference that the gāthās were sung (gāthābhigītam)⁷. Here even without the nidāna we have an inkling of the situation in which the conversation takes place. We even have a glimpse into the life of Dhaniya who is an affluent herdsman. As he one by one ticks off all the worldly goods he possesses the Buddha picks out a item of wealth and goes off in a tangent to a different direction altogether. For example, as Dhaniya remarks that in his house the fire is lit and the roof of his house is sturdy to ward off the harsh weather, the Master at once replies that his fire has been quenched and his roof is gaping wide. Thus ordinary meaning of the terms is turned into its head and the dialogue switches on to a different mode of metaphysical utterings. However, after continuing his argument with the Buddha for a fair length of time during which there is no indication that Dhaniya grasps the transcendental value of these utterings, at the end he suddenly sees lights and hails the Buddha as his teacher. It is interesting that the Buddha and Dhaniya occupy equal textual space throughout the Sutta.

The Kāśibhāradvāja Sutta on the other hand is similar in content but deviates as far as the format is concerned.⁸ In the earlier sutta the interlocutor is presented as an ordinary labourer who would eventually turn into a lay disciple. There is an escalation of the dramatic element as alternate antithetical verses are uttered by the herdsman and the Buddha respectively. Here the Buddha picks on specific words uttered by the interlocutor and imbues them with new meanings as the higher meanings

of his message are articulated in mundane everyday terms. In the later sutta however, the interlocutor is a ploughman who just asks one question. The Buddha on the other hand, gives a long answer in agrarian metaphors alluding to important Buddhist concepts. Here the dialogic element is cut down and the didactic element is foregrounded. The question and the answer is embedded in an introductory and explanatory prose portion which comprises the *nidāna*. The divergence in the modes of address can be linked not so much to the in-text interlocutor but rather to a mixed audience outside the text.

Another dimension of the dialogue ballad are discernible in the riddle poetry of the *Uraga vagga*- the *Ālavaka* and *Hemavata Sutta*.⁹ *Hemavata Sutta* is divided into three parts with conversations being carried out in three different planes. Each conversation is handled in a different manner. In the first part there is free flowing two-way dialogue between two friends, who discuss the omniscience of the Buddha. *Hemavata* is the *Yakkha* who repeatedly and energetically question the spiritual prowess of the Buddha. In the next part The conversation switches between Buddha and *Hemavata* with the Buddha convincing his interlocutors of the supremacy of the true path. The third part is the conclusion which is a speech exalting the Buddha. Thus various dialogic devices are introduced to ensure the flow of the narrative. The interesting thing is, that even here the persona of the Buddha does not regulate the narrative, rather the notions centred around the qualities of the sage , the superiority of the ascetic life and conduct channelize the flow of the narrative.

The *Yakkha Ballads* of the *Culla Vagga* are embedded in prose introductions. Here the interlocutor is less active and the Buddha replies with a long discourse. In the *Amagandha Sutta* for example, the *Yakkha* asks just one question.¹⁰ In the *Sūciloma Sutta* too the interlocutor hardly

speaks.¹¹ These can be closer in format to the didactic gāthās. Yet there is a very palpable difference. The earlier didactic ballads were hardly authoritative proclamations. The figure of the Buddha as a teacher and the leader of an order gives the latter compositions an aura of authority and a more evolved format for churning out direct proclamation. The presence of a sizeable nidāna in the Sūciloma Sutta gives it a further stamp of authenticity. In the Amagandha Sutta the Buddha enumerating the benefits of ethical conduct is a former Buddha Kassapa. This indicates a further attempt to legitimize the authority of the Teacher in clearer terms by tracing a long line of Buddhas, all of whom were founders of an order.

In the Mahā Vagga we have three narrative ballads with occasional dialogues. The Pabbajjā sutta also contains biographical units which delineate the context.¹² Here Bimbisāra's meeting with the Buddha in Rājagṛha brings out the context in sharper detail. These are not connected biographical compositions. But this is the platform from where the biographical compositions took off. The multi-temporal aspect also heightens the narrative element. Change in scene and events regulate the flow of the narrative. Rājagṛha as the focal point of the burgeoning Magadhan power is also identified as place where Buddhism takes deep roots through the personal intervention of the Buddha and in collaboration with the secular authority. The Buddha also relates his origin in the Sākya realm and his royal connections to the king. But then proclaims his utter disdain for material pleasures and royal opulence. Thus he proclaims his superiority over the king and the mundane notions of authority. The king was impressed by the noble and elegant bearing of the Buddha as he caught sight of him from afar. The verse describes how the King approaches the Buddha at his hilly refuge on foot and greets him. This is a precursor to the later narrative frame in the principal

Nikāyas where the king approaches the master respectfully, waits for his permission and sits down on a lower level.

The Padhāna sutta is thematically connected with the Pabbajjā. This sutta uses allegories in a sophisticated way to present the Buddha's conquest of evil. This shows that the Māra legend was beginning to crystallize but not fully developed.¹³

The Nālaka Sutta consists of two parts-the introductory vatthu-gāthā and the dialogue discourse dealing with the state of the muni. In the Nālaka Sutta there is slender connection between the introduction and the dialogue discourse. Most probably the Vatthu Gāthā was composed later and that is why the Buddha legend which was proliferating at a later phase is mostly pronounced in the Vatthu Gāthā.¹⁴

As we analyse the various strata of the text and try to relate them to different forms of speech act and varying degrees of narrativization we can say at best that it reveals a more nuanced relationship and a straight line can not define the connection. We can safely say that throughout the body of the text there are evidence of fiddling with various modes of communication, trying out one against the other keeping in mind the nature of the addressee. For example, in the context of Sutta Nipāta we can not assume that the nidāna is a clear sign of chronological lateness. The internal evidence puts the Pabbajā Sutta at a later stage of development yet does not have a separate nidāna in prose. On the other hand it foregrounds hagiographical and legendary material which points to a more later stage.

The most significant sign of an evolved mode of communication is however crystallizing in the text. The proclamations and conversations in the Sutta Nipāta were starting to show propensities of looking beyond the

text itself and incorporating groups outside the texts in a range of social conversations. For example, as the dialogic and argumentative devices evolved the presence of the ‘other’ as the in-text audience or interlocutor became imperative. The ‘other’ was often the Brāhmaṇas who were coupled with the samanas in popular imagination as embodying spiritual authority. The text has a whole range of conversations with various social groups, the Yakkhas and the Devas. But the conversations on metaphysical questions were actual argumentations carried on in the public arena. These negotiations and contestations were couched in a format of public discourse that had to be ironed out and put on display. For example, once when the Bhagavā was in Sāvattihī he had a conversation with a group of rich Kosalan Brāhmaṇas.¹⁵ Here the Buddha gives a long lecture on how the Brāhmaṇas have deviated from their age-old ideals. This was a tactical ploy to downplay the spiritual aura of the Brāhmaṇa, asserting that they were worthless even by their own standards and they had disgraced their own ancestors. But the most significant thing is that though the Kosalan Brāhmaṇas were the in-text audience this was a conversation that was hardly directed towards the Brāhmaṇas in the true sense. A Brāhmaṇa listening to this tirade would hardly feel flattered and gravitate willingly towards Buddhism. But the wider society especially the secular patrons would be interested in this conversation and could sway towards Buddhism. Thus there was an attempt to take the conversations to the public domain through various dialogic and narrative devices. This indicates an evolved mode of communication and it was already taking clear shape in the Sutta Nipāta.

The structure and Content of the Nikāyas: Problems of Stratification

The contents of the first four Nikāyas also comprise Suttas or discourses. These are predominantly speeches made by the Buddha or more rarely one of his close followers, put in a contextual frame where in a brief introduction the locus and the occasion of the specific utterances were mentioned. Sometimes these are fashioned as dialogues with framing narratives. All the suttas are as a rule in prose form. Only here and there the prose compositions are studded with verses or gāthās which are sometimes quotations or inserted at important junctures to accentuate the spirit of the prose utterances.

The Dīghanikāya or the Collection of Long Sermons has 34 suttas of considerable length each of which foregrounds single or multiple points of the doctrine, Divided into three vaggas with heterogenous material from earlier and later strata of tradition. The forms of the suttas also vary. The first book is written entirely in a prose format, while the second and third are a blend of prose and verse. Some of the suttas (No.20 and 21) were written almost entirely in verse.

G.C.pande's exhaustive work on the Nikāyas has illustrated that the suttas were made up of heterogenous material and the texts thus were stratified. He has also shown how a meticulous examination of the material concerned can help us to identify and chronologically locate various strata of the text.¹⁶ In the Dīgha Nikāya for example, the Brahmajāla or the Sāmaññaphala sutta are apparently unitary unalloyed compositions. But Pande has shown that these suttas had certain features which came quite late and were juxtaposed some very archaic material. On the other hand, the Mahaparinibbāna Sutta according to Pande is a 'veritable mosaic'.¹⁷ There had been a very early version of the sutta, which

developed during the course of time and was being continuously added to until it acquired its present form and was embellished with the prefix ‘mahā’. There are portions where Buddha appears as an ordinary human being bestowed with special knowledge and luminosity. These portions however, indicate the earlier stratum of the text. In the same sutta however, Buddha appears as a miracle-worker and a full-fledged divine being whose relics are enshrined in a stūpa and a new pattern of cultic worship. The last two suttas, the Saṃgīti and the Daśottara are considered to be fairly late because of its completely different format. It seems the later materials were slowly accruing to the second and third book of the Dīgha Nikāya.

The early and the late in the Nikāyas can be identified by taking note of doctrinal development and growth of metaphysical thought. The deification of the Teacher and creation of an elaborate cosmology, changes in style and vocabulary are also indicative of the passing of time. This kind of stylization also signified a shift towards the poetic in early Buddhist literature which is not commensurate with the earlier compositions with no frills. As the words of the Buddha were taken to be extremely profound and solemn compositions with a transcendental quality, compositions which had a poetic tone and ornamental syllabic structure were considered to weigh down the profundity of the message. The Aṅguttara Nikāya has a passage which echoes this sentiment and shows utter disdain for popular taste.¹⁸ Here the Buddha himself in a note of despair announces the day of doom when all his teachings or *suttāntas* will be rejected by the bhikkhus of the future and *suttāntas* which were poetic and fashioned by the poets will be embraced and appreciated. This articulates the deep-seated suspicion the saṃgha had for the poetic and the ornamental. In the same collection there is a passage that forbids the

bhikkhus to sing the suttas in a drawn out voice.¹⁹ It seems that the question of style was paramount to the Buddhist saṃgha who abhorred the idea of bhikkhus reciting the suttas in a non-monastic poetic style that resembled the style of bardic performance. Did this seriously hamper the attempt of the propagandist saṃgha to carve out a wider communicative space in the earlier period? Were they more seriously preoccupied with the notion of preserving the teachings of their Teacher than they were with the needs of their audience? Or did they fear a negative response from the laity who were always quick to point out the laxities of the monks?

It is highly improbable that this great mass of material comprising the Nikāyas were all collected and recited at the first Council. But no doubt a beginning in that direction was made quite early. The original teaching must have left room for interpretative divergences and the theras in the various monasteries were emerging as custodians and transmitters of this tradition while at the same time they were remembering, comparing and explaining the suttas.

But throughout the Nikāyas there is the general impression of homogeneity and doctrinal uniformity. Though there are controversies centring round interpretation, which have been referred to in the texts themselves, as far as the doctrinal matters were concerned there was an impression of uniformity. In fact the Nikāyas ignore more or less the issues that would stir up strong sectarian tendencies in a later period. Thus most of the suttas must have been in circulation by 1st century CE.

The authorship of the texts was embedded in the monastic milieu, but at the same time often these monasteries were located on the fringes of the towns and would also reflect the need to communicate with the

townspeople, householders and merchants. The texts were not primarily concerned with the courts or the kings though a refracted perspective of political authority and its workings would impinge on the texts. Political authority would be viewed as of primary importance but it would also be viewed through the prism of monastic interests. The predominance of orality reflected in the texts conveys a situation of face to face interaction, the respect towards the spoken word and also the spirit of debate that centred round the spoken word. The focus was on questioning and discussions, on arguments derived from logical thinking and was removed from the world of sacrosanct divine revelations.

The dialogic devices of the Nikāyas express this spirit. The first book of the Dīgha Nikāya is the Sīlakkhadhavaṃsa. Each of the suttas of this vagga contains a list of *śīlas* or moral rules. Most of the suttas describe the training of the bhikkhu following a circumscribed and pregressive path. First the bhikkhu has to imbibe the *śīlas* and then moving on to the practice of concentration or *samādhi* and ending with full knowledge of the *arahant*. The list of moral rules is most elaborately enumerated in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta, portions are found in other suttas. This suggests the Sāmaññaphala Sutta always contained the list in its original form and the other suttas drew from it. Otherwise it might indicate the list was in existence separately from which all the suttas including the Sāmaññaphala borrowed. Several of the Suttas start a polemical dialogue from the position of a Brāhmaṇa often foregrounding Brahmanical views on the supremacy of sacrifices and the sanctity of revealed knowledge. They also touch upon the issue of caste and the values of seclusion and self- mortification. The dialogue is carried forward by the Buddha by putting himself in his adversary's position, then accentuating ethical concepts involved, he steers his opponent to the goal of emancipation.

The second book is the Mahāvagga. In this vagga a fair number of suttas have the prefix ‘mahā’ in the title. It is possible that these suttas were based on shorter and earlier versions. Here however the narrative pattern changes and rather than discourses we have legends and origin myths.

The Third vagga, which is the Pāṭikavagga, consists of a motley collection and its contents indicate the doctrinal development and the elaboration of a Buddhist cosmology on a grand scale. This suggests a comparatively late origin of most of the suttas.

The Forms and Modes of Address in the Dīgha Nikāya

The speech-acts in the Dīgha Nikāya embedded in the composite suttas are remarkable for their heterogeneity and variety of forms and functions. Some of the narratives are distinguished by their literary style and the older material they contain. As most of the narratives are composite it is most difficult to separate older material from the new compositions. Often short texts are embedded in larger ones which are comparatively new.

The Dialogic Narrative

Sometimes they come in the form of dialogues similar to the Upaniṣads. Winternitz cites Oldenberg and postulates a close similarity between some of such dialogic devices in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta and the Yājñavalkya dialogue in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.²⁰ In the latter text, the motif of a public debate with Yajñavalkya as the verbal duellist par excellence became prominent. However, in this text we have two

occasions where Yājñavalkya makes his appearance as a duellist. The famous scene of verbal contest in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad unfurls as a series of face to face argumentations are. Notably, this was set in the court of Janaka, on the occasion of a sacrifice, where all the noted brāhmaṇas from Kuru - Pāñcāla regions had flocked.²¹ The argumentative axis rotates along varied shades of two principal polemical positions- the idealist and the naturalist. The other debate also takes place in the court of Janaka. But the challengers of Yājñavalkya are not physically present. The points of view of six Brhamins, mostly hailing from the Kuru-Pāñcāla region are summarised by King Janaka and related to Yājñavalkya who refutes them indirectly. This format has a uncanny resemblance with the Sāmaññaphala Sutta where the King Ajātasattu is the mediator.²² Here the king presents the views of the six principal rivals of the Buddha all of whom were founders of orders and had distinct philosophical positions. Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta appear here as contemporary leaders and authoritative figures within the paribbājaka tradition who represented rival religio-philosophical persuasions. However, here the resemblance ends. In the Buddhist Sutta the dialogue between the King and the master takes place in the Mango Grove of Jīvaka, which the King approaches in trepidation. The ritual context of the public debate is also missing. What is more important however, is that the aggressive tone of the Upaniṣadic debate is also missing. The Upaniṣadic debates had a lot more immediate concerns. They were bound up with notions of fabulous gifts and conspicuous consumption but also had wider cultural affiliations. The issue of regional rivalry and tussle between prominent Vedic schools are articulated in this motif of the public debate. In the Buddhist Sutta however, the reclusive tradition is foregrounded. Ajātasattu after briefly summarizing the

philosophers' positions and expressing his lack of enthusiasm for all of them puts a similar question to the Buddha. Here the King becomes the interlocutor and the Buddha engages directly with the King's question and discourses on the immediate fruit of the life of the recluse. The King draws his question from everyday experience and the Buddha answers in similar mode. The mention of the *śīlas* and the order presumably based on the Vinayas, highlights the sectarian tradition of the Buddhist saṅgha that nurtures the truly emancipated recluse, but on the whole, the preference for a culture of the renunciates vis-à-vis the life of a householder is what is being asserted. Thus the Buddha conjures up an alternative notion of authority based on compassion and wisdom which is shared by the greater tradition of the wandering teachers. Thus as the Buddha says, a slave who was always scoffed at could become a man venerated even by the king by going forth into homelessness. This notion of spiritual hegemony is couched in a non-aggressive and temperate discourse, which is awe-inspiring even for the King. As soon as approaches the assembly of the bhikkhus the calmness of the ambience impresses him and he wishes a similar courtly ambience for his son Udāyi. Thus the king aspires to the notions of spiritual authority that the Buddha represents.

The calmness and absence of pride reiterated in the text are qualities that operate positively in complex negotiations among diverse groups. Emotive conversations laden with everyday life values are to be got rid of. For example, in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya the older Brahmana Pokkharasāti asks his young student Ambaṭṭha to visit the Buddha and test whether he is truly wise.²³ The younger man approaches the Buddha not to seek unsolicited advice but rather to challenge him. The obdurate student does not greet the Buddha and remains standing. Then he hurls insults at the Buddha bringing into question his

noble birth. The Buddha in his turn reveals that Ambattha is actually descended from a slave girl. The mud slinging continues as the audience jeers at Ambattha. The Buddha then pours oil over troubled waters by taking Ambattha's side and engages him in a conversation on merits of birth vs. the value of moral conduct. The Buddha's engagement with Pokkharasāti on the other hand is different. The tone is gracious from the start.

In this section of the Dīgha Nikāya conversations with Brāhmaṇas form the bulk. More than half the suttas of this section have a Brāhmaṇa or a group of Brāhmaṇas as the in-text audience/interlocutor. On the outer surface, these dialogues have the motif of conversion as a form of closure. A stock phrase that confirms the conviction of the Brāhmaṇa is the verbal expression of this closure. This is preceded by description of certain conventional gestures that also symbolise the subservience of the Brāhmaṇa- like the offering of hospitality to the Buddha and lowering himself before the Buddha. But there are other layers in this verbal exchange. As we analyse the Ambattha Sutta we clearly see that the argument starts with the issue of birth and the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa. This issue is not circumvented. In the opening portion the Buddha does address this and establishes the superiority of his own birth within the folds of the Sākyas. Here the thirty-two *lakkanas* of the Great man are made visible for the Brāhmaṇas, who are always awestruck by the sight. This also implies very subtly a superiority of the Khattiya lineage by distinguishing someone who has the right to dominate and rule. Only then does he turn this issue of good birth on its head and asserts the supreme importance of compassion and wisdom. In this part he almost sides with the young Brāhmaṇa and declares that his lowly birth actually means nothing.

The exchange with the Brāhmaṇas are also not completely stereotypical. The good Brāhmaṇa and the Bad Brāhmaṇa are never mixed up and each are treated accordingly.

What is most important here that in the conversation with the Brāhmaṇas often end with a sudden spark of enlightenment that dispels darkness. Pokkharasāti thus says that something which was hidden became revealed in a moment of truth. This sudden glimmer of insight is achieved through conversing in a particular way. We must keep in mind that these are not actual dialogues, but archetypes of hundreds of other dialogues which could have taken place. Thus the notion that truth can be realised through conversations is a premise that shaped this particular textual moment into a historical moment.

The polite discourse continues with the ‘good Brāhmaṇas’ in the Sonadanda Sutta²⁴ and the Kūṭadanta Sutta.²⁵ In the first sutta the Buddha himself encourages the Brāhmaṇa Sonadanda to ask questions, as he was feeling intimidated in the presence of the Buddha. Sonadanda asks a question about the true meaning of the term Brāhmaṇa and the Buddha reasserts the primacy of wisdom and ethical conduct rather than birth in determining a true Brāhmaṇa. In the second the brāhmaṇa Kūṭadanta willingly seeks advice from the Buddha about the benefits of a Brahmanical sacrifice and is convinced by the Buddha that dāna is a much better mode of earning merit than useless destruction of life in Vedic sacrifices. There is an interesting insertion of a story of a past birth. Thus the narrative surface acquires an additional layer and the practice of sacrifices without bloodshed gains further legitimacy. The Suttas start a polemical dialogue from the position of a Brāhmaṇa often foregrounding Brahmanical views on the supremacy of sacrifices and the sanctity of revealed knowledge. They also touch upon the issue of caste and nobility

of birth. These are social issues ironed out in pleasant language which touches the heart of the people. In the Brahmajāla Sutta the benefits of such a pleasant discourse is related in no uncertain terms- Whatsoever word is blameless, pleasant to hear, lovely, reaching to the people- that is how Gotama speaks.²⁶ Here it is also said that, Gotama is a peacemaker, a binder together of those who are divided, impassioned for peace and a speaker of words that make peace.²⁷ ‘Pōri vāca²⁸’ in Pāli is a term that also crops up in this passage of the Brahmajāla Sutta. Etymologically this term is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘paura’. Literally this could be translated into ‘urbane’ speech.²⁹ Though polite and sophisticated this speech is also hegemonic and authoritative as it spells out what kind of ‘low talk’ has to be avoided.³⁰ All sorts of street-side gossip, tall tales, ghost stories, tales about food and drink and all kinds of items of luxury and extravagance, tales about war and women, about relationships, places, speculative tales about creation of land and sea, stories about kings, robbers, high ministers and heroes and all kinds of idle chit-chat and small talk were to be avoided. Even the question of being and non-being was regarded as idle conversation. This was a theme that does not blend with the rest too easily and must have been a question that was pondered upon by skeptics and agnostics. The Buddha says that these were the topics which were being regularly discussed by some samaṇas as well as the Brāhmaṇas. Even when the exchange with Brāhmaṇas turn slightly hostile, for example in the Tevijja Sutta³¹ where the young Brāhmaṇas claim that the ways shown by various Brāhmaṇas lead to a union with Brahmā and the Buddha asserts that this is foolish talk, not backed up by evidence, eventually the conversation is channelized into a true definition of this union and the tension is resolved. The Bhikkhu who is free from anger and malice is similar to the notion of Brhmā and with death his body is dissolved and it is the same as being united with

Brahmā. Thus enlightenment comes to the young Brāhmaṇas through a discourse that imbibes and absorbs their own specific phraseology.

Thus purely didactic suttas are interspersed with argumentative exchanges, which indicate a positive mode of address that transcended the notion of a passive audience. One of the best examples would be the Pāyāsi Sutta which stirs up a spirit of lively discussion and instead of inserting a secondary speaker who intervenes only to nod his assent, Pāyāsi makes repeated positive interventions and interrupts the principal speaker, who is Kassapa a principal disciple of the Buddha himself.³² This sutta however, is a part of the Mahāvagga. The exchange is with a local chieftain Pāyāsi who holds the opinion that there is no after life, no cycle of successive births and deaths nor the karmic cycle based on evil or good conduct. The interesting thing is that the Buddha does not figure in this exchange, the mantle of winning over Pāyāsi from these outrageous views is passed on to Kassapa. Perhaps it is the absence of the Master that allowed the interjections from Pāyāsi to determine the flow of the discourse, But the conversation is arranged in a similar way with Kassapa using apt similes and the mode of parabolic telling addressing each question specifically. There is a horrific story told by Pāyāsi about how he once imprisoned a criminal inside a jar and boiled him alive to observe whether he could watch the criminal's soul leaving his body. Sense perception and experimentation is devalued and at the same time associated with meaningless violence. Kassapa answers with aplomb that just as while dreaming about pleasure jaunts a sleeping person's soul can not be observed as it travels out of his body, a dead person's departing soul also can not be observed. Ultimately Pāyāsi is convinced.

The conversation is also lively when there is a exchange with the members of a rival sect. In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta and the

BrahmajālaSutta the Buddha responds to them indirectly. However, when there is a face to face conversation the issue that is foregrounded is the issue of laxity or rigidity of asceticism. Thus these conversations had a different flavour. In the Kassapa Sihanāda Sutta for example, the question of asceticism and self-mortification is brought to the fore.³³ Here too the conversation ensues in a gentle pace with the Buddha apparently agreeing with everything the interlocutor had said and yet establishing his own views about asceticism in clearer terms. The Buddha tells the naked ascetic Kassapa that he is in agreement with some intelligent and wise recluses and Brāhmaṇas on some issues, while on other issues he does not see eye to eye. Ultimately, the principal markers of a Brāhmaṇa or a samaṇa turn out to be absence of anger and ill will and freedom from all kinds of lusts, irrespective of all kinds of penance he goes through. Talking about the Brāhmaṇas and samaṇas in one breath, the Buddha talks about those who seek glory from extreme self mortification. The Buddha relates this issue with a scrupulous regard for others and compassion. Thus it can be said that extreme self mortification is perceived by the Buddha as arising out of a violent mindset that turns inward on to oneself. In this part of the conversation the samaṇa is clubbed with the Brāhmaṇa. This joint term of reference appear in certain suttas directed to the members of the rival sects. In the conversations with the Brāhmaṇas however the conversations rotate around specific ideological issues of the Brahmanical belief-system. In the last part of the Sutta the Buddha directs his address to the leaders of the rival sects exclusively. This part is doubly interesting as it clarifies the course and aim of the discourses. It is clearly stated that the speeches are to delivered in public assemblies, where upon being questioned, the Buddha expounds the problem and answers it to the satisfaction of everyone present. They value his words immensely and are convinced. Then they give outward

signs of their conviction and arrive at the Truth. Ultimately they are even capable of acting in accordance with the Truth.

Thus, the essence of these elongated dialogues is their propensity to spill out of the texts and to delineate a broader communicative space beyond the texts. The samaṇa Gotama lets forth his lion's roar in public, in the assemblies where men gather, not in the cloistered community of the monks.

Manufacture of legends

Most of the stories of the Mahāvagga are marked by mythological traits and aggrandisement of miraculous feats. They also have a palpable partiality for exaggerated epithets and for the elaborate enumeration of themes. They sometimes take on a proto-Jātaka format as for example in the Mahāsudassana Sutta.³⁴ This sutta can be thematically divided into three parts and as the prefix 'Mahā' suggests must have absorbed many accretions and interpolations. It is a common literary device of the texts to insert important utterances within the most important suttas so these suttas got more and more inflated as time progressed. This proto-Jātaka format is further carried forward in the Mahāsudassana Sutta where the story is fleshed out in detail and stress is laid on the notions of dāna and dama(self-conquest). This stress on generosity is somewhat rare in the early parts of the Nikāyas and probably has a different and bigger audience in mind. This signifies a broadening of the communicative space with Dāna in a newer sense of sharing emerging as a key ethical concept. According to standard Buddhist accounts in the Nikāyas memory of past births comes from meditative prowess. Memory of the past is gradually built up during concentrated practice of an advanced meditative

state. But the association between Buddhahood and multiple life memory does serve to highlight the spiritually advanced position of the Buddha and his superior capacity for insights into the past. Only the Buddha can recollect at will through many millions of aeons.

The Buddha's memory of the past is complete with all the constituents of social identity: place, name, caste, creed and creates his identity and temporality. In this Nikāyik proto- Jātaka format however, the focus is on human birth as it is the transcendental birth which is capable of breaking free from the shackles of life and death. Thus recollections are brought about to reinforce positive social relationships, not to undermine existing social structures. That this memory is mediated through an omniscient being helps to authenticate it. The great king of the Mahāsudassana Sutta who cast away desire for material things and broke free from the craving for after -life is none other than the Buddha in a past life. In the Buddhist suttas a group of people are joined together through a series of social actions and are reborn accordingly. Thus the notion of karma has a socio-ethical dimension.

The Mahāsudassana Sutta leads a series of suttas with replete with mythical matters and these stories have a tendency to treat doctrinal matters laid out in a numerical arrangement. This involves greater precision of expression and yet at the same time greater abstraction of content.

We also have legendary material rooted in a more recent past that explain the origin of clans and cities and legitimate rulership.³⁵ For example, a long excursus on the the origin of the seven cities (Dantapur , Potana. Māhissatī, Roruka, Mithilā, Campā and Vārānasī) and the association of them with seven tribes. The myths attempt to explain the origin of a clan

and also the city associated with It . Romila Thapar describes how the city as the residence of the ruling family was coterminous with the identity of the janapada.³⁶ For example, in the Ambaṭṭha sutta, the city of Kapilāvatthu becomes intrinsically associated with the clan of the Sākya, which in turn is claiming unilateral descent from a known ancestral figure (Okkāka in Pāli or Īkṣvaku in Sanskrit) and purity of lineage through sibling marriage.³⁷ In this tradition the Kṣatriya status of the clan is explicitly stated and origin is drawn from an established royal family. Thapar further argues that the repeated theme of exile and settling of new areas would either point to groups fissioning off from the original clan and migrating to new areas or these myths could also contain local aspirations, when local groups accruing power sought links with the powerful ruling houses of the middle Ganga valley.³⁸ Thus these myths had multiple tasks to perform. They established social links, legitimized succession or possible migration of powerful groups and imbued hegemonic groups with social status. In this way the stories sharply distanced themselves from Brahmanical narratives and Puranic lists of genealogy. The origin myths perhaps consciously emphasized their exclusivity and purity of descent to steer clear of the territories flaunting Brahmanical norms. The origin of social institutions was also looked at through a different prism and an alternative view of the past was evoked.

The Last Two Suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya: A Distinct Trend

The Saṃgīti sutta and the Dasuttara Sutta, the last two suttas of the collection show a numerical bend and attempts to provide a summary of the doctrine.³⁹ The Suttas are divided into sections dealing with subjects

from one to ten thus amounting to one hundred. There are overlaps and repetitions and the arrangement is not always systematic.

The other thing is that in the last two suttas the figure of Sāriputta looms large. As far as the suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya were concerned Ānanda and his disciple were not only custodians and transmitters of every sutta, Ānanda also had to cross check and verify every individual sutta and attest to the circumstances under which the suttas were first uttered.⁴⁰ Likewise Sāriputta and his disciples were responsible for the Majjhima. Though Sāriputta predeceased the Buddha and the burden would have fallen on his disciples. The numerical method which is the schema adopted by the Aṅguttara collection has never had special connection with Sāriputta. Yet the last two suttas of the Dīgha had Sariputta as the preacher par excellence. The Buddha himself praises Sāriputta's method of teaching as he first summarized and recited the salient points of the teaching and then elaborates in full detail.⁴¹ This was a flow-chart of sorts pin-pointing the teachings with accuracy and precision. In the last two suttas the narrative elements are cut down to the minimum. The frame story is given to explain the absence of the Buddha at the time of the discourse and to give Sāriputta a free rein. The frame story also contains the reference to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's death and the subsequent disarray within the Jain saṃgha. The Saṃgīti sutta however, gives a very detailed description of how communal recitation was meant to be carried out which has been validated by the Buddha at the end of the Sutta. The brethren sat facing the east and recited in unison (saṅgitipariyāyan ti samaggikāraṇaṃ).

Some Distinctive Features of the Speech -Acts

One of the most predominant characteristic of the prose narratives is the use of stock phrases or formulas which is a feature of oral texts. There are two principal methods for the composition oral literature. The first is the model proposed in understanding oral epic literature , which is the improvisatory method and where no two performances were exactly alike.If we consider the earliest phase of the collation of Buddhist literature as a period of comparatively free transmission and one of composition-performance then those texts that hail from the period theoretically should be the frozen version of one such performance. The second method involves the composition of a fixed text and its verbatim transmission. The stock phrases or the building blocks of the texts are basic units of both these methods of composition.Mark Allon's meticulous study on the stock phrases of the Dīgha Nikāya shows a plethora of such stock phrases with fixed structures and standardized set of meanings, which could be applied to certain specific situations.⁴² For example when there is a description of 'somebody approaching the Buddha' or 'going to an invited meal'the wording of such situations would be predictable and similar, winnowed out of a limited range of stock expressions. The Dīgha Nikāya narratives together with the Majjhima have proved to be the most wordy of all the texts. The Dīgha incorporates elaborate dictions that no doubt contribute to the length of the suttas. This feature might have come about because of the differences in the bhāṇaka tradition or a new question might be raised that these two texts had a different function within the Pāli canon and differences in diction could have crept in because of this. There was this further tendency in the Dīgha to form a string of similar word elements to lengthen the sutta.

Another characteristic feature of the text is repetition. Allon's study shows that Dīgha Nikāya shows repetition of sentences, passages and entire sections of the text. The wordings used to express a particular situation or concept are predictable and diversity of vocabulary is avoided. There is thus a conscious attempt on the part of the composers to homogenise the material and transmission of the texts as fixed texts. This has to be coupled with the imageries of communal recitation preserved in the texts themselves the composition-improvisation method does not seem to apply to the Buddhist texts and especially the Dīgha Nikāya. In the Pāsādika Sutta the Buddha himself advises communal recitation which he tactfully brings with reference to the squabbles among the Jains after the death of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta.⁴³

The Importance of the Nidāna or the Context

This device of delineating a context to conversations was important in the Dīgha Nikāya. Not that it reflects historical truth that such and such events took place at such and such place on a particular occasion, most of the introductions could be later insertions, but what they do signify is the bid on the author's part to provide a context and a description of the cultural setting that would have an oblique reference to reality and provide hints to historical conditions. The context has a three-fold significance- it posits the speech-act in a specific spatial-temporal context and also clarifies the reason behind the particular utterance. The factor of causality that is the premise of Buddhist perception of reality, permeates the fundamental texture of the Suttas.

The texts mention the conversations of the Buddha with various people in various cities where he preached, such as Rājagṛha, Śrāvastī, Campā,

Vaiśālī, Vārāṇasī or Kapilavastu. The conversation was with a wide range of people – monks, householders, heads of clans and kings. The Suttas mention local landmarks like streams, groves, hillocks and local shrines and often the Suttas are uttered outside the settlement in the proximity of these landmarks. Thus the speech-acts relate to these landmarks emotively and imbue them with deep affective values. Often the natural beauty and serenity of these landscapes are described in the most graphic detail. The utterances thus try to root themselves in the local landscape and the local community.

Narrative Structure and Mode of Address in the Majjhima Nikāya

The Majjhima Nikāya consists of 152 suttas arranged in three groups of fifty. They are further divided into vaggas of ten each, except for the penultimate vagga which has twelve suttas. There is no obvious order followed in the arrangement of suttas, except that suttas with similar names are clubbed together. There are interestingly seventeen pairs of suttas with the same name distinguished by the prefixes ‘mahā’ and ‘cūla’. In most cases the pairs are arranged together with sometimes the ‘mahā’ coming first and sometimes the ‘cūla’ coming first. The two yamakavaggas contain five and two such pairs respectively. But sometimes a ‘mahā’ has no ‘cūla’ counterpart. Often the ‘mahā’ version is longer than the ‘cūla’. But that is not always the case. Sometimes the pairs are not even connected thematically except for the link in the name. The two Hatthipadopama Suttas for example, have nothing in common except they both use the simile of an elephant’s footprint.⁴⁴ Sometimes however, like in the Dhammasamādāna Suttas, the two suttas deal with the same subject matter.⁴⁵

As far as the narrative elements are concerned this collection is strikingly similar to the Dīgha but on the whole the suttas are shorter. The Majjhima Nikāya contains some of the utterances that provide insight into the true nature of existence and thus have great significance for pedagogical practices. Yet, if we look at the collection as a whole, the arrangement of the Suttas do not follow a sequential pattern in accordance with pedagogical concerns or a logical thread that traces doctrinal developments.

The themes of the suttas are also more varied and the effort to provide each sutta with a context or a nidāna induces the creation of array of narrative situations. In this collection too we have the familiar formats of discourses like:

- i. Dialogic devices of elaborating on a theme embellished with an introduction or a frame story. Similes are often foregrounded in this type of discourses to smooth out doctrinal issues or to validate comments on socio-ethical themes.
- ii. Manufacture of legends and insertion of mythic narratives foreground the heterogeneity of this collection. These narratives too are often placed within a frame story with a clearly delineated narrative context. Some are fashioned as biographical fragments that illuminate episodes in the Buddha's life which are otherwise unknown to us. Most are on the other hand parts of biographical units which are complete in themselves and would accrue to later hagiographical literature in a more detailed form.
- iii. Unlike the Dīgha in the Majjhima Nikāya we also have some cut and dried sermons with almost no trace of a context.

- iv. In the Majjhima Nikāya we come across suttas which are neither dialogues nor sermons but simple narratives in the Ākhyāna style, combining both prose and verse.
- v. This collection also contains suttas laid out in the numerical style.

The Majjhima Nikāya foregrounds the narrative strategies and communicative devices of the early Buddhist texts more clearly as it has a wider variety of suttas addressed to various groups and individuals. What is significant here is that these suttas are not peopled by rigid and immovable archetypes, but the textual elements create vivid imageries and the characters are imbued with an individuality that is very rare in the entire Nikāyik corpus. Most of the suttas in the Majjhima Nikāya have the Buddhist monks as in-text audience and it seems that the text is intended for an inner ring of the community of monks. In the second part of the text however, the discourses are directed towards a wide array of addressee and the format of the dialogic narrative and the Ākhyāna really flower in this section.

In the Alagaddūpama Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya the categories of addressee are described and posited within the body of the discourse itself.⁴⁶ The Buddha says that the Dhamma, here clearly meaning his teachings, has been taught by him clearly, been opened up and all its wrappings have been ripped off. The message has reached various categories of people and has transformative effect on all of them in different ways. The categorization is hierarchical in the sense that it denotes varying degrees of spiritual progression. Topping the list are the arahants, then come the non-returners or the anāgāmino, who break free from all the five fetters. Then comes the once-returner, followed by the stream-enterer. This categorization is conventional and follows a fixed

pattern. The interesting categories come next. It incorporates all monks striving to follow Dhamma and faith (dhammānusārino saddhānusārino) and all of them are headed towards sambodhi. The discourse is winded up by asserting that all those who have faith and affection (saddhā-māttam pema-māttam) in the Buddha are bound for Heaven. Thus, it is clear that the teaching is to be chnnelised to sectors outside the saṅgha, to all those who have faith and affection in the Buddha and would have transformative impact on them all, even though in a lesser degree.

The reception of a discourse by any of these categories was not automatic and sponataneous. In the same sutta, The Buddha says categorically, that when foolish men master the Dhamma they do not attain the desired goals, because they receive the words of the Master literally without any intuitive wisdom. They only receive the words, not the meaning conveyed through the words and misinterpret the words to antagonize others and to induce useless prattle. The teaching thus, cannot have any transformative effect on them and causes misery and discomfiture. That the words of the Buddha have to be interpreted and intuitively understood is further illustrated by a simile of a water-snake. A man looking to catch a water-snake may do so but if he grasps the snake wrong, the snake might bite and kill him. The point here is that the teaching can reach all and sundry, but the recipient has to grasp it correctly for it to have the desired transformative effect. He goes on to elaborate that even young men with families could imbibe Dhamma and be transformed if they grasp it correctly.

It is clear that the utterances were meant to convey quick and pressing messages. Figurative language, that contained a cluster of condensed meanings was a way to pass on such messages. Pariyāya or a teaching conveyed in a roundabout manner is a known convention in the Sutta

texts, which made the utterances interpretative rather than literal. Allegorical preaching did not shroud the inner meaning of the speech-act but often clarified it and fleshed it out. This indirect mode of expression or allegorical telling is very evident in the Sutta we are discussing. The famous parable of the raft that illustrates that Dhamma is just a mode for crossing over to the other side, not something to cling to, is laden with such allegorical telling. The Dhamma is the raft that assists a seeker to cross over to the opposite bank or attaining enlightenment. This crossing over is not easy or smooth and requires tremendous effort and discipline. After the crossing, the person concerned is advised to let go of the raft. This does not mean letting go of Dhamma, but rather the external trappings of Dhamma. The mere words that convey the Dhamma are inconsequential to the enlightened being, because the deeper meanings of the teaching have been internalized. Allegorical telling is also very prominent within the biographical units of the Majjhima Nikāya.

The Biographical Units

A complete and consistent Buddha biography is alien to the early layers of the canons especially the Nikāyas. Still bits and pieces of life stories of the Teacher have been cobbled together from the texts. These have been further interpreted and elaborated by the commentaries from 5th century CE onwards. But we have to keep in mind that the agenda of commentators who were steeped into a developed form of Buddhist cosmology. The most ancient kernels of biographical units are in for example the Ariyapariyesana Sutta.⁴⁷ This Sutta gives an account of the Buddha's activities between the time he left home and gave his first sermon. The format of a sequential narrative is adhered to yet it is also a

very terse, no frills narrative and the descriptions are stripped to a bare minimum. The aspirations and endeavours of the individual is foregrounded, yet the Buddha who grapples for and gains enlightenment is not wholly projected as a historical figure, but rather as an archetype, an example of a supremely enlightened man. Thus the imagery and the literary tropes are conventionalized. The focal point in these biographical fragments is the moment of enlightenment. The notion of nibbāna is also conveyed allegorically, juxtaposed between the figures of the Brahmā Sahampati and Māra. The Brahmā Sahampati entreats the Buddha to preach his doctrine and Māra seeks to destroy it. The entire imagery of attaining nibbāna is communicated through the allgory of a battle with Māra, who symbolizes evil. In the early Buddhist parlance Māra is more palpably associated with desire rather than Death. Yet, it is made amply clear, that death is rooted in desire. It is ironic that, Māra exhorts the Buddha to live, while he personifies Death. Thus, living a life enmeshed in desire is equated with death. The figure of Brahmā on the other hand, almost smacks of a satirical take on the Brahmanical notion of the supreme creator God, who also symbolizes the essence of the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa. He is made to bow before the Buddha in supplication and buttresses the notion of the Tathāgata's superiority.

At the same time, the figure of the enlightened man is not lost in a thicket of effusive legendary material. The motif of Enlightenment is the focal point of this narrative as it is in almost all the biographical units of the Majjhima Nikāya, but the interesting thing is that this sutta goes beyond this motif and continues upto the theme of the First Sermon and the beginning of dissemination. The epithet Tathāgata, as he describes himself in this Sutta again and again, denotes that he is different from all others and asserts to the first five disciples that now he had become an

enlightened man and ordinary epithets will not fit him any more. It also signifies that he is ready to speak and teach the truth to others. This teaching is not uttered as sudden revelation but is carried out through conversations. This Sutta takes us to this important point and leaves us there.

The Mahāsaccaka Sutta ⁴⁸ similarly recounts the Buddha's early attempts to attain enlightenment through asceticism. These are not personalized narratives of Buddha's life and a glimpse into history through a different perspective. But such bits and pieces came about just because of this engagement of the saṃgha with historical processes and projection of the Buddha as a historical being. Thus a sequence of events and adherence to a recognizable chronological format was sought. These narratives hint at the notion of individualism and hinge onto the pivotal point in the Buddha's life- his enlightenment- and seek to arrange the events leading up to this momentous event. In a discursive tradition which is repetitive and formulaic, the biographical unit brings no relief whatsoever. Any emotive content that became parts of later hagiographies play no role here. The emphasis here is to foreground the image of the Tathāgata, the one who acquires the capacity to achieve full awakening by his own endeavour and to underscore the difference between the Tathāgata and the other categories advanced in knowledge- the arahant or even the anāgāmi (non-returner), the sekha-with that of the ordinary person.

The Ākhyāna and the Dialogic Narrative

The Suttas of the Dīgha and the Majjhima are all narrative suttas in the sense that they contain sermons, discourses, dialogues and so on but all of

them have an overarching narrative structure. All of them consist of rhetorical acts of somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose that something happened. To be very precise all the Pāli Suttas share a structural feature which is a doubled communication situation, where the narrative work does not merely narrate but also represents an act of narration. But of the two or more frames and narrative surfaces they project, none are supposed to be fictional. Another thing is that apart from the author and the narrator we also have the reciter who engages with the addressee directly. The narrative device that is most distinctive in the ākhyāna type narratives of the Majjhima Nikāya is the shifting of narrative perspectives.

This is very evident from the Ghaṭṭikāra Sutta⁴⁹ or the Aṅgulīmāla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya. The first sutta is a rare example in the canon where the past Buddha Kassapa is not only mentioned repeatedly but also appears in the sutta as a narrator. This sutta also contains a proto-Jātaka trait as Jotipāla the skeptical friend of the potter Ghaṭṭikāra turns out to be Buddha Śākyamuni in a previous birth. The narrative starts with a third person address and narrates the context of the story. The Buddha Gotama takes over as the narrator and relates the second level of the story to Ānanda and later to a larger group of monks. Here he tells the story of Ghaṭṭikāra and Jotipāla and their visit to the Buddha Kāssapa after a lot of agitation and fuss. On this level Kassapa surfaces as a narrative agent rather than a narrator. After the ordination of Jotipāla, he completely disappears from the narrative. As the future Buddha does a vanishing act at the peak of the story this cannot be termed as a Jātaka story proper. After that Buddha Kassapa appears as the narrator and Kikī, the king of Vārānasī becomes the addressee. Then again Buddha Gotama takes over and identifies himself as Jotipāla. Thus juggling with the narrative levels

and changing the narrative voice again and again becomes a hallmark of these kinds of stories. In these stories too some characters emerge as narrative agents and create a powerful after-image to be remembered and contemplated upon. Characters like Jotipāla or Āṅgulīmāla are shown to have doubts and conflict and are capable of serious reflections. Some like Ghaṭikāra are more transparent who play a different role. They embody goodness and generosity and mark out the path of nibbāna for all and sundry. They also foreground the power of karmic value of the individual and play the second fiddle while guiding the chosen one towards the path of Buddhahood. This also underlines the value of collaborative effort and ideal friendship. Ghaṭikāra is the humble potter who willingly parts with all his worldly goods to express his loyalty towards the Buddha Kassapa. Jotipāla on the other hand, is a Brāhmaṇa who lets himself to be persuaded by his friend to go and visit the Buddha. In the end, it is Jotipāla who goes forth from home to homelessness and Ghaṭikāra remains behind to care of his elderly parents.

The Āṅgulīmāla sutta⁵⁰ has been studied by Richard Gombrich who has delved into the identity of Āṅgulīmāla⁵¹ and Monica Zin who has tried to compare the story with other stories related to cannibalism.⁵² However from the narratological point of view we have a shift in the narrative perspective and prior to the conversion the focalization had been on the murderer. Thereafter the action is shifted to Śrāvastī and The robber now ordained accompanies the Buddha. This heightens the curiosity of the audience because they are eager to learn what happens to the killer as he turns over a new leaf. Here the great king Pasendi who is also a devout follower of the Buddha embarks on an expedition to capture Āṅgulimāla, a terror to the people. Instead he comes to Jetavana and witnesses the transformation of the killer. Here the narrative continues to underline the

fact that what the valiant king could not do with five hundred armed warriors, the Buddha could accomplish through peaceful means. This is a perfect Ākhyāna in the sense, that the most dramatic moments see the insertion of a verse and profundity of thought is articulated through the utterance of the verse. Here the most dramatic moment is when the Buddha is pursued by the robber and the swift-footed robber capable of catching wild beasts could not catch up with the Buddha. So he stops in his tracks and shouts to the Buddha to stop. The the Buddha replies that he had stopped in the true sense as he acts with supreme compassion and wisdom and thus refrains from all kinds of evil acts. The robber is awed and expresses a desire to embrace the teachings of the Master. This dialogue between the robber and the Buddha takes place in verse. Later when Aṅgulīmāla receives enlightenment, he utters his enlightenment speech in verse. Thus the essence of the Sutta is articulated through verse. This type of suttas are not embellished with long speeches or formulaic doctrinal expositions. The narrative surface changes as the robbers leaves the forest and accompanies the Buddha to Sāvattthī. The Raṭṭhapāla sutta⁵³ is a similar ākhyāna type sutta where a young man renounces domestic life defying his parents. He comes back to his own house after alms collection and is refused food. The story underscores the novelty and aura of the bhikkhu's life and that achieving insight into the true nature of things essentially changes a man. The next sutta is the Makhādeva Sutta⁵⁴ which again foregrounds the theme of renunciation in a completely different way. An ancient tradition followed by the kings of Mithilā through generations is decribed, where the kings after discovering their first strand of grey hair abdicates in favour of the son. This sutta has been invested with a mythic character as it harks back to very ancient times and is also tied up with a past birth of the Buddha. The Ākhyāna type suttas foreground the motif of renunciation and the dramatic nature of this

transformative moment is underscored. Though more often than not, these stories are uttered with the monks as in-text audience, they do not gravitate towards doctrinal obscurities or spell out a step by step guidance along the path towards arahatship. Thus these were meant for a mixed audience, outside the text, who would be overawed by the moment, yet would be able to relate to and recognize this moment. This was not a ploy to motivate people to renounce domesticity but rather to impress them with the aura of the moment which would have a long-lasting impact and would also reassert the power of the renunciate in the wider society.

The Dialogic Narrative is directed towards a wide array of Brāhmaṇas, ascetics and householders and the conversations range from a unilinear speech to the format of a lively debate. The conversation with the Brāhmaṇas centre mainly on the connotation of the term Brāhmaṇa, its true nature and essence as well as the question of hierarchical social practices. The tactic is to adopt the phraseology of the interlocutor and to guide him gently towards the goal of achieving supreme insight and also to the external goal of conversion. In the Brahmāyu Sutta⁵⁵ the ancient sage realizes that the true Brāhmaṇahood can only be achieved through arahantship. In the Assalāyana Sutta⁵⁶ the young Brāhmaṇa is reluctant to engage with the Buddha in debate because he realizes the independence and insurmountability of the doctrine preached by the Buddha. However, when he does question the Buddha about the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa caste and derives his argument from the ancient Vedic position the Brāhmaṇa caste is originated from the mouth of Brahmā, the Buddha refutes him by asserting the primacy of good conduct and wisdom over birth and plucks out examples from contemporary material life.

The Majjhima Nikāya contains a good many conversations with the Jinas. The interesting thing is the conversation often progresses with a

mediator, who is often a patron of the Jaina community. The conversations are argumentative but never transcend the boundaries of civility, but evoke violent and extreme reactions from the Jainas themselves as the conversations are reported. For example, in the Upāli Sutta⁵⁷ the householder Upāli expresses a desire to enter into a debate with the Buddha, when he learns that Dīgha Tapassin the Jaina had a conversation with the Buddha and managed to hold his own in that debate. In his conversation with the Buddha he tries to assert that bodily evil was the root of every wrong, but of course the Buddha convinces him about the primacy of mind over body. In the end, Upāli is won over and becomes one of the foremost patrons of Buddhism. When Nāṭaputta learns about this he erupts in a violent outburst, uses violent imageries and blood gushes forth from his nose. The dialogues swing from one context to another- conversations between Dīgha Tapassin and the Buddha, Upāli and Nāṭaputta, The Buddha and Upāli and then to Upāli and Nāṭaputta again. When Upāli identifies himself as a follower of Nāṭaputta he himself does not shy away from using violent language and expresses his desire to toss the Buddha up and down with his eloquent debating. However, when he is converted he not only becomes more genteel, he even reserves an amount of civility for his erstwhile mentor and informs Nāṭaputta that he is acting according to the advice of the Buddha, who had very generously urged him to continue his patronage for the Jainas also. Nāṭaputta however, is not mollified and retorts that a stupid person like Upāli brags that he is going to castrate somebody and himself returns castrated, he goes forth to gouge somebody's eyes out and himself returns blind. The tirade ends by blood oozing out of the infuriated Nāṭaputta's nose. The sutta implies that the violence that is latent in the mindset of the Jainas is projected on to their own bodies which is expressed through various methods of self-mortification.

The conversations with the Jainas harp on the ideals of strict asceticism and the values of self-mortification. This theme was a cause of major concern within the Buddhist order itself. The conversations with the Jainas thus were models which could be used to regulate conversations within the saṅgha. Or it could have been the other way round. The conversations centring round the issues of ascetic life could have been very much alive within the saṅgha and could have been projected onto the Jainas. The Mahāsīhanada Sutta the Buddha describes to Sāriputta all the hardships he endured when he embraced the life of an ascetic. He lived in impenetrable thickets in forests and fled from the sight of men like a frightened deer, slept on beds of thorn, fed on his own waste. But none of this led him to attaining enlightenment.⁵⁸ Probably this was a much-debated and much-elaborated theme current within the saṅgha which had to be brought up again and again and fitted into different contexts, with different interlocutors, both within and beyond the saṅgha.

In a sutta where Prince Abhaya is the interlocutor, Nāṭaputta is again in the background.⁵⁹ He sends Abhaya with a trick question that would flummox the Buddha. But Buddha had an unconventional reply for the double-edged question, which was, whether the Buddha could deliver a speech which would be pleasant for everyone. The Buddha replied he would wait for the right moment. When he could utter a speech that was a fact, the truth, was connected to a higher goal, but would not be pleasing to everybody, he would wait for the right moment and utter it and would also explain it thoroughly. If a particular truth was connected to a higher goal and was also liked by everyone he would also wait for the right moment to utter it. But he would not utter something which was false and not connected to the higher goal irrespective of peoples' proclivity

towards it. This impressed Abhaya so much that he crossed over to Buddhism and embraced the faith.

On the other hand, in the Bhaddāli Sutta⁶⁰ the Buddha addresses a recalcitrant monk who does not live according to the training of the Master. This pinpoints a lapse in practice and the conversation flows gently and touches on the importance of the order and outward life of the monk.

Thus while both the Dīgha and the Majjhima are replete with narratives, dramatic turns and imaginative flights the two texts served different purposes within the ranked community of monks and the laity. As the Dīgha embodies the imaginative and narrative aspects of the Nikāyik texts and was probably geared to reach out to a larger audience, the Majjhima also was not meant for inner circle of the monkish community exclusively. The sermons and the numerical suttas were geared to the community of the bhikkhus and pedagogic practices, there are a large number of suttas that had a wider currency and a bigger purpose and were capable of generating social dialogues outside the texts.

The role of the speech-acts in building up a unique communicative space at least in an ideational sense and creation of a discursive universe which was embedded in materiality is evident from of these two collections as they emerge as legitimate conduits of ethical utterances and leave vivid after-images on different levels of communication.

Notes

- ¹ Chakravarti, Uma, *The Social Dimension of Early Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987, p.64.
- ² Norman (2001), pp.16–17.
- ³ S.N., 1.12 Chalmers, 1932, pp.49–53.
- ⁴ S.N.I.1, Chalmers, 1932, pp.2–4.
- ⁵ S.N.I.3., Chalmers, 1932, pp.11–20.
- ⁶ S.N.I.2., Chalmers, 1932, pp.4–10.
- ⁷ S.N. 81.
- ⁸ S.N.I.4., Chalmers, 1932, pp.20–24.
- ⁹ S.N.I.9., I.10., Chalmers, 1932, pp.38–44, 44–46.
- ¹⁰ S.N. II.2., Chalmers, 1932, pp.58–61.
- ¹¹ S.N.II.5., Chalmers, 1932, pp.66–68.
- ¹² S.N.III.1., Chalmers, 1932, pp.98–100.
- ¹³ S.N.III.2., Chalmers, 1932, pp.100–104.
- ¹⁴ S.N.III.11., Chalmers, 1932, pp.164–171.
- ¹⁵ S.N.II.7., Chalmers, 1932, pp.70–75.
- ¹⁶ Pande(1957)pp.27–50.
- ¹⁷ Ibid..p.98.
- ¹⁸ A.III.107.11ff.
- ¹⁹ A.III.251.1ff
- ²⁰ Winternitz(1933), II, p.37 fn I.
- ²¹ Olivelle, 1996, pp.34 – 56.
- ²² D.I.II..Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.69–76.
- ²³ D.I.III., Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.108–136.
- ²⁴ D.I.IV., Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.144–159.
- ²⁵ D.I.V., Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.173–185.
- ²⁶ Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), p.5.
- ²⁷ Ibid, pp.4–5.
- ²⁸ D.I.4.

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- ²⁹ Rhys Davids and Stede, Pali– English Dictionary, Vol–V, 1952(Reprint), p.97.
- ³⁰ Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), p.13.
- ³¹ D.I.XIII., Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.300–320.
- ³² D.II.XXIII., Rhys Davids T.W. and C.A.F., 2007(reprint), pp.349–374.
- ³³ D.I.VIII., Rhys Davids, 2007(reprint), pp.223–240.
- ³⁴ D.II.XVII, Rhys Davids T.W. and C.A.F., 2007(reprint), pp.199–230.
- ³⁵ D. I.137.13, D.I.92.16.
- ³⁶ Thapar (2013), pp.396–397.
- ³⁷ D.I.92.16.
- ³⁸ Thapar, op cit.,pp.398–399.
- ³⁹ D.III.XXXIII., D.XXXIV.
- ⁴⁰ Sv. I, 15.
- ⁴¹ S. I.242.
- ⁴² Allon(2003)pp.7–8.
- ⁴³ D. III.127.15.
- ⁴⁴ M.I.27., M.I.28.
- ⁴⁵ M.I.45, M.I.46
- ⁴⁶ M.I.140–142. Horner, pp.181–183.
- ⁴⁷ M.I.26.
- ⁴⁸ M.I.36.
- ⁴⁹ M.II.81.
- ⁵⁰ M.II.86.
- ⁵¹ Gombrich (1996), pp.135–160.
- ⁵² Zin (2015), pp.37–38.
- ⁵³ M.II.82.
- ⁵⁴ M.II.83.
- ⁵⁵ M.II.91.
- ⁵⁶ M.II. 93.
- ⁵⁷ M.II.56.
- ⁵⁸ M.I.79–82., Horner, pp.106–108.

⁵⁹ M.II.58.

⁶⁰ M.II.65.

Chapter Three

The Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas: Emerging Voice of Authority

Contents and Layers of the Saṃyutta Nikāya

The Saṃyutta Nikāya or the Collection of Grouped Discourses comprises 56 saṃyuttas or groups of suttas. Each of the suttas having a theme attempts to illustrate one or more points of the doctrine. The name or theme of the suttas of each group are supposed to have some kind of connection and continuity and supposed to propound specific points of the doctrine as thematic clusters. But a good look at the clusters would prove otherwise. The suttas cling to each other through more superficial associations. For example, the Devatā-Saṃyutta, the very first cluster of the collection contains utterings by deities. But these sayings underline diverse themes related to the doctrine. Thus ‘Devatā’ is the catchword that welds together this most eclectic collection. The Māra Saṃyutta on the other hand, contains various legends involving the Buddha himself or one of his followers, who are tested and tempted by Māra in various ways. The Bhikkhū Saṃyutta also has the figure of Māra looming large as he tries to sway the resolve of the bhikkhū in multifarious ways. The Anamatagga-Saṃyutta contains twenty discourses each starting with the utterance that the origin of saṃsāra is unknown (*anamatagga*). After

this initial utterance the discourse meanders its way through a thicket of imageries and similes and illustrates it in various ways. The cycles of suffering and pain that is transported from one existence to another are brought out in vivid detail. Kāssapa Saṃyutta or Sāriputta Saṃyutta has suttas clubbed together in them because of the simple reason that Kāssapa and Sāriputta are the respective speakers. They are clubbed together even if the individual suttas have diverse addressee and pick out and elaborate on diverse themes.

The most interesting collection is the Nāga Saṃyutta which contains the stories of Nāgas with demonic powers who pass through several births to be born and reborn because of the various deeds they perform. The stories bring out the karmic significance of actions performed by the individual and also delineate various contexts to the actions.

Thus, it is evident that the several motivations were at work while grouping the suttas – sometimes they were clustered together because they referred to specific classes of divine or semi-divine beings or elaborated on some doctrinal term or idea or simply because an important personality uttered them at some point.

These 56 Saṃyuttas are further incorporated into five vaggas or sections, in each of which some aspect of the Buddhist religion is foregrounded. Thus in the first vagga the question of Buddhist ethics and goals pertaining to it are given prominence. Another vagga touches upon metaphysical themes and epistemological issues. Some suttas are biographical while others bring up the question of monastic discipline and thus move closer to the Vinayik contents.

K.R. Norman argues that the arrangement of the saṃyuttas reflects a conscious editorial practice and selection of material to fit together in this

particular way.¹ He also is of the opinion that there is a clear overlap between the contents of the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara.² Probably the same contents were fitted into two separate collections and were laid out differently.

The first vagga is different from all the other vaggas as far as the arrangement of individual suttas was concerned. In content too it deals mostly with the questions of Buddhist ethics and the ideals of Buddhist life. The other vaggas on the other hand focus on metaphysical issues and are set out in a more formulaic style, with repetitive and mechanized articulation. The stress is on elaboration and arrangement of material in a numerical pattern while at the same time moving away from picturesque and lucid style of storytelling according to a sequence. Though details pile up, the tendency is towards further abstraction. The first vagga contains more of the biographical material and is also conspicuous because of a more fluent style interspersing prose with beautiful poetical compositions. G.C. Pande considers the first vagga to be the earliest one as here verse seems to be central and prose only appears to provide a short introduction to the verses.³

The *gāthā* or the core of the narrative, composed in archaic Pali are often cryptic and more often than not the verses would be unintelligible without the accompanying frames in prose. Some of the *gāthas* do not have any discernible Buddhist content and resurface independently or attached to other stories in different Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. Often there is a clear disjuncture between the verse and the accompanying narrative. Especially, in the *Devatā Saṃyutta* the verses appear more as proverbial sayings and are more or less loosely attached to the prose sections. It was also argued that the *gāthā* was the true canonical component, current in the Buddhist community, who were familiar with

the contexts. The prose sections accrued to the original gāthās in order to explain the contexts to the laity⁴. Thus each sutta here is a heterogeneous, multi-layered construct where each component part has a life of its own and can be located on different temporal planes. All the stories together make up an untidy collection with no semblance of chronological order. The same story often crops up clinging to a completely different verse. If the gāthās are taken as the original, fixed points of the narrative, the prose sections signify the accretive elements and they on the other hand, interlock the divergent components within an essentially Buddhist scheme.

The suttas of the first vagga thus often resemble the compositions of the Khuddaka Nikāya, because of this juxtaposition of verse and prose but these are more often than not simpler nebulous compositions. The genre of stylised narratives in the Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā or the narratives of the Thera and Therīgathā had been imbued with a more purposive air. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya on the other hand, some verses are often framed as riddles, while others are simply moral exhortations. The formulaic pattern is absent in these suttas. The riddles and aphorisms often resort to a dialogic format. Some of them are shorn of any specifically Buddhist reference.

The late stage, according to Pande, are overburdened with formulaic prose.⁵ The rest of the vaggas are mostly homogenised. They are scholarly and dry. The narrative trappings are done away with. The suttas in the other vaggas typically are very important from the point of view of Buddhist doctrine as all the aspects of a particular doctrinal concept are enumerated and described in these suttas. The suttas of the Dīgha and the Majjhima were unitary and rarely the ideas of one flowed into the next sutta. In this collection however, in certain clusters there seems to be a

flow of ideas signifying an archaic conceptual bond between various suttas of a particular cluster. Therefore, the scope for repetition becomes boundless. Thus, it can be argued that some of the suttas may have been composed together. Winternitz has suggested that multiple suttas conveying similar ideas were collected from various sources, from far-flung monasteries or even from laymen.⁶

Side by side with these however, fragments of earlier material are found marked both by its style and an early doctrinal exposition. These fragments are typically laden with narratives and richly adorned with similes and metaphors. The independence and nuclear nature of the suttas are more marked. These earlier fragments more often than not are squeezed into the second vagga.

The later suttas are as said earlier unified through the reiteration of a common doctrine. This artificial and inorganic bonding between the suttas seems to have come late. Partly these came about because the reciters found it convenient to improvise formulaic verbal fragments to join the suttas together, as this could be an aid to memory and foregrounded the dominant doctrinal themes through familiar and repetitive formulae.

Modes of Address and Narrative Structures: Saṃyutta Nikāya

The Ākhyāna

The ākhyānas in a mixed form of prose and verse are found particularly in the Deva Saṃyutta, Māra Saṃyutta and the Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta. Sometimes they are reiterations of ancient legends and miraculous happenings. Winternitz has opined that these are fragments of sacred

ballads and rules out any performative aspects of the narratives.⁷ As it is evident from the internal evidence of the texts themselves that individual performance and improvisation did not blend with the peculiar Buddhist temper which encouraged communal recitation.

These narratives are also the repository for miraculous and fantastic incidents. Scholars shy away from using the word ‘miracle’ in relation with happenings within the Buddhist universe and more often than not use the term ‘magic’ to describe events in the Nikāyas. The word ‘miracle’ has a different connotation in the Western sense and seems to imply powers that completely go against the natural laws. The Buddhist idea of miracle on the other hand seems to be in tune with the natural laws achievable through means of chants and meditation. The tales of the first vagga contain miraculous elements in order to display in one way or other his superiority vis-à-vis divine beings of various types, rival teachers and others. But the interesting feature that determines the trajectory of the narrative is that a demonstration of superhuman power is always underpinned with telepathic ability and ends up with the greatest miracle of all, imparting of Dhamma. The sacred mission is always projected as the ultimate goal. Often these goals are reached precisely through the display of superhuman powers. Miracle tales featuring prominent Buddhist monks and nuns through such acts demonstrate their own power but also by extension establish the powers of the Buddha. Thus the conclusion that Buddhism rejects the miraculous wholesale disregards the tenor of the stories where conversions are achieved through the display of miraculous deeds. Such stories could be branded as popular. But in this collection the stories surface in an earlier stratum and are intrinsically linked to the events that are of cardinal importance within the discursive universe of the Buddhists.

In the Māra Saṃyutta and the Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta the adversary is Māra and a dialogue takes place between the Buddha or one of the nuns and Māra in verse. The interesting thing is that, in these two sections it is Māra who assumes different forms, beautiful and ugly and tries to scare or mesmerise the Buddha. The miracle here consists of recognising Māra and exposing him to the community of monks. For example, Māra approaches the Buddha as an elephant, a snake, a bullock or a Brāhmaṇa on different occasions.⁸ The Buddha sees through his disguise on each occasion and interjects with a verse. This utterance is enough for the evil being to realise that he has been exposed. He then simply fades away in shame and humiliation. There are two layers to this motif. One is that Māra here is portrayed as the one who resorts to supernatural means and that is perceived as something which is crude and unnatural. The real miracle is the phenomenon of the Buddha seeing through his many shapes and forms. The Buddha says that he knows very well that Māra had been wandering to and fro, taking on shapes both beautiful and loathsome. But everything that is Māra is ultimately going to end. Then the Buddha exhorts him to acknowledge his defeat. Thus, Māra's magic is neutralised by the superior knowledge and correct utterance of the Buddha.⁹ The other thing is that, knowing the true identity of Māra does not always bring about the closure, the real intention is to expose him to the community of monks and to make them aware of the true nature of Māra. The imagery of Māra that takes shape in the Nikāyas is almost exclusively Buddhist. The other principal divine beings like the Brahmās and Sakka have parallels in other religious systems but the figure of Māra is unique in the Nikāyik texts. The Buddha says that Māra symbolises evil and desire and represents saṃsāra. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya he is represented as a swirling mass of murky mist which envelops all quarters.¹⁰ He appears before the community of monks to cloud their

judgement and to obscure their knowledge. Thus the monk Sammidhi was terrified by the scream that Māra let out and thought that an earthquake was tearing the ground apart. The Buddha clarifies to Sammidhi that this was not an earthquake but Māra who wanted to darken his understanding.¹¹ Next time when Māra tried to scare him at the same spot he was not taken in by his horrific scream and recognised his intentions. Thus, Sammidhi was able to outsmart the wily Māra by himself, once the Buddha had made it clear to him.

Māra represented chaos in the domain of systematic thought propounded by the Buddha. He always tries to project his lack of clarity to others to confuse and perplex them. He tries this again and again with the Buddha but is baffled every time. Once when the Buddha was nursing a sore foot after a splinter had got stuck into it, Māra approached him and accused him of being mentally dull and vacuous and undecided about what to propound in his next discourse.¹² The Buddha answered that he was in perfect composure and would sleep filled with love for all beings. Māra was suitably subdued by this utterance and fled the scene.

The intention of Māra more often than not was to humiliate the Buddha while he was in a congregation instructing, enlightening, inciting and inspiring the brethren. Thus he approached the monks and addressed the young monks, praising them for their youthful looks and saying they deserved to indulge in all the pleasures of material life. The monks reproaching him elucidated that the material life embedded in natural desires was the one which was full of sorrow and despair. They also declared that the doctrine is concerned with the material life as it guides a man on and away from it and that it was a doctrine that should be known by the wise as personal experience.¹³ This completely crushed Māra who went his way with a bent head.

In the Bhikkhunī Saṃyutta interestingly, the Buddha is not present in person and the nuns are left to their own devices when they encounter Māra. That an entire collection of Suttas were narrated to showcase the wisdom and theoretical acumen of the Therīs underscore the need to unfurl a new kind of discourse on the innate nature of women. These are short Ākhyāna type suttas where Māra utters a verse and the nun replies with a verse. The context and the frame of the story is given in prose. Unlike the Māra Saṃyutta where the Buddha is present and the dialogue is carried out on one or more narrative surfaces, here we have only one narrative surface. The Buddha is continuously referred to and the wisdom and power of argumentation that the nuns display are attributed to the Buddha, but he is not present in person to help them out. The nun is often accosted by Māra when they wander deep into the forest seeking solitude. Māra's address to the nuns have two formats both touching upon the issue of women's nature. For example, in his address to Somā, Māra ridicules her for trying to attain the wisdom for which even the sages have to strive hard. He pokes fun at a woman's calling with an oblique allusion to the household chores that are her lot. Somā however, instantly realizes that the speaker is Māra and replies that one who has gained insight does not ponder on the question whether she/he is a woman/man and Māra is not fit to speak to such a person. Thus, exposed and vanquished, Māra leaves the scene.¹⁴ The other approach adopted by Māra is as crude as the other one. Here Māra deliberately praises the beauty of the nun and tries to lure her towards unbridled enjoyment of the pleasures of the senses. In answer to this Vijayā replies that all the delights brought by the senses are for Māra to enjoy and he is welcome to it, because she does not seek them. Then the body is described as loathsome and brittle which only brings shame and sorrow. That this imagery of the body is built up and expressed by a woman and arises directly from an enlightened perception

of her own body is the crux of the matter here.¹⁵ This display of aversion for her own body is a counterpoint to how a woman celebrates her own body and derives a sense of pleasure from being aware of its beauty. The attempt of the Māra's daughters to seduce the Buddha, described in an earlier sutta provides a counterpoint to therī Vijayā's resolve. The three daughters of Māra embodying taṇhā, arati and ragā assumed the forms of a hundred young women and sought to allure the Buddha, who needless to say remained unfazed.¹⁶ Similarly, Gotamī was chided by Māra for venturing into the woods alone and accused of making secret assignations with men.¹⁷

These conversations had a broader scope than merely a monkish circle in the sense that they were systematically conniving with and controverting the traditional discourse on the true nature of women. The body which was filled with desire or more importantly aroused desire became ugly and crumpled when looked at with true insight and could be transcended with wisdom.

The Mythic Narrative

The mythic narratives were edifying and illustrative in character often underpinned with miraculous elements of a strongly anecdotal nature. These stories were perhaps heirs to the Vedic ākhyāna but couched in a Buddhist vocabulary and temper. The cosmological material and introduction of an elaborate pantheon go hand in hand with this development. The gods are ordered in a numerical arrangement and are led by Sakka paying homage to the Buddha. Introduction of songs, chants and poetical materials further distinguish these narratives. Some of the stories are fashioned as origin myths and explain the beginnings of

social institutions or moral ideas. These are mostly utopian myths narrating the origin of family, status and political authority. Myths do not spell out historical truths but as far as circumstantial evidence is concerned but they let us take a peek at the issues that were important to the authors and reflected social assumptions. What differentiates a mythic narrative from a purely fictional one is the 'ontological self-consciousness' of the narrative, the issue of its precise relationship with the real world. Religious narrative in both prose and poetical forms is an important category of verbal art which comprises myths, legends and folktales as three basic categories. They are related to ballads, epic poems, proverbs, dialogic devices, riddles and multiplicity of forms on the basis of formal and internal characteristics.

Narratives and religion, at least in their rudimentary forms, emerged in human history at points which were not temporally distant from each other. Belief is fundamentally based on the religious narratives which are offered to the believing subject. What differentiates a religious narrative from a purely fictional one is the 'ontological self-consciousness' of the religious narrative, the issue of its precise relationship with the real world. However, there is a model of literary philosophy that claims that the world of a literary work is independent of the real world and has reference only to the world that is established by the literary work- it is unique, coherent and autonomous. Others maintain that religious narratives have some ontological commitments.¹⁸ If we consider the religious narratives as analogous to fictional worlds, doctrinal and artistic entities can be freely multiplied and transformed. Religion of course, draws a sharp contrast between its own narratives and fictional narratives with a claim of ontological commitment.

Mythic narratives engage two realms- the realm of 'real' beings and the realm of supernatural entities. The imperative to mediate between the natural and the supernatural poses ontological problems for religious ideation. This creates a split between the genuine desire to provide an account of which is true to the real world and also to retain its alterity in relation to this world, unleashing a series of logical contradictions and mindboggling paradoxes within the body of the narratives themselves.

We also have to keep in mind the dispersed purposive element of these mythic re narratives. We also have to keep in mind that often the realm of narration can afford to be ontologically ambivalent. Often their internal coherence is so watertight or the events described are so vivid or the content promulgated is so desirable that their relationship to reality is not questioned and the aesthetic requirement outstrips the ontological requirement.

In analytic categorization however, three basic categories are used –the myth, the legend and the folktale. These terms are however, very loosely used in the scholarly circles while at the same time the grey areas that cut across all three genres are not recognized clearly.

Myths are narratives which in the society in which they are told are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith, they are taught to be believed and they are invoked to resolve doubts and disbelief. They are mostly sacred narratives and often parts of theology and ritual. They mostly have nothing to do with human beings or the empirical world, the world as we see it today, but describe an archaic world of the gods and the culture heroes. They often explain the origin of the world and the world-

processes. They often have the so called 'logic' behind ritual paraphernalia or taboos tucked into the folds.

Legends, on the other hand, though purported as true by the narrator and his/her audience, are nevertheless set in a world not so much temporally distanced from our own. Legends are interspersed with secular material and their principal characters are human. They recount tales of heroes and battles, valorous chiefs and victory, migration and death.

Folktales are narratives which are regarded as fictitious, not as dogma or history. Folktales are may be set in any time and any place, but at the same time have important functions within organic communities and beyond, as the moral tales or parables illustrate.¹⁹ These are secular in content, but can religious utterances can accrue to these types of verbal constructions.

A particular type of narrative can be classed as a myth in one society and a folktale in another. As stories move from one culture to another through diffusion a myth might become a folklore and vice versa. It also happens that with the flow of time a particular narrative in a given society might change its function within the community. A narrative which was regarded as a myth, within a course of years could be accepted but not believed within the same society. Especially in a time of rapid cultural change the entire belief system and mythology of a given society might be dismantled.

There is also the question that how do we judge what was held as true in an ancient society and by the majority of the society. Because within a given culture there would be always some people who would not adhere to the traditional system of belief. In the case of ancient societies, the

question is always there as to who believed the narratives at a given point of time.

There is also a kind of juggling with time and space in the mythic narratives and multiple notions of chronology and temporality play out and fashion the narrative texture. The heavenly realm and the mundane domain seamlessly merge with each other and there is easy passage through aeons.

The First and Second vaggas of the Saṃyutta Nikāya contain mythic narratives in the sense that the Buddha is the mediator between the mundane and the supra-mundane realms. The Buddha as a historical person with specific spatial-temporal connections would have to negotiate with divine and semi-divine beings and establish his pre-eminence and inherent supremacy within a setting not so temporally distanced. There are two modes of resolving the discrepancies. One was to combine the sober discourse typical in other situations with displays of supernatural prowess. The other was to create an array of literary dialogues which were actually artefacts mirroring actual dialogues with various groups of people. Thus, a dialogue with the reverential Sakka could indicate a number of friendly conversations with allies and disciples in actual situations. On the other hand, a dialogue with the ever-hostile Māra could be a condensed form of innumerable dialogues with members of the rival sects and Brāhmaṇas.

As an illustration of the first mode a number of conversations could be cited from the Sakka Saṃyutta or the Brahmā Saṃyutta. When Baka the Brahmā was beset with erroneous thought that brahmāhood was eternal and indissoluble, the Buddha magically disappeared from the Jetavana and reappeared in the realm of the Brahmā.²⁰ After this display of

miraculous power, he enters into a dialogue on the notion of impermanence with the recalcitrant Baka and establishes his spiritual supremacy. In another instance, another Brahmā bragged that nobody could enter his realm. The Buddha divined his thought and again disappearing from Jetavana reached the realm of the Brahmā and sat cross-legged in the air, radiating flame.²¹ The principal disciples of the Buddha followed him and sitting beneath their Master humiliated the God. The address that dispelled the God's false sense of superiority was uttered by Moggallāna.

As far as the second mode is concerned, a conversation with the Brahmā Sahampati who is extremely reverential to the Buddha will clarify the matter. As the Buddha attained enlightenment, he was in a conundrum whether to teach the norm to the people at large or not and was on the point of giving up the attempt as the people were beset with lust and hate and were not capable of grasping his teaching. Sahampati realized what he was about to do and thought that the world will be perish if the doctrine did not reach it. He then left his heavenly abode, bowed before the Buddha and with a gesture of supplication persuaded him to change his decision.²² The Brahmā as the creator of the world intervenes in favour of the mundane world and inaugurates the array of conversations. On the other hand, the Sakka Saṃyuttas depict a series of mythical battles between the Gods and the Asuras. Yet Sakka represents the warrior and relates to the mundane world. Once when the ruler of the asuras Vepacitti, challenged Sakka, to a verbal duel, Sakka utters a verse that downplays violence and upholds calmness and forbearance.²³ The warrior denouncing violence is a crucial moment. While the speech of Vepacitti embodies harshness and violence, the speech of Sakka

embodies forbearance, persuasion, concord and harmony. Sakka is acclaimed by the audience and is declared the winner.²⁴

The mythic narrative also introduces a satirical frame for the stories. Use of figurative language to topple conventional Brahmanical imageries is a common device in these narratives. The allegory of fire in the *Samyutta Nikāya* illustrates this. The sutta starts with the Buddha declaring that all was on fire. The fire itself was the fire of lust, the fire of ill will, of birth, death and decay.²⁵ This systematic dismantling of the aura of fire has an allusion to the sacredness and purity of fire within the Brahmanical tradition, particularly in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the Buddhist context however, the fires have to be extinguished to attain *nibbāna*. This has a conceptual correspondence with the Vinaya tradition, in the episode of the *Jaṭila Kassapa*.²⁶ The group of fire-worshipper is converted by a display of a series of miracles. The first miracle is performed by the Buddha in the fire-shrine of the *Jaṭilas*. The resident *Nāga* was defeated by the miraculous many-shaded fires that the Buddha wielded. But the point here is, that the Buddha demonstrated that he was capable of controlling and taming the fire, thus demonstrating his ability to conduct a fire sacrifice. But he knew this was fruitless and did not lead to the intuitive wisdom that brought about a cessation of all anguish. Thus, the allegory of the fire could be taken as a satirical take on the Brahmanical notion of the purity of fire.

The Numerical Discourses

The narrative trapping is done away with in the later *vaggas* and only minimal circumstantial background to the discourses is given. A background story or *nidāna* is almost completely absent as the

introduction is a perfunctory one which states the discourse was delivered by the Blessed One or one of his prominent disciples in such and such location. Thus, while the *Dīgha* and the *Majjhima* are replete with narratives, dramatic turns and imaginative flights here the later suttas appear with no frills and are dry and scholastic. The first vagga, the *Sagāthāvagga* is of course an exception. Otherwise, a sutta starts with the single sentence like “At Sāvathī, in the grove of Jeta”. In the Fourth and the Fifth vagga this sentence also disappears. The Suttas unfurl as direct proclamations. The shifting of the narrative perspective and creation of two or more narrative frames is a device that has been rejected in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. Sometimes the Buddha lets out a direct proclamation to a single monk or a group of monks regarding some finer points of the doctrine. Many suttas are constituted of a few short sentences.

In the fifth Vagga whole chains of suttas are reduced to single words to form mnemonic verses, rather like a convenient flow chart. Perhaps the reciter had to flesh out the contents. This rules out the percolation of these discourses to the world of the uninitiated or even to that of the novice. These suttas were intended for those who were already steeped in the ways of the *saṃgha* and immersed in its study and practice.

The terse pronouncements on the doctrine gathered and laid out with a thematic arrangement however superficial, point to a repository of suttas which catered to the doctrinal specialists and the disciples with an intellectual bent of mind who sought to explore the weighty topics like dependent origination, the five aggregates, the six basic senses or the Four Noble Truths. These suttas were also probably addressed to the nuns and monks who were resolved to ‘know things as they really are’ and the realization of the ultimate truth. This temper of contemplative insight transcends the familiar world of persons and things and prizes open the

impersonal conditioned world which emerges and perishes according to laws of dependent origination.

In this collection specific suttas dealing with specific aspects of the doctrine is a ready reckoner for the specialist. Thus, in the Dīgha for example, material which are embedded in larger suttas are fashioned into single suttas in the Saṃyutta. Thus, materials from the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta are found as whole suttas in the Saṃyutta.²⁷

The narrative portions of the Vinaya Piṭaka were supposed to have originated at a later date than the Nikāyas.²⁸ It seems that the compilers of the Vinaya borrowed heavily from the Saṃyutta collection and included three suttas of the Saṃyutta which were of paramount historical importance to Buddhist doctrinal traditions and were supposedly the first three sermons of the Buddha (the Dhammacakkappavattana, the Anattalakkhaṇa and the Ādittapariyāya).²⁹ These are direct pronouncements with a very short nidāna sections and are nothing like the biographical units surfacing in the Vinayas, where a connected narrative on the evolution of the order was taking shape.

The template suttas veer away completely from the Dīgha-Majjhima tradition. These suttas mainly clustered in the third and the fourth vaggas project a formal pattern like a flow-chart, where a similar formula could be used to describe different phenomena. For example, similar formula could describe the aggregates and the elements. These could have been formulated for teaching the intricacies of a doctrine by an expert teacher. Though it has been said that these were associated with religious performances and ritual chanting, it could have had an extra dimension within the community.³⁰

The other mode of repetition is to squeeze similar contents into two or more different narrative settings. Thus, the theme of how a bhikkhu can attain nibbāna surfaces several times in separate suttas, are repeated verbatim but are set in a different context. Thus, every time a different person appears as the speaker and the speech has a different locale.³¹ This reiteration of the same words underlines the importance of the theme within the monkish community. But the differing audience like Sakka or a Brāhmaṇa could signify that a broader reach was intended for a sutta of such paramount importance.

The Content and the Layers of the Aṅguttara Nikāya

The fourth great collection is the Aṅguttara Nikaya which contains discourses arranged in an ‘ascending numerical order’.³² The suttas are arranged in eleven sections or *nipātas* of which section I deals with themes of which only one exists, likewise section II handles things which consist of only two and so on and so forth. Thus, in the second section the two things one must avoid are enumerated along with the two dark and two bright things, two sorts of Buddhas and so on. The third section goes on in the same vein.

The *Nipātas* are fitted into vaggas. The suttas in the same vagga are sometimes linked together thematically, though the thread that connects them are extremely fragile. For example, the 14th vagga comprises 80 suttas and enumerates the names of the most prominent disciples, both male and female and describes their virtues and exploits. Vagga 20 which contains 262 suttas are almost exclusively on different types of meditation.

In this collection too the narrative element is pretty meagre with short speeches and dialogues and the characters are opaque and flat which leave no long-lasting after images and do not have the agency to critique or doubt that was a feature of the Dīgha or the Majjhima Nikāya.

Many of the suttas surface in the other collections and K.R.Norman assumes that some of the material that constituted the Aṅguttara must have existed as numerical matters in the common reservoir of discourses from an earlier period.³³ But of course it is difficult to determine which of these suttas were borrowed to create the Aṅguttara collection and which were actually borrowed from the Aṅguttara in a later phase. For example, in the aṭṭhaka- nipāta the eight earthquakes are described which corresponds with the version in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.³⁴ What is interesting is that while the Aṅguttara collection has little narrative trappings and the nidāna is very brief in most cases, the description of the eight earthquakes is preceded by the narrative section given in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.³⁵

Winternitz had noted certain gaps in the collection as cardinal doctrinal themes like the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path are not included in the relevant nipātas.³⁶ It is pointless to argue that these points were not known in the earlier period. More plausible would be to assume that they were so well-known and important that they had to be remembered in their original settings and did not need to be remembered in the numerical format.

As many of the suttas are non-narrative and have a stereotyped formulaic arrangement it is possible that a certain fluidity could be attributed to the collection and the possibility that appropriate suttas could be fitted into relevant nipātas cannot be ruled out. In fact, some of the suttas of the

tenth nipāta which contain suttas dealing with the numbers 20 and 30 are thought to be later additions. So is the eleventh nipāta according to G.C. Pande.³⁷

The easy correspondence with the Saṃyutta collection probably came about because similar materials were being put into two collections, one arranged thematically and the other numerically.

The Modes of Address in the Aṅguttara Nikāya

The numerical lists or flow chart like structure of the suttas of this collection underline a phase in Early Indian textual history when writing was not used to articulate religious utterances. Memorization and preservation of the discourses were aided by the numerical method. As we have seen the notion of Buddhavacana and the anxiety for its preservation surface from an early phase of Buddhist history and all the four Nikayas with their variegated content each had a specific role to play in conveying the words of the Buddha. If we look at the individual suttas this inner purpose is not at all apparent or crystal clear. To understand the role of the specific Nikāyas it is necessary to look at the collection as a whole. As we have seen the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara collections have quite a few overlaps and mostly contain terse suttas laid out often in a numerical format and foreground quick and radical insights on some of the points of the doctrine. The Saṃyutta would serve as a ready reckoner for the doctrinal specialist or for the monk/nun who were preoccupied with the notion of attaining absolute truth. The Aṅguttara on the other hand, has the kind of structure which would facilitate pedagogic exercises. Thus, it has a more practical orientation conducive to teaching and edification.

In this collection more than the others suttas are compiled which valorize the practice of learning. According to the suttas the learned are esteemed by all their fellow men. It is not only glorifying learning but actually foregrounding the proper ways to learn and to teach that becomes more prominent. In the Nikāyik programme the Buddha as the authoritative figure looms large, yet it also has the underpinning that the disciples are to realize and experience the truth by themselves. The Tathāgata is the one who teaches Dhamma and the proper way of life is clarified by him for the happiness of many. Emphasis is on how to listen attentively and to retain correctly. The monks are exhorted to learn a discourse by heart, with words that are correctly arranged to convey the proper meaning of a particular discourse. The learned monks are instructed to pass on the Dhamma and the Vinaya thus the roots of the discourse are always deeply embedded in the ground. The learned monks are to refrain from a life of abundance and laxity, so that the next generation could follow their lead. In this way the doctrine is never obscured and never withers away.³⁸

In the Vinaya Piṭaka it has been underlined again and again that the Dhamma had to be taught energetically and in full detail. The teaching had to be carried out in the form of suttas, both in the prose and verse forms.³⁹ The *acarya* and the *upajjāya* were the two conventional terms that denoted a teacher. Among the two the latter was formally connected with the formal ceremony of ordination and therefore most probably held a more prestigious position in the early Buddhist pedagogic system. After ordination a person could become a full-fledged disciple. Now the preceptor and the disciple lived together, sharing resources and caring for each other. As a special provision the preceptor gave permission to the disciple to seek out a special *acārya* for specific branches of study.⁴⁰ The

figure of the *ganācārya* surfaces recurrently in the Nikāyas but his role as a leader is underscored more than his role as a teacher.

On the other hand, the epithet of *satthā* applied almost exclusively to the Buddha. The *satthā* is more than a teacher or a master. He is the one who sends a message or *śāsana*, which is authoritative in the sense that it produces an effect. At the same time, it is not the responsibility of the teacher to make the recipient responsive to the message. In the Nikāyik universe the receiver has to pursue the goal. On numerous occasions the message first and foremost brought about a change of perspective that imbued the mundane words with transcendental meanings. In the *Angulimāla Sutta* ordinary words assume different meanings when the robber experiences a change in perspective and veers away from a worldview dominated by lust and greed. Thus, teaching in nikāyik parlance is also experiential. The exterior and interior aspects of the true path are to be elaborated and pointed out.⁴¹

It is also important to note that the message was to be disseminated within an extended but ranked community. Though in the Nikāyik world the notion of the *samagra saṃgha* comes up again and again it necessarily connotes the notion of a harmonious order with fixed hierarchical alignments. The *saṃgha* as the universal order or the order of the four quarters incorporated all disciples and transcended time and space. But the *saṃgha* which is located in history and in a specific temporal and spatial context included five groups of mendicants. Only mendicants over twenty were usually allowed full ordination, while boys and girls over fourteen could be initiated (*pavvajjā*) and could enter as novices-*samanera* and *samanerī*.⁴² When a female novice turned eighteen, she could qualify as a probationary nun. All these five categories are clubbed together in the texts and are known as five groups of mendicants. Laymen

and women (upāsaka and upāsika) were added to form the seven groups. Since the precepts differed for each of these categories the entrant had to choose whether she/he wanted to remain as a lay follower or enter into the life of a mendicant. After her/his ordination under an experienced upajjāya the process of learning intensified. It has been reiterated in the texts that just as the ocean becomes deeper as you move further into it, so does study in the order progress gradually.⁴³ The monk-disciples fall into various categories as far as their progress along the path towards the realization of the Truth is concerned. Some are the learners or the sekḥā who need detailed elucidation on matters of doctrine. The others are the sekḥā or the masters to whom the deliberations could be given in summary. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya the anāgāmī or the non-returner, who had broken free from the shackles of rebirth and re-death through pursuing his/her ultimate goal in solitary striving comes to the master before departure and asks for a brief summary of the doctrine.⁴⁴

The manifold capacities of a teacher of summarizing the doctrines as well as expanding are brought out most vividly in the Saṃgīti Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya.⁴⁵ In this sutta the pattern of the Aṅguttara is reflected and the principal arrangement is done through numerical grouping. In this sutta Sāriputta is the dominant figure not Ānanda who takes the lead role in almost all the suttas of Dīgha Nikāya. Though Sāriputta is traditionally linked with the Majjhima tradition, in this sutta he makes his emergence as the teacher par excellence. The sutta opens in Pāva where a new assembly hall has been built by the Mallas. This brand-new hall had never been occupied by any Brāhmaṇa or recluse and was offered to the Buddha for making first use of it. As the exhausted master retires after preaching to the Mallas, Sāriputta takes over and instructs the brethren on the benefits of chanting in unison. This method of repetition and chanting in concord

could preserve the teachings of the Master and here Sāriputta refers to the strife and disputes plaguing the community of the Nigaṇṭhas after the death of their master Nāṭaputta and the importance of preserving the holy life.

This method of summarizing the teachings earned Sāriputta accolades from the Master himself as well as from his brethren. He was said to have delighted the congregation with his teaching. This easy movement between concise and detailed method of teaching, summary and explanation has been foregrounded in other parts of the Nikāyik collection. For example, in the Uddesavibhaṅga Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya reference has been made to brief, terse suttas used for teaching the doctrine, while senior disciples carried out the task of critical exegesis.⁴⁶

This mode of teaching has survived in a fossilized form in various parts of the Nikāyik tradition. This category of lectures was in general non-participatory as exemplified in Sāriputta's lecture in the Saṅgīti Sutta. There was no provision of making comments or asking questions when a lecture was in progress. This mode in fact, veers away from the lecture given by the Sāthā himself in the Dhammacakkapavattana sutta contained in the Saṃyutta Nikāya.⁴⁷ Here, though the lecture progresses as a monologue there is no attempt to enumerate and summarize the content. On the contrary the speaker breaks the monotony of the delivery through interjection of self-explanatory questions. The change in the mode of address has to be analyzed against the context delineated so clearly in the two suttas. While entirely new ideas were being floated in the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta the content was laid out in an elaborate fashion, blocking scopes for interjections, on the other hand in the Saṅgīti Sutta Sāriputta was ladling out old traditional material, to stem the

breakdown of the holy life. That is why the suttas were concise and terse, arranged in a numerical pattern, for practical day to day chanting and training of the monks. This pattern also veered away from the expanse of freedom sensed in analytical methods of deliberation or Vibhājjavāda. The analytical method is linked to the concept of personal emancipation and the experiential aspect of attaining the truth. Thus, in the Brahmajāla Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya analysis of attha (meaning), dhamma (reason), nirutti (medium) and pātibhāna (presence of mind) become important. The monks are told to judge the truth of each statement raised by the interlocutors dispassionately, not to be delighted as praises were heaped, neither to get angry when they were derided.⁴⁸

Thus, if we accept that the Aṅguttara collection embodied practical pedagogic exercises of the early Buddhists and the fossilized form of a specific mode of communication in contradistinction to other more elaborate or analytical modes of teaching, we have to take into account the concept of ‘practical canons’ brought up by Hallisey.⁴⁹ Hallisey has argued that within the Theravādi circles the canons were perceived on two planes. One was the complete set of Suttas and Vinaya rules which were the ultimate focus of interpretative authority. But only a limited number of monks actually accessed these texts unless they were very senior or had a pronounced scholastic bent. Most of the brethren accessed a filtered canon. Apart from the condensed set of doctrines they were accessing selected suttas from the Sutta Piṭaka to anchor themselves into a life of monastic discipline. Thus apart from Pātimokkha the monks found it difficult relate to the canonical Vinaya in actual practice. The Vinaya seemed to be remoter because it had to be mediated through voluminous commentarial literature. That is why selected suttas from the Sutta Piṭaka helped to ground them in aspects of Buddhist discipline.

Suttas on Monastic Discipline

We have to remember that the Aṅguttara collection also includes snippets of monastic discipline, some important part of the Buddha's biography or fragments from the principal disciples' lives. The Dasadhamma Sutta for example, lays out the reflective conduct of the monastic community in an enumerative style.⁵⁰ The sutta focuses upon the various elements to be reflected upon by the monks. The ten elements enumerated in the sutta are different but are related to important aspects of monastic life and uphold ideal personal discipline within the monastic community.⁵¹ Other suttas flesh out the benefits of composure in all situations. Sloth and torpor on the one hand and excitement and flurry on the other are to be forsaken to cultivate attentiveness and positive energy.⁵² Some suttas spell out the qualities of persons who were to be given specific roles within the order, for example, who should be given the responsibility of allotting the quarters to the monks or who should be the storekeeper.⁵³ These are all very short and terse pronouncements, without any contextual prelude or any specific mention of the addressee. Though as these are exclusively based on monastic discipline and exercises it is safe to assume that these were working summaries made for the monks.

The Biographical Units

The biographical fragments are important in the sense that they project the Buddha not simply as the source of doctrinal utterances but also as a person, with a life story and a role to play in broader historical processes. From the Nikāyas, it is difficult to stitch together a connected and

coherent biography of the Buddha. That was not the primary concern of the Nikāyas. But the first ingredients of the biographical narratives start to appear in the Nikāyas. The miracles associated with his conception, birth and enlightenment appear in this collection and were the raw material for more elaborate post canonical biographical genre of the later period. These clues would be taken up and elaborated and would become familiar to all. The four miraculous events associated with the manifestation of a Tathāgata, the moment when he enters his mother's womb, when he emerges from the womb, when he attains perfect enlightenment and when he sets the wheel of Dhamma in motion are portrayed as momentous events that light up every pore of the earth, even the impenetrable recesses between the worlds become radiant, flooded with this wondrous luminosity. The beings in these intermediary regions are able to perceive each other as beings reborn.⁵⁴ The in-text audience of these suttas were monks and the Buddha here is not the Historical Buddha of the later hagiographies as such but the Tathāgata who is the exemplar of innate perfection. The emotive and devotional element that tinged the hagiographies are absent in these accounts. This effect is further accentuated as the intrinsic intention of the discourse is to arrange the biographical material into a numerical pattern. This was definitely a speech-act that had to be learnt and repeated over and over again by a community. Again, in another sutta the Tathāgata refers to his luxurious upbringing, the opulence of his father's house and his sheltered life. This is just a little snippet, a little peek into his prior life before the speech meanders into the realm of the three things he pondered upon-the phenomena of decay and old age, disease and death and realized that his own splendid life was also subject to these three phenomena. These fragments are embedded into monologic speech-acts directed towards the monks and are blended with metaphysical elaboration.⁵⁵ There is also the

intent to delineate a religious landscape by reiterating the significance of the places where the Tathāgata was born, attained perfect enlightenment, preached his first sermon and attained complete release.⁵⁶ The monks were urged to relate to these places with intense feeling. But there are short snippets which are not so common and have little or no mention in the later biographical literature. For example, his efforts to master some stages of meditation before his enlightenment, is a piece of material that has been left out of the traditional biographical genre.⁵⁷ There is a reiteration of the incidents in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta where he chose to relinquish his life force because Ānanda did not request him to live on for his full life span. This sutta is different from the other biographical fragments as a context to the sutta is very clearly delineated and is identical to the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. This sutta juggles with multiple narrative surfaces, accommodates two conversations with Ānanda and one with the evil Māra, all laden with the theme of his imminent death. This feeling of impenetrable gloom is channeled into the numerical format once again as the Buddha utters the eight causes of Great Earthquakes, the seventh cause being the Tathāgata finally resolving to cast aside his life. The first exchange with Ānanda is intimate and emotive and is permeated with a sense of imminent end, which is conveyed to the audience with the mediation of a second narrator but escapes the in-text addressee Ānanda.⁵⁸

Apart from material that sought to delineate a trajectory to the for the life story of the historical Buddha, most of the suttas present him as an archetype, as the latest representative of a long line of Buddhas, though in this collection reference to previous Buddhas are few and far between. The Tathāgata is referred to in the plural and It represents a class of highly superior beings succeeding one after the other. The Tathāgata is

the best among the four principal types of being because of attaining perfect enlightenment.⁵⁹ The arising and ending of the world is fully comprehended by a Tathāgata, from which he is ultimately released. After this full comprehension he utters, speaks and proclaims till the day he is fully released and this utterance and speech that is communicated is just so, the only truth. Thus he is projected as a speaker imbued with the utmost authority.⁶⁰ The Buddha Kassapa, the immediate predecessor of Gotama. The Tathāgata is seen as establishing a world system which had a vast temporal spread and also cuts across various realms of existence.⁶¹ These suttas thus acquired more of a cosmological significance. The Tathāgata is also projected as the being from whom the not only doctrine emanates but the one who embodies and serves the Dharma from the all-enveloping notion of which the doctrine is translated. When the Tathāgata attains enlightenment, he is struck with the awareness that he is the personification of virtue and concentration and nobody from any of the realms was fit to be served by him. Thus, he vows to honour and serve only Dharma that he had comprehended in full.⁶²

Addresses for the Laity and Addresses on the Laity

The Aṅguttara Nikāya has the largest number of suttas directed towards the laity, as well as addresses on the laity. There are suttas which foreground the notions of an ethical lifestyle and social responsibility that are the hallmarks of Buddhist thought. A large number of suttas are directed to the lay people and thus contradict the notion that the collection was exclusively geared to monkish pedagogy. Yet some of the suttas also

convey the imagery of the ideal lay follower to a monkish community that is to be retained and disseminated.

The idea of the saṃgha in the Aṅguttara Nikāya includes the lay devotee both male and female. This suggests that the word saṃgha even in its conventional sense can incorporate the lay people. It is categorically stated in the suttas that just as a monk or a nun living according to the Dhamma illuminates the order, a layman or a laywoman living according to the Dhamma can also illuminate the order.⁶³

These suttas mainly contained references to various categories of the lay population and started with the workings of the family as a basic unit. From the family this plea for righteous living goes up to the heads of the states of the oligarchies and the monarchies. The head of the family is like a mighty grove that provides shelter to his wife, children, kinsmen and friends and they all emulate his virtuous life to be led into a heavenly realm after death.⁶⁴ Just like this another sutta says in the same vein that when the kings are righteous, the ministers, Brāhmaṇas and householders in his realm are also righteous as are the townsfolk and the villagers. Thus, the entire cosmic order is held in its groove. If the top order falters everything collapses and the Sun and the Moon go off course, all the seasons and the day and night go haywire. The wind blows from the wrong directions, the earth goes barren and the people fall sick and die.⁶⁵

Ethical living in the Aṅguttara involved a clear cut glorification of the notion of wealth sharing, providing material support for the Buddhist community and the other renunciants as well. In a speech addressed to Anāthapiṇḍika, the most prominent lay disciple, The Buddha clarifies the path of duty for the householder. For good repute and for a rebirth in the heavenly realm the householder waits upon the bhikkhus with the offer of

food, robes, lodging and medicine.⁶⁶ In another prolonged monologue also directed towards Anāthapiṇḍika the Buddha said that wealth that is lawfully acquired through initiative and hard work should be spent in a befitting manner. A lay follower should be always be available to confer a favour on the deserving, the perfect generosity had to be cultivated in the householder.⁶⁷ In Long addresses to the householders and housewives the husband and wife are considered a well-matched pair when both of them abstain from taking life, stealing, indulging in sense-desires, abusing Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas.⁶⁸ When the husband and wife are thus well-matched in faith, virtue, generosity and wisdom they are reborn together in the heavenly realm.⁶⁹ Women as givers of food are extolled in various suttas. The texts indicate that women played a role in preparing and allocating portions of food for the mendicants. The women who kept aside a part of the household resources were praised as giving life, strength, beauty and happiness to the receiver. The woman who feeds the meritorious mendicants with well-cooked and tasty food made of choicest ingredients are tipped to reach the heavenly realms after death.⁷⁰

In the early parts of the Nikāyas the Buddhists emphasized a shared culture that included various branches of renunciants, even though technically speaking these were rival groups competing in a scramble for resources. The suttas are important in the sense that they create a hierarchy of ethical living and the concept of the deserving monk/nun who had a clear edge over his/her rivals as far as meritorious deeds were concerned.

Thus, these short addresses really delineate the difference of the Buddhist monks from the rest and underline their spiritual edge and this notion is reiterated for the benefit of the monks. Three types of monks are mentioned – The monk who is immoral but longs to overcome his evil

ways, the one who is moral and of a pleasant nature but does not long to go any further and the third is the arahant who has destroyed the āsavas and has transcended all longing.⁷¹ In another sutta also directed towards the monks the Buddha compares the monk with a peasant. Even as the peasant ploughs the field, plants his seed and waters the field very swiftly, he cannot make the crops sprout overnight, the monk, having trained himself in high morality, higher thought and high insight cannot expect that the fetters of desire to vanish overnight. Thus, he has to train rigorously to cultivate these virtues which sets him apart from everybody else.⁷² Some suttas delineate the boundaries that had to be set between a monk and the laity. The monk who is too inquisitive or secretive, keeps bad company or ladles out unwanted advice is not accepted by the laity.⁷³ The monks are urged not to stay at one place for too long as they become enmeshed in the life of the laity and even become intimate with the womenfolk of the family.⁷⁴

Though women have been praised as givers of food and as practitioners for the righteous path an ambiguity enshrouds perceptions regarding women in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Impassioned speeches are directed at the monks to make them realize the destructive impact that the woman has on the initiate who wants to follow the righteous path. The body of a woman is portrayed as the locus of most intense desire, it is intoxicating and distracting. A woman personifies the snares of Māra and will not refrain from seducing a man even when she is on her last breath. This speech has a very significant backdrop. It was addressed to the monks when it was revealed that a monk was involved in an incestuous sexual relationship with his mother, who was a nun at the same monastery.⁷⁵ In another sutta a woman is compared to a black snake, both are full of anger, ill will, have deadly poison, forked tongue and both of them betray friends.⁷⁶

There is an interesting story which tries to work out a compromise between the conflicting imageries of women brought up in the text. In the first part of the story Thera Anuruddha is waylaid by some beautiful female Devatās who do not explicitly try to seduce him, but brag about their magical prowess and hold over people. They tried to impress him by changing the colour of their faces, garments and finery. Then they sang, danced and made heavenly music. Anuruddha remained composed and knew about all their caprices beforehand. The Devatās were flummoxed as their powers could not sway Anuruddha and vanished quickly. These spirits were not the snares of Māra who destroyed the resolves of a righteous man. Rather they are portrayed as friendly souls who wanted to showcase their magical powers. When they failed to match the powers of the resilient Thera, they merely faded away. The Buddha explained to Anuruddha that a woman who is obedient to her chosen husband, serves him to the best of her ability, honors everybody held in respect by her husband, takes part in whatever industry her husband is engaged in, takes care of everybody in the household, protects and preserves household resources, embraces the three fold refuge as a lay follower, keeps the precepts, shows unstinted generosity to the order is reborn as a beautiful spirit. Thus, the model housewife metamorphoses into a free-spirited fairy who works magic and makes music.⁷⁷

Multiple Functions of the Speech-Acts

It is difficult to pin down the point in the history of Buddhism when the realization came that the new doctrine was ready to receive the widest possible audience and the idea of a full-fledged and autonomous order began to take shape. Initially there was a lot of hesitation and fumbling.

There was also a lot of speculation as to whether it was feasible to preach the truth as was perceived by the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment. Finally, in the First Sermon it was worked out how to give a more comprehensible content to the unuttered thoughts and to reach out to the people at large. Also there was this imperative to operate differently and to arrange the network of relationships with the wider society according to a unique pattern.

The key question is how the collective body of the monks integrated itself within the social, religious and economic fabric of the areas in which they struck root and the viable models of religious propagation that they devised.

The Buddhists chose to live and travel within a restricted landscape and took the same orbits again and again, always moving to and fro between the contours of the settled society. As the temporary abodes were transformed into permanent establishments, it would imply that a new framework of communicating with the wider society had come into being. The texts assert unequivocally that the body of the monks was always to be accessible to the people and the boundaries between the *saṅgha* and the settled society should ideally be porous.

This was the dichotomy that began to emerge in the functioning of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. The Buddhists ideally being peripatetic were slowly getting involved in permanent relationships with the wider society. From its inception the Buddhism was associated with urban centres or transitional spaces on the margins of the settlements. Gradually strong links were forged with the royal and the urban.

The reciprocal relationship that existed between the *saṅgha* and the wider society was negotiated through the notions of *dāna* and *puñña*. The

mutually beneficial relationship laid out on the basis of these combined concepts has been illustrated through stories in the *Nikāyik* literature. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the questions were already building up regarding the concrete results of *dāna*. It is very clearly stated that owing to three things merit accrues to the clansman. These three things are Faith, Gifts and worthy recipients of gifts.⁷⁸ The scramble for patronage was a reality in the days of the Buddha and the relationship with the laity was sometimes tenuous and fraught with tension.

Though the opinion of the lay people made a great impact on the workings of the saṅgha, it was also necessary to retain the gap between the two worlds. This difference between the two worlds had been kept alive essentially by the speech-acts within the *Nikāyik* collection. The addresses thus had significance for the monks as well as for the laity by continuously reasserting the ideological gap between the two worlds. This question brings us to a very interesting juncture in the history of Buddhist discursive practices. Most of the Vinaya traditions of the Buddhists inform us that after the First Communal Recitation at Rājagṛha after the master's death the arduous task of memorising, preserving and disseminating various genres of texts were shouldered by groups of monk-scholars, the *Bhāṇakas* of later inscriptions and texts. All this would be done orally. Thus, in an oral rendition the narrator has to keep repeating it to tell it the proper way. Thus, the speech act is studded with identifiable catchwords for the monk which only the monk could interpret. What was further being established was the authority of the monks to repeat, reiterate and elucidate the speech-acts. If for example, you look at the setting of the speech-acts most are played out in the monastic space, it were the monks mostly who were the direct recipients of the addressee. The authority of the monk and the monastic community

as a whole is very clear. The monk's hegemonic role as the interpreter of doctrines and the custodian of the stories preaching Buddhist ideals makes him engage with the immediate social landscape on multiple levels. The gap was bridged by a network of exchanges meticulously laid out and the material gifts of the laity were reciprocated by the intangible gifts of the *saṅgha*, the gift of *Dhamma*. The gift of *Dhamma* was by far the superior form of gift. Moreover, great happiness was conferred upon the laity as they were allowed to make gifts of food, dwelling, clothes and medicine to the *saṅgha*. The smooth working of this network of exchange had to be ensured and the donee and the recipient at both ends had to be convinced of the necessity of the system running smoothly. The speech-acts reiterating the difference between the two worlds and upholding the aura of an authoritative discourse were the pivotal elements of the texts.

The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* underscores the importance of teaching the *Dhamma* in a distinct, polished and explanatory tone. This practice of teaching and explaining was a skill that was praised and appreciated by the community at large. As the Thera *Visākha* excelled in elucidating the nuances of *Dhamma*, the Buddha praised him and declared that if a person did not talk, nobody knew him, could not differentiate between the wise man and the fool, but as soon as he utters a speech and explains the righteous path everyone knows him.⁷⁹ When the Buddha asks Kesi the horse trainer by which methods does he train a tameable horse, Kesi replies that he trains a horse in a mild way or in a harsh way or he judiciously combines the two methods. The Buddha says he also trains in the same way and if none of the ways are effective, he does not even think him worthwhile for admonishments. This is like the destruction of the man in a spiritual sense.⁸⁰ This parlance was not to be imbibed by all and sundry.

The addresses in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, on the other hand, are more revelatory rather than being geared to the pedagogic exercises. The Ākhyānas and mythic narratives in the Saṃyutta collection bring about this revelation through descriptions of miracles and friendly dialogues that often mediate between the mundane and the supra-mundane realms. However, both these modes, assertive exhibitionism on the one hand and persuasive conversation on the other, indicate communications of two different kinds. As we have seen, these two modes of communication sought out two different groups of audiences, both inside the text and beyond the text. But both forms of addresses intended to project Dhamma as a revelatory experience, as a means to perceive the world as it really is. It can be revealed through miraculous experience or through conversations either suddenly or imbibed gradually. These addresses are revelatory and also as we have seen explanatory. Even the short numerical suttas were short proclamations regarding some finer points of the doctrine. The difference is that they are not explanatory. But they harness the intricacies of the doctrine for the doctrinal specialist within the saṅgha and are steeped in the intellectual culture of the order. These would have no meaning for the audience outside the saṅgha. Thus, different layers of the text would have been geared to different kinds of audience, yet mostly all the sections of the text articulated revelatory and transformative knowledge. Thus, the Aṅguttara Nikāya which had distinctive mode of address which aided day to day pedagogical exercises and the Saṃyutta Nikāya which contained revelatory and transformative knowledge for the specialists were removed from the analytical and exploratory mode of address that has been revealed in the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas.

Saying this, we may be under the impression that we have completely and fully grasped the function of the two collections and the addresses they contain. But we have already seen that both the texts contain addresses which were powered with purposive thrust. This is what turns an address into a speech-act. In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, we have seen, how in the *Ākhyānas* and mythic narratives, conversations with supernatural beings can really be artefacts signifying multifarious modes of social conversations with friendly entities and rivals and can thus reveal a wider scope. These conversations also convey a sense of authoritative pronouncement and intellectual hegemony. This sense encapsulates the friend and the foe in equal measures. Both are awed by this hegemonic assertion and either seek peaceable supplication or are humiliated or utterly defeated. This sense, as we have seen, is nurtured within the increasingly cohesive order of the monks and the nuns. The Leader or the *Satthā* himself sees the Truth as it really is and reveals it to the community of monks, who are also able to see it. Interestingly, in the *Samyutta Nikāya* itself we have references to lay people who by their wisdom can progress to a cessation of all sufferings. For example, the Buddha stated to the householder *Mahānāma* that a lay person could attain enlightenment once the attachments were all destroyed and they were freed from the *āsavas*. Thus, in this stage of mental progression there could be no difference between a monk and a lay person.⁸¹ This assertion underscores the notion of the moral and intellectual agents both inside and outside the *saṅgha*, which transcended the conventional reciprocal relationship of *Dāna* and *Puṇya*, as we will see in a later section.

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the spillover of the addresses can be understood by looking at them through another lens. As we have seen, in this text, a

large number of suttas are directed towards the laity and another large chunk of the suttas are on the qualities of the laity. In an address, the Buddha sets out to define a Dhamma-rājā, who sets the wheel of Dhamma rolling. In answer to a monk's question the Teacher clarifies that, Dhamma is paramount and is the king of all kings. The Dhamma-rājā relies only on Dhamma, reverts Dhamma, his banner is Dharma. For every person of his realm-for the warrior and his retinue, for the Brāhmaṇa and the householder, for the city-dwellers and the country folk, for the recluse and the saint, for every bird and beast the Dhamma watch is established. This wheel cannot be rolled back by any hostile forces. The Tathāgata is the Dhamma-rājā and this analogy is quite common though very significant, as it underscores the superiority of the Tathāgata in the moral sphere just as the wheel-turning monarch in the temporal authority. What is more significant for us here is that it further asserts, that Dhamma permeates the four assemblies of monks and nuns as well as the assemblies of the Upāsaka and the Upāsikas. The four congregations are mentioned in one breath and the Dhamma is supposed to protect all of them.⁸² Moreover, the presence of the intellectual and moral agents who realise the Truth is also seen in this collection and enlightened lay individuals are mentioned by name. They are paraded before the congregation of the monks, as examples, as having followed the six things- unwavering faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Order, Ariyan Virtue, Ariyan Knowledge, and Ariyan Release. The names of the lay sapurisas are mentioned clearly and it is once again reiterated that this was possible because of the Tathāgata. Thus, Tapussa, Bhallika, Sudatta Anāthapiṇḍika and the others were said to have gone to the end, seen the deathless and realized the state of Deathlessnss.⁸³ These lay followers were not simply examples before the monks, in a projection beyond the frame of the addresses these names must have found a wider resonance.

Notes

¹ Norman (1997) p.50.

² Ibid., p.54.

³ Pande (1957), pp. 182–183.

⁴ Winternitz (1933) p.57.

⁵ Pande, op.cit., p.194.

⁶ Winternitz, op.cit., p.63.

⁷ Ibid, p.57.

⁸ S.I.103–104., I.105–106., I.111–112., I.118., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, pp.129–130, 133–134, 140–141, 147–148.

⁹ S.I.104., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.130.

¹⁰ S. I.122., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.152.

¹¹ S.I.119., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.149.

¹² S.I.110., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.138.

¹³ S.I.117., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.147.

¹⁴ S.I.29. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.162.

¹⁵ S.I.131. Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.164.

¹⁶ S.I.124., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.156.

¹⁷ S.I.129., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.162.

¹⁸ Dardel, E. 'The Mythic' in *Sacred Narrative*, ed. Alan Dundes, London, 1984, pp.225–226.

¹⁹ This tripartite categorization is based on), Vladimir Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, Minneapolis, 1997 (4th reprint) pp–14–17.

²⁰ S. I.142., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.180.

²¹ S. I.144., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.182.

²² S.I.136., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.172.

²³ S.I.222., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., p.286.

²⁴ S.I.222., Rhys Davids, C.A.F., 1917, p.286.

²⁵ S.IV.19., Woodward, F.L., 1927, p. 10.

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- ²⁶ Vin.I.24–34., Horner, I.B., 2007, pp.33–35.
- ²⁷ S.V.6.5, V.47.9, V.47.12.
- ²⁸ Pande (1957), pp.161–162.
- ²⁹ S.V.420., S.III.66., S.IV.19.
- ³⁰ Winternitz (1933), p.64.
- ³¹ S.IV.35.118, 35.119, 35.124, 125, 126128, 1310.
- ³² Winternitz, op.cit., p.80.
- ³³ Norman, op.cit., p.55.
- ³⁴ D. II. 98., Hare, E.M., 2006 (Reprint), p.194.
- ³⁵ S.IV.292.
- ³⁶ Winternitz, op.cit, p.86.
- ³⁷ Pande, op.cit., p.204.
- ³⁸ A.II.147., Woodward, F.L., 1933, pp.151–152.
- ³⁹ Vin. II. 326.
- ⁴⁰ Vin. II.187.
- ⁴¹ M.II.86.
- ⁴² Vin. I.237.
- ⁴³ A.II.5.23.
- ⁴⁴ S.III.64–66.
- ⁴⁵ D.II.33.
- ⁴⁶ M.III.223–225., Horner, I.B., 1999(Reprint), p.272.
- ⁴⁷ S.V.420.
- ⁴⁸ D.I.2., Rhys Davids, T.W., 1899, p.3.
- ⁴⁹ Hallisey (2015) pp.56.
- ⁵⁰ A.V.48.
- ⁵¹ A.V.87., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.62.
- ⁵² A.II.13., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.14.
- ⁵³ A.III.272., Hare, E.M., 1934, pp.198–199.
- ⁵⁴ A.II.130., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.134.
- ⁵⁵ A.I.145., Woodward, F.L., 1932, p.128.

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- ⁵⁶ A.II.120, Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.124.
- ⁵⁷ A.IV.300, Hare, E.M., 2006 (Reprint), p.201.
- ⁵⁸ A.IV.308–313., Hare, E.M., 2006 (Reprint), pp.205–210.
- ⁵⁹ A.II.16., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.17.
- ⁶⁰ A.II.22. Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.25.
- ⁶¹ A.II.32–34. Woodward, F.L., 1933. pp.36–38.
- ⁶² A.II.20–21., Woodward, F.L., 1933, pp.20–22.
- ⁶³ A.II.8., Woodward, F.L.p.8.
- ⁶⁴ A.I.152., Woodward, F.L., 1932, p.136.
- ⁶⁵ A.II.74., Woodward, F.L., 1933, pp.84–85.
- ⁶⁶ A.II.62., Woodward, F.L., 1933, p.73.
- ⁶⁷ A.II.66., *ibid.*, pp.74–75.
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- ⁶⁹ A.II.61, Woodward, F.L., pp.69–70.
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- ⁷¹ A.I.107–109, Woodward, F.L., 1932, pp.92–94.
- ⁷² A.I.238–240. Woodward, 1932, pp.1218–220.
- ⁷³ A.II.136., Woodward, F.L., 1933 p.105.
- ⁷⁴ A.III.259., Hare, E.M., 1934., pp.189–190.
- ⁷⁵ A.III.67., Hare, E.M., 1934, p.56.
- ⁷⁶ A.III.261. Hare, 1934, p.192.
- ⁷⁷ A.IV.263–266., Hare, E.M., 2006 (Reprint), pp.175–178.
- ⁷⁸ A.I.146., Woodward, F.L., 1932, p.133.
- ⁷⁹ A.II.51., Woodward, F.L., 1933, pp.59–60.
- ⁸⁰ A.II.110., Woodward, 1933, pp.116–117.
- ⁸¹ S.V.161.
- ⁸² A.III.150., Hare, E.M., 1934, pp.114–115.
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Chapter Four

The Vinaya Piṭaka: The Saṅgha and the Framing of Discursive Forms

Just as Dhamma sought to arrange the inner life of the monks, the Vinaya Piṭaka sought to order their outer life. Outward morality cultivated by training had been laid down for the monks in a network of relationships with other monks, the laity and the wider society as a whole. Both forms of interactions are unfurled in a hermeneutic format and the people who specialize in the domain of monastic discipline are authoritative figures, hailed as experts in law. While the Sutta Piṭaka was preoccupied with the subjective states to be experienced by the monks, the Vinaya reflected an objective attitude. It has to be asserted that the Vinaya articulated a propensity for positive conduct and thus went beyond the strictures to delineate a wider fabric of appropriate behavior.

The Vinaya of the Theravāda school is perhaps the most complete Vinaya with the main sections of the text as well as the ‘by-sections’ in an apparently frozen and intact state. The text of course shows unmistakable traces of a long transmission. When Mahākassapa requested Upāli, who is traditionally the custodian of the Vinaya tradition, to speak on the Vinaya, he speaks of a two-fold Vinaya.¹ That most probably stood for the

Pātimokkha rules and the Khndhakas. This perhaps is the earliest portrayal of the council at Rājagaha where the Dhamma and the Vinaya were recited. Later descriptions of the Council of course conjure up a more complete division of the Vinaya and mention the Bhikkhuvibhaṅga, the Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga, the Khandhaka and the Parivāras.

The structure and stratification of the Vinaya Piṭaka trace the gradual emergence of the Buddhist Saṅgha itself. The material from which the Vinaya codes sprouted were earlier than the Buddhist order and mostly borrowed from a common paribbājaka tradition. The principal indication of coming of a distinct Buddhist order was the crystallization of the Pātimokkha. The sense of a well-defined community was embedded in the distinctive set of rules. Sukumar Dutt has asserted that it is the formulation of the Pātimokkha, which came sometime prior to the Council of Vesālī, that underscores the growing cohesiveness of the community of monks. He illustrates that some of the rules incorporated within Pātimokkha, became obsolete in the later period and were more or less diluted. For example, he shows that the penalty of a saṅghabhedaka or a scismatic is extremely strict as laid out in the Pātimokkha, but is gradually relaxed in other parts of the text, when he argues that more leeway was available for the dissident and an ambience of much more open discussion could be afforded.² Thus, the Pātimokkha and the ceremony of reciting the Pātimokkha became the cementing force that welded together the community. The other factor was the coming of the rain retreats. The āvāsa, a temporary abode set up for the rainy season, became a permanent fixture in the textual landscape. Along with the universal saṅgha spanning the four quarters, we also have the local orders in the Vinaya Piṭaka, mentioning place-names, with monks identifying themselves with the local order. Thus, the sense of a self-

conscious and well-defined community, rooted in a specific spatial-temporal context, emerges as a tangible category in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

In the Pāli canon the Pātimokkha is of course embedded in the Suttavibhaṅga and consists of 227 rules for the bhikkhus and a separate set of 31 rules for the bhikkhunīs. Thus, the monastic code itself is unfurled as a set of suttas which had a distinctive status as it had to be recited and reiterated periodically, in the Theravāda collection, this was the kernel around which the other texts crystallized. The code of rules formed the bond holding the community together. Though the Buddha had not appointed a successor nor invested anyone with supreme authority the community was expected to continue because the Master had proclaimed the Pātimokkha, which would be recited in the form of confession formulae in a conclave of the monks. The rest of the Suttavibhaṅga is nothing but an ancient commentary on the Pātimokkha. For without the Pātimokkha the saṅgha does not exist. Sāriputta expresses his anxiety about how the teaching might altogether disappear if fixed codes regarding the conduct of the monks were not laid down at the correct time. He further emphasized the fact that several Past Buddhas had been lax in laying down the code and the Dhamma had vanished accordingly. He was then reassured by the Buddha that the Tathāgata will automatically know the appropriate moment to recite the Pātimokkha. As soon as Dhamma is defiled (āsavaṭṭhānīyā dhamma) the Pātimokkha will be uttered.³ It is interesting that the codes arise out of clearly spelt out incidents of laxity and offensive behaviour within the community of monks. What is being underscored here is the experiential and practical nature of the codes.

As said earlier, the completion of the Vinaya Piṭaka probably took longer than the Sutta Piṭaka as seen from the description of the recitation of the text in the First Council, but in terms of authoritative utterance the Vinaya

was considered superior to the Collection of the Suttas. All the rules are shown to be flowing directly from Gotama though some of the sub-rules were inserted without reference to the Buddha. In the Theravāda tradition the Dhamma follows the Discipline. In the description of the first Council itself this sequence comes up. The authoritative status of the text is thus very palpable from an early period.

The various components of the Vinaya Piṭaka probably took shape in the following order:

1. Pātimokkha is the earliest layer and contains pre-Buddhist materials winnowed out of older renunciatory tradition.
2. An old commentary develops on this part and the khandhakas are there in a formative stage.
3. The development of Suttavibhaṅga. The introductory stories are added which are influenced by the Khandhaka.
4. Revision of the Khandhaka. The legal and technical parts are added.
5. Accounts of the two councils are added.

The Basic Narrative Format in the Suttavibhaṅga

The Suttavibhaṅga is arranged according to a set pattern.

- a. A story leading up to a rule
- b. A Pātimokkha rule stating the penalty for breaking it
- c. The Padabhājanīya- defining each rule word for word
- d. More stories dealing with deviations from the rule

The list was to be recited twice a month in the Uposatha ceremony. This element of continuous reaffirmation of the rules is embedded in a context of ritual observance and performative assertion.

Some features of the narratives are worthy of note:

1. The frame story delineated a context for the rule to have come to force in the first place. In most cases, the monk is portrayed as confessing his offence to the Buddha or to another monk or to a group of monks rather than in the full congregation. Thus, the monk could be chastised and made fit for the Uposatha. The first four sections were concerned with the most serious offences (Pārājika) that would entail expulsion from the order. Sexual lust and misconduct topped the list for Pārājika offences. Pārājika connoted a sense of irreversible defeat. This conveyed a sense of having lost a battle against evil, it is an āpatti or offence as far as the training is concerned and the offender is defeated (parājika or parajikā) and is no longer fit for communion. Along with sexual intercourse, theft, murder and unabashed display of spiritual attainments are the most serious offences. The next set of offences comprising sexual transgression, schisms and vacillations entail temporary exclusion. Another set of offence consists of accepting various forms of valuable goods, medicines and other monastic matters. These require expiation and forfeiture after confession. Some offences relating to food and drink and conduct with women result in expiation. Offences pertaining to intake of food when under prohibition require a confession. There are some rules regarding day- to- day monastic conduct which require no sanctions. Some rules are purely procedural and spell out how to settle disputes, analyse evidence, decide through majority vote, the procedure for appeal etc.

In the Vinaya, ‘Dhamma’ is manifested most concretely in its implementable form and has the notion of legality in it. This stamp of legality has its ideological scaffolding in the workings of the non-monarchical polities of the contemporary world. In fact, the Buddha comes from such a small non-monarchical system and the Sākiyas are emotively integrated in the textual universe. The Sākiyan as a term has a broader connotation and the early Buddhist movement as a whole claims originary links with the Sākyas. The Vajjis had a special place too in the texts and their administrative procedures signified by lengthy deliberations in assemblies had, as we have seen earlier, earned praise from the Buddha himself. In fact, in the *Dīgha Nikāya* the Buddha states in so many words that the monks should model their behavioral code on those of the Vajjis. The importance of holding discussions in the full assembly in harmony in accordance with the training is foregrounded. There is the exhortation to obey the elders who are the authoritative leaders of the community. There are other parallels but one of paramount importance is that these leaders who had seen the truth should be sheltered and their merits should be propagated, so that the ambience of the monastic life could be valued and emulated by those inside and outside the order. The leaders of the order as moral agents negotiating and communicating with the outside world is an imagery that is immanent in the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. This is not to say that the ambience of the Vinaya can be replicated in the outside world, the rule of celibacy that is of paramount importance in the Vinaya could not be imposed on the outside world. But in the *Dīgha Nikāya* we have a clear indication of what could be regulatory principles that could operate in the outside world and could also seamlessly blend with the behavioral pattern of the monks.⁴

The person who indulges in sexual misconduct, receives his/her first round of rebuke from his fellow monks and then is brought before the Buddha. The Buddha asks whether the accusations are true, if the response is affirmative, then the offender receives his second round of rebuke from the Master himself. The offender is referred to as the first one to transgress the training in a certain way and is told that he will from now on cling to asaddhamma or the 'low' dhamma of inferior people, after death he would move to miserable births and the fearful chasm of hell. After dismissing the offender, the Buddha reiterates the gravity of the offence and a rule is promulgated on the basis of this offence. The Master also clarifies the reasons for promulgating the rule- for the benefit and comfort of the Order, for the restraint of evil persons, for the peace of the diligent monks, for combating devious frauds, for the benefit of the non-believers and increasing the number of believers, for establishing saddharma, restraint has to be practiced. Thus, a new rule is uttered. The context of the rule has to be clearly spelt out. The nature of the offence and the reason for chastisement also have to be clearly delineated.

2. The other thing of note is that unlike the Jainas, the Buddhists had no Vinaya for their laity though the laity were participating in the wider dialogue as to what consisted of proper conduct as far as the monks were concerned. The stories of the Vinaya clearly harped on the problem of interaction with the laity as well as articulated the problem of bringing over lay life into monastic life. The monks were recruited from the laity and the residues of lay life were the springboard from which the stories took off. Some of the stories were no doubt invented to explain the origin of one rule or the other, but in some cases some historical foundation might have survived or could be concocted from some actual events now forgotten. The first story in the Pārājika section illustrates this point of residual lay-

life in very clear terms.⁵ The story revolves round the figure of Sudinna who enters the Order against the wishes of his family. He almost blackmails his family to obtain permission for joining the Order. However, when a famine devastates the Vajji land, he again seeks support from his family for the benefit of the Order and also for his own well-being. The family tries to tempt him back with promises of gold and the beauty of his former wife. On the first occasion they do not succeed. But one thing leads to another and Sudinna ends up having a child with the wife he left behind. His fellow-monks are mystified by his haggard looks and sallow complexion as Sudinna is weighed down with guilt. His confession to the monks and then to the Buddha leads to a rule banning sexual intercourse for monks and nuns. The story of Sudinna runs parallel to the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya⁶ upto a point. The Vinaya story veers away from the Majjhima version on the single aspect of transgression.

3. The other interesting thing is of course the meticulous detailing, repetition with slight variations and the tendency to manage all the nitty gritty. Thus, the stories at the end could form a cluster for illustrating penalties for offences with neatly set out permutations and combinations. When a rule was flouted a) sometimes exceptions could be made b) certain exemptions were permissible or c) there could be no exemption. For example, when a monk is mad or is ill or forced to do something he did not consent to do or did something under misapprehension, he would be exempted or his punishment would be less severe. All these circumstances could conjure up a different situation and bring up a separate story and a different closure. Thus, the stories assist to foreground humane, lenient and commonsensical utterances.

4. There is a conscious attempt to connect spatially and temporally to the biographical fragments in the Mahāvagga. This is where the introductory

stories come in. In the Suttavibhaṅga as Sāriputta asks the Buddha about the durability of Dhamma, the Buddha answers that as soon as a monk does something wrong, he will promulgate a rule. But the interesting thing is that this utterance is in sync with the biographical units of the Mahāvagga as the first rules are laid out after Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna enter the saṅgha. The introductory stories thus forge a connection between the Suttavibhaṅga which is not chronologically but thematically arranged and the Mahāvagga which simulates sequential ordering. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether the introductory stories are the original stories which delineated the context of a new rule or replaced older frame stories to bring about a systematization of the text. So, it can be said that parts of the stories might reflect the needs and concerns of those responsible for teaching, transmission and codification and were not generated by actual experience.

5. This mode of delineating a context to each and every rule has a similarity with the Later Vedic Brāhmaṇa texts where rituals and their explanations are given. This signifies a correspondence with an older tradition. But in the Vinaya, really long stories were spun and they tried to pinpoint a particular time when a particular rule was promulgated. Thus, the introductory stories more often than not began with expression *evaṃ ekaṃ samayaṃ*. The other significant matter is the treatment of the individual or the person in the Vinaya Piṭaka that set the Pāli texts apart from the Brahmanical ones. The understanding of a person as an empirical category is implicit in the Pāli texts. A person or *puggala* is understood by certain physical and mental processes. A good or a bad person is determined by his mental progress along the path towards enlightenment. On the exterior this is assessed by one's adherence to the training. Thinking of oneself as an individual is not a mistake but to ponder on one's existence or more precisely, on one's constituents as being permanent is a mistake. This is in

contradistinction to Brahmanism, where an individual's particular niche is determined within the overarching social order and the individual is in complete compliance with the social order which is projected onto the cosmic order through bonds of appropriate rituals. In the Buddhist system, the personal responsibility shouldered by the individual was something novel and radical. This sense is heightened in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

The Khandhakas

Just as the first part of the Vinaya Piṭaka is concerned with the individual as a member of the saṅgha, the Khandhakas touch upon the saṅgha as a whole.

The structure and arrangement of the narratives in the Khandhakas are different. Here the stories are embedded in the history of the order. The Mahāvagga opens with the days preceding the foundation of the order. For the most part the stories are told in the context of the biography of the Buddha. Especially the Mahākhandhaka of the Mahāvagga apparently tries to give a chronological account of events from the Night of the Awakening to the admission of Sāriputta and Moggallāna in the order. But rather than being a precise historical narration the Mahāvagga represents a grouping of specific themes and chronology is suspended. Sequence of events becomes secondary to systematization. Life of the order is the focal point which had to be planned, arranged and adapted to all kinds of circumstances. In the beginning of the Mahāvagga an account of the order expanding and taking shape after its inception is given, the remainder refers to a phase when the order already has a considerable history behind it. In the textual arrangement the Mahāvagga comes after the Vibhīṅgas. Thus, in the middle of the text, we have a narration of sanghic history. As this

part of the text deals with the rules of ordination connecting it to the early history of the order was natural.

In the Vibhīṅga each rule was introduced by a story whereas the Mahāvagga had the greatest story of all as its introduction. This introduction also traces the trajectory of how the method and scope of ordination also changed. The first five followers were all ordained by Gotama as were the next group of fifty disciples. Freed from all snares now they were told by Gotama to go out and travel, each on his own, teaching Dhamma for the welfare of the multitude. The Dhamma, which was beautiful in the beginning, in the middle and also in the end was beneficial to devas and men. Further, the Dhamma, delivered with correct spirit and correct wording uplifted those who were partially in the darkness and saved them from spiritual decay. In this phase the monks were bringing potential converts from all quarters to be ordained by the Buddha. This made the Buddha think of delegating the responsibility of ordination to his disciples. So, in the next phase, the monks were allowed to ordain anybody they thought fit, in any quarter, any region.⁷

Then the next step came when the order itself ordained the candidate who was presented by his preceptor and a motion was floated followed by a formal proclamation. Order alone now had the authority to ordain. The candidate was also supposed to have a preceptor arranged by the order itself. This came about when the Buddha heard rumours about bhikkhus going about their daily alms-round improperly dressed and with unacceptable eating habits. When the rumours were confirmed the candidates were each assigned with a preceptor (*upajjhāya*) and they were also *saddhivihārika* or shared a cell like father and son. There are elaborate details on how the pupil should serve and appease the preceptor, at the same time learning the Dhamma and proper conduct from close contact

with the preceptor. But it has also been spelt out quite clearly that the preceptor should be worthy of carrying out an ordination on behalf of the Saṅgha. Any offensive behavior observed by the pupil, was to be addressed by gentle persuasion by the pupil or sometime with guidance from others.

⁸ Above all, a preceptor was formally assigned to further the progress of the pupil and train him in recitation, interrogation, exhortation and instruction- the art of speaking and conducting himself properly in public was to be inculcated in the privacy of the cell.

The Vibhaṅgas already indicated a fairly complicated organization of the community. The Khandhakas presuppose a still more advanced organization. The first disciples were all arahants but they were inducting people whose potential for attaining enlightenment was not always up to the mark. They therefore needed continuous training. But in spite of that things did not always turn out satisfactorily. Monks notorious for bad habits, trouble makers and cantankerous monks like those of Kosambi were also very much in the picture. The monks fell out with another group of monks, who were protecting a suspended monk and each group was holding a separate communion. At one point the animosity reached such a point, that the monks were accused of badmouthing and hitting each other. These schismatic propensities were recorded and sometimes left unresolved. Even the Buddha with his repeated pleas for forbearance and gentleness within the order could not convince the monks. The image of the Master leaving his seat and departing after his fruitless persuasions is a rare and poignant image to ponder over. ⁹

Followed by the stories of the first conversions thus we have stories of conversion where the recruits could be from the lowest dregs of the society and a most dramatic turn of events could rescue them from their life of depravation and compel them to embrace the pure life. Thus, we have a

group of dissipated young men who had been tricked out of all their belongings were hot in pursuit of a scheming prostitute. On their way they encountered the Buddha who advised them to seek themselves rather than giving the woman a chase.¹⁰ A comparison with the story of the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna could show how the act of ordination was becoming more and more difficult.

Here it will be appropriate to mention that the stories of the Vibhaṅga and the Khndhakas correspond, though focusing on and foregrounding different elements of the same story, one spelt out in the Vibhaṅgas and the other in the Khandhakas. This will be elaborated later. Thus, the stories are contemporaneous and stereotypical, except for the biographical units of the Mahāvagga.

The Mahāvagga also contains the legend of the physician Jīvaka.¹¹ Thus these legends broke free from the dry tone and took recourse in emotive yet simple narration. Serious narratives embodying Buddhist morality also surfaced. The story of Prince Dīghāvu who could not avenge the death of his parents out of compassion and joined the saṅgha as a consequence would fall in this category.¹²

The Mahāvagga was being played out in the backdrop of the biography of the Buddha. The Cullavagga on the other hand, recounts events happening after the Master's death, when the fount-head of authority was no more and the expansion of the discipline stopped.

The first section of the Cullavagga deals with the seven formal acts and is preoccupied with internal squabbles and as well as relationship with the laity. Thus, the story of Yasa is given here and the predicament of the order as well as the monk was articulated in the full. Yasa was falsely accused by the Licchavis of reviling and abusing lay followers. The monk was so

ashamed to go out into the world and meet his accusers that a messenger was allowed to accompany him. The story was invented to legitimize the presence of a companion when an accused monk was compelled to face the laity but could have come indirectly from memories of actual events. The point of contention was the acceptance of gold and silver by the recluses. Yasa refused to accept gold and silver and insisted that he was maintaining a doctrine that came from the master himself. Accused of misbehaving with the laity and facing suspension, Yasa travelled to the lay followers of Vesālī and pleaded his case, buttressing his argument with discourses delivered by the Buddha at various places. By the end of his talk, the lay followers were completely convinced and Yasa was exonerated by the laity. However, the unnamed companion monk found this ominous and duly reported to the monks of Vesālī how Yasa has been able to sway the laity in his favour. This again placed Yasa in grave danger of being suspended and victimized by the scheming monks. The ensuing events are of momentous importance in the narrative on the saṅgha as this issue was serious enough to involve the monks of all four quarters to deliberate on the Ten Points raised by the bhikkhus of Vesālī.¹³

Some of the stories of the Cullavagga occur in other parts of the Vinaya. For example the story of Ariṭṭha who obstinately clung to his wrong ways comes up in the Suttavibhaṅga and the Cullvagga.¹⁴ In the Suttavibhaṅga he was warned and admonished up to three times. The Cullavagga mentions none of these warnings and Ariṭṭha is expelled straightaway. Here the focus was to highlight and legitimize the authority of the saṅgha. This story underlines the well-established strength of the order which could ask one of its members to leave and it could also say that it was due to his or her own incompetence than any deficiency in training and teaching on the part of the saṅgha.

The next section deals with the issues of probation and also the settling of legal questions. The proceedings of cases settled in the presence of the accused and settlement of disputes by a majority decision is illustrated by sample narratives. The narratives tend to focus on the accused and to create vivid after-images of the wrongfully accused. Thus, Dabba who is accused wrongfully has the full glare of the audience on him rather than the devious monks who accuse him.¹⁵

While these sections deal with normal monastic life section VII of the Cullavagga deals with the extraordinary issue of schism. This section starts with the story of Bhaddiya, a former Śākya chief, who was suspected of pining for his former days of luxury and power. Bhaddiya ultimately managed to reassure the Buddha but probably this section on schism started with the story of Bhaddiya because it was important to underline the presence of potential schismatic elements.¹⁶ Then of course Devadatta was cast into the role of the schismatic and a potential murderer.

The next section defines the purity of assembly and how the Buddha suspended the recitation of the Pātimokkha to delegate his power, thus showing the expansion of the order up to a point from where it could not be handled singlehandedly. A supposedly immoral person masquerading as a monk had made his way into the congregation and until he was ejected from the assembly by Sāriputta, the Pātimokkha could not be recited.¹⁷

Thus, the two parts of the Vinaya complement each other, with positive guidance as to how one should act individually or in a congregation. The section on the order of the nuns comes up next and again the biographical unit takes over. The important statement of Gotama that women were eligible for arahantship was ensconced in this biographical backdrop. The

eight important rules for the nuns are also embedded in the legend of Mahāpajapatī Gotami and how she embraced the rules.¹⁸

The two sections on the two councils in Rājagaha and Vesālī bring up the rear. These are late additions as the Vinaya itself was recited at the First Council. The chanting of the Discipline or Vinaya Saṅgīti took place in Rajagaha. Discipline was chanted before Dhamma and it was said that dispensation stands because discipline stands. The Mahaparinibbana Sutta which narrates the same events as Cullavagga does not mention the councils or even the possibility of a council. The two versions had two distinct purposes and went off into different directions.

The Lay People as Moral Agents

It will be appropriate to mention here that this practice of legitimizing doctrinal and philosophical differences through the mediation of various communicative modes is a device that came about with the evolution of Buddhism through several stages of existence. It is difficult to pin down the point in the history of Buddhism when the realization came that the new doctrine was ready to receive the widest possible audience and the idea of a full-fledged and autonomous order began to take shape. Initially there was a lot of hesitation and fumbling. There was also a lot of speculation as to whether it was feasible to preach the truth as was perceived by the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment. Finally, in the First Sermon it was worked out how to give a more comprehensible content to the unuttered thoughts and to reach out to the people at large. Also, there was this imperative to operate differently and to arrange the network of relationships with the wider society according to a unique pattern.

The Buddhists chose to live and travel within a circumscribed landscape, hugging the peripheries of the settlements. Some of the stories in the *Vinaya* explicitly states that abandonment of forest retreats and the setting up of temporary *vassāvāsas* had the logic of being closer to the people. As the temporary abodes were transformed into permanent establishments, it would imply that a new framework of communicating with the wider society had come into being. In fact, the interesting thing is that the texts look at this relationship through a different prism. It seemed that it was for well-being of the people that the monks chose to live in close proximity with them, not the other way round. On the other hand, the monks lived close enough to appear at the doorway of a householder and ask for a portion of the household resources. In fact, in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the sense that they were never too far away has been articulated time and again. There being no *Vinaya* for the laity, the question comes up as to how did the laity keep their side of the contract that imbued a sense of balance to its tenuous relationship with the Order. The monks on the other hand were bound by elaborate codes of conduct as far as their relationship with the laity is concerned. The *bhikkhus* were constantly trained on how to regulate their relationship with the laity. There are training rules or *Sikkhāpada* which were impinging on the relationship with the laity (*gihigata*).¹⁹ So, was is this a one-way relationship with the onus entirely on the monk? From the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, we have the image of the ideal householder or *gihī*. We have a stray reference to *gihīdhamma*.²⁰ Though the text does not flesh out what this *dhamma* consisted of, the term occurs in a section on *dāna*. Thus, *gihīdhamma* seems to be linked to the practice of *dāna* with all the five benefits of appropriate *dāna* accruing to the householder who adheres to this *dhamma*. It is interesting that in the same section, the *dāna* coming to the order from the *gihī* has been contrasted with the term ‘*Dakkhinā*’ which is intrinsically linked to the notion of sacrificial fee to

the Brāhmaṇa. The gihī donor seems to have no obligation other than to listen to the Dhamma and were sometimes designated as Upāsaka or Upāsikā. In the Vinayas, this is the space, where the lay people are incorporated and a dynamic relationship is sought to be established. The relationship is built upon a careful assessment of the householders' receptivity. That this was a fragile relationship and needed to be reworked and rearranged was a notion implicit in the Vinaya. The relationship is tenuous because the bhikkhus are dependent (upanissaya) on the laity for donation. Yet, the laity must not be under the impression that the bhikkhus are after quick gain. A fraud can make his way into the order and have an easy life by simply fleecing the householders. Such dishonest and greedy mendicants appear in the Vinaya. In the Cullavagga, the Buddha talks about teachers who pretend to be a paragon of all moral habits, yet are essentially impure. His disciples protect him and do a cover-up to delude the householders.²¹ In the Mahāvagga, a Brāhmaṇa was lured to the saṅgha because several feasts were being arranged for the recluses in Rājagaha. When the feasts ended the newly ordained monk refused to walk with the other monks, asking for food. Instead, he demanded to be served by the monks and declared that he had joined the Order to have good meals every day without working.²²

In the Vinaya Piṭaka, it has been reiterated again and again that the Brāhmaṇas and the householders render great service to the saṅgha and the monks reciprocate by teaching the 'good law' and pure life. Religious life is only possible through this kind of mutual effort. The Upāsaka aspires for the heavenly realms or a desirable rebirth. Thus, the eightfold path that leads to nibbāna is not the path of a lay follower. Adherence to the Buddhist faith in no way compels the lay follower to reject his/her ancestral or regional customs or beliefs. According to the Vinaya Piṭaka the necessary

qualities of a true upāsaka are faith, morality, generosity, learning and wisdom. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya a developed notion of the sīlas also should have a correspondence with this. The notion of the sīlas is fluid and have varying connotations in the Nikāyik and the Vinaya traditions. But it is clear to see that they correspond to two terms firmly entrenched in the exclusively monastic parlance of Sikkhāpada and the pārājika. In the Aṅguttara, the sīla has two layers-the abhisamācārika sīla which constitutes good behaviour and abhibrahmacariyaka sīla, which constitutes the higher forms of behaviour leading towards the cessation of all sorrows.²³ In the Majjhima Nikāya the term abhisamācārika crops up to denote the general pattern of behaviour of a bhikkhu living in a monastery.²⁴ The detailed contents of these two forms of sīlas however, have not been fleshed out. The notion of the five sīlas prescribed for the laity is chalked out in the Sutta Nipāta, with clearly delineated prescriptions which take the form of vows and are located in the common ground. Though uttered by the Buddha, they are supposed to be internalized by the laity. The vows of non-killing, abstaining from theft, regulated sexual conduct, not lying and not indulging in intoxicants are precepts that were designed for the householders.²⁵ This could be linked to the utterances in the Sigālovāda Sutta which contains the most important ethical addresses to the laity. The practices of the Ariya comprised similar norms of non-killing, abstaining from theft and sexual misconduct and lying.²⁶ The sāmaṇera or the novice, in his course of training had to learn the ten sikkhāpadas the first five of which are replications of the pañcasīlas.²⁷ As far as the pārājika rules are concerned, they were again very similar to the pañcasīlas and the first five sikkhāpadas, the only differences being that they drop the fifth vow and the prescription against sexual misconduct surfaces here as a complete prohibition against all kinds of sexual intercourse and tops the list of

pārājika offences. The pārājika rules also have the notion of legality about them that of course is absent in the notion of the sīlas.

These various forms of behavioral codes converge and converse on a common ground, yet these are also hierarchically laid out precepts which had developed over a long period of time. The sīlas for the householders are obviously inferior compared to the sikkhāpadas to be followed by the novices. The pārājikas on the other hand contain a very early notion of jurisprudence. Yet these precepts were in currency within the integrated community that was sought to be built not only on the ideational plain but also as a matter of practice. Most of these are drawn from a wider world of renunciatory tradition but in the Buddhist universe are formulated and communicated in a distinctive way. The spillover of the moral discourse engaged the laity in an internal dialogue with oneself and an external dialogue in the public forum. He is internally transformed but also is visible and audible in the public forum as a person transformed. This factor brings out the importance of lay followers as moral agents in the public arena.

Yet, the papāto or the chasm that divided the householder from the bhikkhus was unbridgeable. The ‘bahu jana’ or the people enmeshed in experiencing sense pleasures or kāmabhogī can never match the bhikkhu. The Buddha himself had declared that teaching the law to the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis was similar to a farmer sowing the first seeds in the good fields and then giving attention to the fields which were middling and bad.²⁸

The householder as a distinctive category of donor is foregrounded in the Vinaya. In the Brahmanical texts, the transaction often occurs within a ritual context. In the Gṛhyasūtra texts, which were being compiled within the same time-span as the Pāli texts, often the act of donation is carried out within a ritual context or as a charitable act of gifting food for a saṃnyāsin

from the entire household. The notion of reciprocity and ideological imperative is more clearly defined in the Buddhist texts. As Oliver Freiburger has shown, more often than not, the donor householder is gahapati, rather than the gihī or the gahaṭṭha.²⁹ Many celebrated lay followers are gahapatis, mentioned by individual names. The emergence of the gahapati as an affluent category and their association with the renunciants' moral culture indicate a new donorship freed from the shackles of clan-based transactions. The gahapati had accrued wealth from agriculture as well as from commerce and embodies the household that becomes the primary unit from which the gifts to the renunciant flow. The reciprocity in the exchange is very significant in this context. The donation of food, lodgings, robes or medicine are given to an individual monk, a group of monks or to the order in return for the compassion of the monks, a discourse on Dhamma or a promise of a good rebirth. The story of a lay follower of Sāvattthī illustrates this point. He donated a dwelling place for the order and demanded to hear a discourse and meet the bhikkhus. The bhikkhus expressed their inability to travel during the rains as the rules did not permit it. The householder was very indignant and said that as he was a donor and a supporter of the order, his demands should have been met. The Buddha then prescribed that if the monks have been sent for, they could visit the lay follower for seven days.³⁰

The ideological dimension is the support of the householder for a way of life completely different from his own. This helps in building up an integrative community, bound together through an intricate system of exchange. Findly has termed this exchange as 'deferred exchange' as the reward that the monk offers in return is intangible and does not have immediate effect.³¹ The householder derives happiness from the discourse, often embraces the life of a upāsaka or upāsika and is further integrated in

the network of gift exchange. That is not all however. Some of the gahapatis mentioned in the Pāli texts proceed along the spiritual path and attain certain high spiritual markers, like sotāpanna or the stream enterer or the anāgāmin or non-returner. This entails a new notion of moral culture that has multiple dimensions of social applicability. The householder, who has his social identity intrinsically linked to earned wealth rather than any assigned role in the social structure, in the Buddhist texts subverted the conventional division of the society. Instead of the four-fold varṇa system comprising the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and the Śūdra, the Buddhists had already made their own modifications and rearranged the social order with the Khattiyas coming up to the top, followed by the Brāhmaṇa. In certain insertions, the third place in the pecking order went to the gahapati rather than the Vessa. As the gahapati could come from any of the three higher classes, the economic importance of the gahapatis clearly projected them as an independent category shorn of all considerations of birth. Thus, the very premise of social division, based on birth and ritual status was subverted.

This was the dichotomy that began to emerge in the functioning of the Buddhist saṅgha. The Buddhists ideally being peripatetic were slowly getting involved in permanent relationships with the wider society. From its inception the Buddhists were associated with urban centres or transitional spaces on the margins of the settlements. Gradually strong links were forged with the royal and the urban. Even if some of the monks were dwelling in the forests there were rules for holding their own in the forest. They were instructed to set out the fire and water for washing, to know the quarters and the position of the moon. When they entered the villages on an alms-round they were also instructed to be properly clad. There is a story in the Cullavagga where the monks are clueless in the forest

and are accosted and beaten up by robbers.³² The crux of the matter is that the monks are beaten up because they do not behave like monks and are taken for a rival gang of thieves. Thus, the outward markers of public etiquette are also applicable in the forest.

Devadatta, bent on causing a schism in the saṅgha, once approached the Buddha and insisted that rules pertaining to spending a lifetime in the forest, at the root of a tree, be implemented. He further insisted that monks should not accept invitations or robes from a householder and should not eat flesh and fish. When this was denied, he went about the town of Rājagaha with the propaganda that the Buddha was all for a life of luxury and abundance. What is interesting is that, the Buddha says in response to Devadatta's demand, whoever wished to live as a forest-dweller was permitted to do so, even living at the root of a tree was permitted for eight months. But whoever wished to go to a village or accept an invitation was also permitted to do so.³³ This flexibility and liberal outlook were geared to the relationship the saṅgha was trying to forge with the lay groups and to the models of public morality they were trying to produce by conceiving of an integrated community.

The reciprocal relationship that existed between the saṅgha and the wider society was as we have seen, based on the notions of *dāna* and *puñña*. The mutually beneficial relationship laid out on the basis of these combined concepts has been illustrated through stories in the *Nikāyik* literature. We have seen earlier, that in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the questions were already building up regarding the concrete results of *dāna*. The *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* also contains stories pertaining to the benefits of *dāna*. The greatest gift of all seemed to be the gift of a monastery or a *vihāra*.³⁴ This also underlines the permanent bond that was being established between the *bhikkhu* and the laity.

On the other hand, the gift of food also retained its importance in the Buddhist narratives. The very first lay-followers Tapussa and Bhallika gave the gift of food to the Buddha.³⁵ This gift was also received according to proper etiquette. As the Tathāgata does not receive food in his bare hands, four stone bowls were offered by the deities of the four quarters. The gift of the food signifies the primal issue of hunger and that the hand to mouth existence of the *paribbājakas* was not a remote memory. The scramble for patronage was a reality in the days of the Buddha and the relationship with the laity was sometimes tenuous and fraught with tension. But the gift of food and the association with the laity had another dimension. Apart from the notion of resource-sharing that had a background in kin-based societies, the gift of food is a very intimate and transformative act that creates a special bond between the donor and the recipient. The transformative quality of food is articulated in the Majjhima Nikāya where after taking nourishment, Gotama, not yet Buddha, entered the stage of First Meditation, on his way to Enlightenment.³⁶ Another linkage is forged between the donor and the recipient through the gift of food. Findly points out that the term for an alms-round is often called *piṇḍāpāta* in the texts. Findly argues that this notion draws from the Vedic Śrāddha rituals. Piṇḍa which in Bramanical terminology denotes food offering for the departed ancestors, resurfaces in Buddhist tradition as daily offerings to monks and nuns. This symbolizes regeneration for the donor. By feeding the monk the donor is assured of a good rebirth.³⁷

The encounter with the lay people occurred daily, the begging bowl was the external marker of the almsmen and women. There is the motif of one-to-one contact and also group encounters. Sometimes the monk or the nun ventured out alone and sometimes they went in groups. In the alms-round sometimes there are references to food being given to a special monk or

nun. But some were also given to the saṅgha as a whole. When the Buddha allowed group invitations, individual monks as well as a group of monks were invited to a particular household. Sometimes food was stored up before being given up to the order. If food was superfluous it was shared by the order of the monks and the order of the nuns. If some still remained it went out to the needy. There were rules and regulations regarding eating and sharing of food. Stories related to hunger, food taboos and sharing of food galore in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Women as Negotiators, Resource-sharers and Agents of Subversion Within the Integrated Community

The integrated community, envisaged in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, was made further complex by the presence of women both inside and outside the saṅgha. In the *Mahāvagga*, as we have seen earlier, a more or less connected narrative on the formation of the order had been given. After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha was persuaded by the Brahmā Sahampati to teach the Dhamma, out of compassion for all beings. When he had decided that doors to deathlessness should be opened for all those willing to learn, the Buddha speculated as to who would be most receptive to his teachings. It is interesting but not unnatural, that the first names that came to his mind were the names of Āḷara Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, both former teachers of the Buddha, both learned, experienced and of great intelligence. However, when he learnt that both of them had passed away, the Buddha chose the five monks who had been his followers in the first phase of his endeavours.³⁸ Next came the episode of the conversion of the Jaṭilas or the Matted hair ascetics led by Kassapa³⁹ and then came the crowning glory for the order with the conversion of Sāriputta and

Moggallāna.⁴⁰ This trajectory underlines the early propensity of roping in recluses who were already steeped in a spiritual tradition of some form or other. All the groups or individuals making up the community were recluses and mostly were attached to some loosely formed order of mendicants propped up by distinctive ritualistic practices like the Jaṭilas or specific ideological backgrounds like Sāriputta or Moggallāna (both left the order of the Wanderer Sañjaya to take recourse in the teachings of the Buddha). All of the primary recruits were ordained by the Buddha himself and the rudiments of an order of the monks were taking shape. This narrative, underscores the primacy of the order of the monks in the Vinaya tradition. The order of the nuns comes late both in terms of the chronology chalked out in the text and also in terms of the stratification within the text itself. The formation of the Bhikkhunī saṅgha surfaces in the last portions of the Cullavagga, with the only the account of the two councils, which are little more than appendices coming after it. Apart from being a late insertion, the text makes it clear, that this account is secondary, almost incidental and has a completely different trajectory.

The story opens in Kapilavatthu, as Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī seeks out the Buddha, on her own accord and requests him to allow womenfolk to leave home and embrace the order. She was refused three times. Gotamī, however, was not one to give up. Cutting off her hair and putting on a saffron robe she pursued the Buddha to Vesālī, accompanied by a group of Sākyan women. The travails of the women are brought out in sharp relief, as she and her followers arrived in Vesālī covered in dust, tearful and travel-weary. They were rejected once again, but found an able mediator in Ānanda. The momentous utterance that, women were capable of attaining Arahantship, was coaxed out of the Buddha by none other than Ānanda. This utterance establishes a woman as a person, as an empirically

identifiable category capable of mental and spiritual progression. Women were allowed into the order but the Eight Great Rules or *Garudhammā* were clamped on the order of the nuns which signified complete subservience to the order of the monks, as seen earlier. What is significant, is the completely different circumstances under which the order of the nuns was formed.⁴¹ The women who came to the Buddha did not hail from any spiritual order or had none of the training or experience that the first male recruits had. The Buddha did not ordain any of them and delegated the authority to the monks. Gotamī and the first women converts came from the Buddha's own clan. Gotamī was his foster mother, who had suckled the prince when he was a new-born. Thus, the primary community of nuns would be very different from the community of monks. The nuns negotiated their way into the order, while in the case of the monks, it was the Buddha who had first reached out to the monks. The grief-stricken, weary image of Gotamī was very different from the eager and forward-looking image of Sāriputta and Moggallāna who entered the order out of intellectual curiosity. The women seemed to gravitate towards the order out of a sense of personal loss.

The propensity to revert back to the ways of the world would manifest in monks and nuns in equal measures. But in the case of the nuns this was expressed in myriad ways. The Vinaya forbade all kinds of manual labour and the stress was on training and cultivation of spiritual virtues. Theoretically the monks and nuns had very limited personal possessions. Taking care of communal possessions was a shared responsibility, for the monks and nuns alike. As far as the Vinaya is concerned, distribution of labour is not at all lopsided with the women doing the menial work. Yet, *Pācittiya* rules imply that sometimes the almswomen sneaked out and spent their days in doing household chores for the laity.⁴² This kind of

relationship between the almswomen and laity was not tolerated by the order. A rule was immediately put into force to bar the nuns from doing any kind of household work for the laity. Some of the women were also spotted spinning yarn. This too was immediately banned.⁴³ Thus, domestic drudgery, that was women's lot in the outer world was prohibited for the women of the order. Yet, there is the lurking fear in the texts that the women might forsake their spiritual quest and go back to their 'natural callings'.

Again sometimes, some concessions would be made for specific needs of women. The same fear of reversal would crop up in the text, expressed by the monks and nuns of the order and also by the laity outside. For example, when the women were given concessions as far as bathing and washing their private parts were concerned, a woman carried out a very lengthy wash and a sore came out in her private parts. The fastidious nuns were annoyed with the nun and complained to the monks. This made the monks break out in anger and hurl abuses at the women. At this point the Buddha intervened and a set of corrective measures were introduced.⁴⁴ In the name of reticence the issue of hygienic living had become inconsequential. There is yet another story of the almswomen bathing in the same pond as a group of prostitutes, who mocked them for growing hair on their bodies, like householders.⁴⁵ Another time, a group of prostitutes ridiculed the nuns and invited them to join their ranks and leave the order. ⁴⁶ Thus, all and sundry looked askance as far as the special needs of women were concerned. In all the instances the nuns were reported to the monks, who in their turn brought the matter before the Buddha, who then promulgated a rule. The danger that the women would learn worldly knowledge and mingle with householders was something that also haunted the order of the monks. But

as we have seen these were expressed in distinctive ways as women had certain special needs that had to be addressed by the Order.

There are stories of violence and assault especially on the almswomen. These stories are so numerous that it seems the plight of unprotected women was really frightening. That is why there were strictures in the *Vinayas* on nuns travelling alone in secluded and dangerous regions.⁴⁷

Nuns like Thullanandā or Caṇḍakālī are represented as paragons of all vices in the texts and are brought up repeatedly as subversive elements. But these are literary counterparts of the recalcitrant monks like Ariṭṭha, the former vulture trainer, who comes up again and again as the ‘bad monk’. It is easy to see, that Thullanandā or Chaṇḍakālī are ‘bad’ not essentially because they are women, rather they embody and give faces to evils that lurk both in the monks’ Order as well as in the Order of the bhikkhunīs. Like the group of prototypical six monks who go gallivanting and end up doing all kinds of notorious misdeeds, we have a group of six nuns who match them act for act.

In fact, in a story, Thullanandā imitates Ariṭṭha.⁴⁸ It is not even said what she does exactly. Imitating Ariṭṭha is bad enough. Caṇḍakālī is the quarrelsome nun, given to self-harming, who quarrels with all the other nuns and hurts and curses herself or mingles unashamedly with householders.⁴⁹ Thullananda on the other hand, is exceptionally learned, preaches the doctrine and recites the discipline impeccably, yet she indulges in various kinds of misdeeds and apparently has no regard for authority. As Reiko Ohnuma shows, she is directly responsible for the promulgation of an array of rules from all categories of offences and embodies certain tendencies within the order.⁵⁰ On one occasion, she is crafty and scheming, on another just lazy and stupid. She has a

considerable following among the laity, even preaches to King Pāsēndi of Kosala and gladdens his heart. Yet, after the sermon, out of greed, demands the king's woolen garment.⁵¹ It seems that she had learned the doctrine and the discipline, yet had not internalized it. The entire programme of the Vinaya that sought to translate the morality of the Doctrine into ethical codes embedded in practice, is turned into an inadequate system that cannot accommodate and transform everyone. Thullanandā provides a critical commentary to the system. She colludes with Devadatta, who is the embodiment of schismatic tendencies in the Vinaya. She has an intense antipathy for Mahākassapa but a palpable favoritism for Ānanda. She is a pointer to all forms of dissensions and rifts within the order. Devadatta as a proponent of rigid asceticism could have been a force to reckon with in the earlier period. Thullanandā hails him as a hero.⁵² Yet, another proponent of austerity, Mahākassapa evokes only hostility from Thullanandā. Ānanda, who symbolises a more liberal and lenient propensity is clearly a favourite of Thullanandā. The indication of a latent ideological rivalry between Ānanda and Mahākassapa is brought out in the account of the First Council. Ānanda was publicly made to face five accusations, one among the five being, the establishment of the bhikkhunī saṅgha.

It seems Thullanandā has a chip on the shoulder as far as legitimate authority is concerned. She embodies the subterranean current of dissent that interrogated and critiqued the whole package of moral culture projected in the Vinaya. She is a straw woman set up to be confuted and bashed at every point. Yet, she emerges as a complex construction and is charged with contradictory impulses. Even when she is in the right, she is vilified. When a householder's son takes away a gift given to the order of the nuns, Thullanandā fights for the entire order and secures a favourable

verdict from the Judge. Yet, as the householder complains of harassment to the saṅgha and it is Thullanandā who is sanctioned by the Order.⁵³ Even though she is defeated and vilified, she provides a powerful sub-text to the largely monophonic narrative of religious morality and indicates a quest for alternative ethical mores.

The gahapatānī, in contrast to the bhikkhunīs is much sought after from the very outset. Among the first lay followers were the mother and wife of Yasa, who were visited by the Buddha and discoursed and solaced by him.⁵⁴ None of the bhikkhunīs have been addressed individually by the Buddha, yet in the early phase the Buddha preached directly to both laymen and laywomen. This practice was probably curtailed at a later period. The story of Udāyin approaching the housewives and teaching the dhamma in an intimate fashion put an end to the custom of monks preaching to women.⁵⁵ However, this is a stray reference. No other sources suggest that women were not allowed to listen to Dhamma. It seems that, one to one interaction between a male monk and a female lay follower was put under the scanner. The housewife as an independent donor with alienable wealth for the renunciant, to allocate and donate as she pleased, was as we have seen involved in a seemingly non-gendered encounter with the male monk. The monk was required to adhere to rules of public etiquette that regulated his conduct during the alms round.

On another occasion, Udāyin was spotted conversing with a girl in a secluded corner of the room. Visākhā Migāramātā, the most prominent lay woman was present at the spot and warned Udāyin of the impropriety of his conduct. Udāyin however, took no notice of Visākhā. Visākha promptly complained to the order. This invoked a serious reaction. As the laywoman was acknowledged as a trustworthy witness, the monk could be punished on the basis of her evidence.⁵⁶ The gravity of the offence was to be judged by

comparing the evidence given by the woman and the confession obtained from the man. The gahapatānī as an independent consumer of Dhamma was integrated into the clearly spelt out network of exchange, determined by upanissaya. She was a donor in her own right. Visākhā was herself an extremely generous donor. She even built a monastery for the Order. Pointing out the laxities of individual monks was a prerogative she enjoyed not only because she showered gifts on the saṅgha but because she had embarked on a path of mental progression. That is why she is called trustworthy and auspicious. The prosperity and extremely satisfactory family life of Visākhā also supposedly flowed from her mental progression and association with the order. She was acknowledged as a person of great moral virtue and wisdom. That is why she was invited to various households. Visākhā as an exemplary individual thus counted as a moral agent who operated within the integrated society envisaged by the Order.

The Buddha as the Arbiter and the Moral Leader

The Buddha as the authoritative leader appears to mitigate frictions and squabbles within the order, but in reality also addressed the broader issues pertaining to the interactions between the saṅgha and the wider society. The general rules could be circumvented by women and men where misconducts were concerned, but one was driven to a corner when specific rules for moral laxity were enforced. Thus, very detailed rules and by-rules were laid out to curb deviant behaviour. The principal aim was to identify the cause of evil practices and to simulate a situation which would eradicate the cause itself. This causal principle was inherent in the Buddhist narratives, for they were developed as ideological tools to delineate the context for the good and the evil.

The stories emphasize the swing of the guiding principles of the saṅgha. Sometimes the rules are modified due to pressures from the wider society and the power of public opinion is foregrounded. On the other hand, sometimes the pressure came from the inside to make concessions or to curb disruptive behavior within the saṅgha. In some of the stories a succinct condensation of these pulls has been made and they emerge as compromise stories. None of the stories told in the Vinaya are apparently unresolved and leave no other option than the one arrived at. Yet, the stories are not closed even though they are conclusive and omnipotent. As we have seen earlier, all possible permutations and combinations of misconduct and the mitigating features of the offence are taken into account and each possibility explored, explained and resolved. This recognition of different possibilities and different closures blend seamlessly in the discourses. For example, a monk was brought before the Buddha for carrying out sexual intercourse with a woman.⁵⁷ Several issues came up- whether the man was uncovered or the woman, whether the man performed sexual intercourse willingly or was his male organ forcibly placed on the woman's particular body parts. Each possibility had a different answer and each story had a different closure. Thus, the Buddha pronounced rules with the stamp of authority but at the same time a meticulously worked out sense of justice and leniency for the supposed offender were also foregrounded.

In his conversation with Upāli in the Mahāvagga, the Buddha spells out the nitty-gritties of carrying out a formal act of deciding dhammakamma and vinayakamma and also adhamma and avinaya. Thus, in the conjoined terms dhammakamma and vinayakamma the issue of establishing the notion of legality is articulated.⁵⁸ A formal act deciding dhammakamma and vinayakamma involves the presence of the accused and an interrogation and the acknowledgement of the offence by the accused. The formal act

can not have legality unless it is carried out according to the rule, in a complete assembly.

In negotiations with the laity, this authority was articulated in a more complex way. The laity were not bound by the Vinaya and the tenuous relationship of reciprocity had to be maintained. The gap between the order and the laity was bridged by a network of exchanges meticulously laid out and the material gifts of the laity were reciprocated by the intangible gifts of the *saṅgha*, the gift of Dhamma or Dhamma-dāna. The gift of *Dhamma* was by far the superior form of gift. Moreover, great happiness was conferred upon the laity as they were allowed to make gifts of food, dwelling, clothes and medicine to the *saṅgha*. The smooth working of this network of exchange had to be ensured and the donor and the recipient at both ends had to be convinced of the necessity of the system running smoothly. Stories were improvised to illustrate that putting obstacles in the flow of gifts from the laity to the *saṅgha* would prove to be disastrous for both the parties. When a household was barred from donating robes to the order their home was burnt to the ground through some accident. The laity's desire for making donations was being legitimized through this story. When a monk is accused of reviling or abusing a householder, a formal act of reconciliation is carried out for him and the monk could be suspended for clinging to the wrong view.⁵⁹

When the flow of donations was impeded by the greed and selfishness of a member of a *saṅgha* the onus was on the *saṅgha* to chastise the offender. When a greedy nun tried to hold off other almswomen from a certain household, so that she could enjoy the delicious food all alone, the household in question became aware of the nun's intentions and made inquiries. The issue was that on one hand, the greedy nun had prevented the householders from attaining greater merit for her own ends and on the

other had slandered the householders saying, fierce dogs and mad bulls were kept at the house and there were swamps all around.⁶⁰

The issue of hospitality was also dealt with and clarified in the stories. In the Vinaya Piṭaka, there are stories that mention the lay people offering a resting –place or a night-shelter for the monks. When a worthy monk passed the night in the house of a family, often a new conversion was made. But it was also recognized that this situation was potentially dangerous and a lone monk was prohibited from taking shelter in a woman's house. The fear of unseemly behavior from a monk or a nun was inherent in the notion of hospitality. The encounter between the lay woman and the monk was to be an anonymous and impersonal transaction, the monk not being allowed to look the donor in the eye. They had to be dressed properly, stand not close or not too far away, not to appear suddenly at the doorway and not to move away too quickly. A monk who had ventured into the inner chamber of a house, saw the wife of the house lying naked on her back, realized his mistake and moved away. But the husband of the woman saw her naked and accusing the monk of having seduced the wife, beat him up. The innocence of the monk was established and the woman herself defended the monk. However, the Buddha blamed the slovenly dress of the monk for this incident and introduced stricter dress-codes.⁶¹

There was ample scope of communication between the almsmen and the laity. The *vihāras* were open to the laity and there are records of numerous visits by both men and women. Apart from regular visits the laity were allowed to visit when the almsmen and women fell ill.

This phenomenon of relatively open communication between the monks and the laity prized open new areas to be worked upon. On the other hand, the presence of the Buddhist order on the margins of the settlements and

the principle of non-seclusion brought about new social implications and enriched the early narrative tradition of the Buddhists, with different genres of stories performing different functions within and outside the saṅgha.

On a micro level, another dimension of this engagement between the saṅgha and the wider society can be imagined from a very early age and has left its imprint on the discourses. Nupur Dasgupta has very recently pointed out that the authority of the charismatic leader, the moral preceptor par excellence was projected through words in the early days after his demise, recited by the *bhikkus*, meditated on by the *sutamtikas*, *pamcanekāyikas*, *peṭākinas*, and *vināyakas*, or promulgated in public by the *Bhāṇakas*. The authority of the teacher was embedded in the utterances which would be imbued with an idea of infallibility within the Theravāda tradition.⁶² This notion of authority took shape right from the earliest period, as the phenomenon of gatherings and congregations feature prominently in the early parts of the text and dialogic devices and the importance of public address were not only foregrounded in the texts but were also valorised as legitimate methods for winning over supporters. Nupur Dasgupta opines that there were certain epithets ascribed to the Buddha which indicated his status as an acclaimed teacher, a leader. The epithet ‘*Bhagavā*’, for instance, is found repeatedly in the four Nikāyas and even in the Aṭṭhakavagga of the *Suttanipāta*, considered as one of the oldest portions of the Pāli canon. The other epithet ‘*Satthā*’ which distinguished the Buddha from the other contemporary or previous teachers like him might have layers of meaning but in early Buddhist parlance would denote a leader of a band or a teacher.⁶³

This imagery of a supreme moral guide was also gaining wider currency, taking deep roots in the temporal world connected with the saṅgha in a bond of reciprocity. This could also include the royal court. Nupur Dasgupta has

very aptly quoted from the Sāmaññaphala Sutta where Buddha preaches to King Ajātaśatru of Magadha and gradually the aura and moral authority of the teacher is unfurled. The king confesses his ignorance and is totally under the sway of the teacher. The Buddha declares himself before the monarch:

‘Suppose, O king, there appears in the world one who has won the truth, an Arahaṭ, a fully awakened one, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, who knows all worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men a Blessed One, a Buddha’. ⁶⁴

Thus, it would appear that the imagery of the all-powerful spiritual guide was taking shape in early Buddhist discursive practices and had meaningful resonance within and outside the *saṅgha*.

The term Vinaya in conjunction with dhamma is inseparable from the notion of sāsana, it denotes the Buddhist dispensation rather than hard and fast rules. It is more of a code of conduct for the ideal monk or nun and a form of jurisprudence. This also encapsulates the notion of proper training and evaluation through which virtue might be cultivated. Thus, the imagery of the moral leader and the arbiter is more apt for the Buddha than the imagery of the mere codifier. The way of disciplined life projected in the Vinaya Piṭaka is more important than the sanctions spelt out in it. Thus, the Vinaya as a codified text could not permeate the world of the laity but the way of life it prescribed could seep into it, through the connected notion of the sīla. By controlling the relationship between the monk and the laity the text was actually churning out appropriate models of behaviour and that could touch both ends of the relationship.

The Saṅgha and History

One has to keep in mind that the stories form a part of the records of the saṅgha. The events that led to the structuring of the saṅgha themselves had to be recorded. This was done through periodic meetings of the monks who debated the teaching and its interpretation. These Discussions and dialogues or the models of them have been preserved in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The Buddha himself came from a clan-based chiefdom where public debates and long deliberations were pivotal to the political culture.

When the monasteries became institutions their records had to be kept. This meant statements on the legitimacy of the original teacher together with some biographical information as evidence. This initiated narration of activities of the historical Buddha believed to be real, the coming of the saṅgha, enumerating sectarian fissions, narrating the relationship between the saṅgha and the wider society, frequently its relationship with the ruler. To sum up, records were evolved to provide validity to the utterances of the original teacher, to provide nuggets of information about his life and also to keep track of the complex social relations, entered into by the Buddhist order. This complex relation was based, as we have seen, on the reciprocal act of gift-giving . The other dimension of this complex relation was of course, the participation of women both in the life of the saṅgha and the life of active lay follower.

There was always this tendency to record an important donation. A gift from the royal family or a socially influential person increased the prestige of the saṅgha. Apart from that, for the individual lay donor for whom it was an act of great merit and also for the saṅgha as it wanted the flow of gifts to continue. As Romila Thapar asserts, the focus was on establishing

chronology and for the evolution of a sequentially structured record. The saṅgha had to build a past for itself by linking itself with temporal events.⁶⁵

Further, while building a history of the saṅgha, the narratives, speeches and dialogic devices were brought in to produce evidence. This practice would be more intensified in situations where there were potential rivals. The narratives often forged linkages between political authority and the saṅgha whether real or imagined. This was done in the *Nikāyas* and also in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, a most suitable example would be the attempt to build up a connected history of the Buddhist Councils and linking the ruling king with the councils.

The rulers of Magadha and Kosala are portrayed as upāsakas in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Sāvattthī and Rājagaha were resorts where many a rainy season was spent. Bimbisāra gifted the veluvana to the Buddha and is associated with several cardinal Vinaya rules, like the rule of reciting the Pātimokkha on a fortnightly basis.⁶⁶

The principle of non-seclusion brought about new social implications and enriched the early narrative tradition of the Buddhists, with different genres of stories performing different functions within and outside the saṅgha.

We have to recognize the essential difference of the Buddhist records interspersed with illustrative narratives from the Brahmanical traditions. The records of the Buddhists had a more concrete engagement with the sequences of history. This stemmed from the belief of the order in the Buddha as a historical person. His life and actions were not only seen as an example to follow but also as a life that had a deep impact on the broader canvas of history. Thus, it became imperative for the saṅgha as an institution to weave together the dispersed content of the Teacher's discourses and to collate and preserve it as historical memory.

The other important aspect of the Buddhist records was that though these were religious records the problem of regulating social relationships was immanent within it and this was reflected in the texts. The teachings of the Buddha originally recalled as an oral tradition had to be given shape as recognizable systematic knowledge. After the death of the Buddha there was the fear losing his words forever and the task of formalizing a connected narrative of the Buddha and the saṅgha was undertaken by the elders. The sect that initially claimed to have collated the teachings of the Master were the Thravādins. This claim was contested by other sects, thereby starting a separate tradition of saṅghic history.

When this systemized knowledge took on a literary form it required a different discipline of learning. One must not expect a sense of connected history from the narratives. Most of them are chronologically diffused, compiled over a span of time. The chronological range would stretch from the time of the Buddha to the mid-first millennium CE when the commentaries were being composed.

The important thing to remember is of course, the unique nature of authorship. Veering away from the Vedic tradition which are attributed to the sūta and the Brāhmaṇa, the Buddhist texts were composed by the monks situated within a monastic establishment.

We cannot ascertain the role of the prominent lay followers in the making of the texts. The monastery as we have seen had a dynamic relationship with the socio-cultural landscape that surrounded it and gradually through its interactions with the wider community gave a socio-economic stamp of identity on the wider landscape. But we can imagine an interpretive community which operated beyond the conventional networks of Dāna and Puñña. This community consisted of the composers, reciters, preachers,

edifiers and audiences of the addresses. They were united by certain common strategies of interpretation honed inside the order of the monks and disseminated within an integrated interpretive community. This community directly and indirectly participated in shaping the addresses. The refracted voices of the components of this community can be discerned in the literary conversations contained in the texts and also pointed towards a range of social conversation beyond the texts.

Notes

¹ Vin.II.287., Horner, I.B. 2001., p.396.

² Dutt, S., *Early Buddhist Monachism*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., London, 1924, pp–18–19.

³ Vin.III.9., Horner, 1949, p.18.

⁴ D.II.76., Rhys-Davids, T.W. and C.A.F., p. 82.

⁵ Vin.III.11–20., Horner, 1949, pp.21–37.

⁶ M.N. II.55.24

⁷ Vin I.21., Horner, I.B. IV.28–29.

⁸ Vin.I.45–56., Horner, IV.65–72.

⁹ Vin.I.349., Horner, IV.498.

¹⁰ Vin.I.23., Horner, IV.31.

¹¹ Vin.I.269., Horner, IV.381.

¹² Vin.I.348., Horner, IV.498.

¹³ Vin.I.297–298., Horner, V.413–414.

¹⁴ Vin.II.26. Horner, V.38.

¹⁵ Vin.II.79., Horner, V. 104.

¹⁶ Vin.II.183., Horner, V.258.

¹⁷ Vin.II.236., Horner, V.331.

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- ¹⁸ Vin.II.254., Horner, V.354.
- ¹⁹ Vin.II.288. Horner, V.399.
- ²⁰ A.3.41., Hare, E.M., p.32.
- ²¹ Vin.II.186., Horner, V.262.
- ²² Vin.I.57–58., Horner, IV.74.
- ²³ A.II.243., Woodward, p.248.
- ²⁴ M.I.469., Horner, II.142
- ²⁵ Sn.V.393.
- ²⁶ D.III.181., Rhys Davids, p. 174.
- ²⁷ Vin.I.27.
- ²⁸ Vin.II.13., Horner, V.19.
- ²⁹ Freiburger, O., ‘Gṛhastha in the Śramaṇic Discourse: A Lexical Survey of House Residents in Early Pāli Texts’, in Gṛhastha: The householder in Ancient Indian religious Culture, P. Olivelle ed., Oxford university Press, New Delhi, 2019, p. 70.
- ³⁰ Vin.I.139–141. Horner, IV.185–186.
- ³¹ Findly, E.B., *Dāna: Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism*, Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 2003. P. 59.
- ³² Vin.II.216–217., Horner, V.303–304.
- ³³ Vin.II.197., Horner, V.276–277.
- ³⁴ Vin.I.139., Horner, IV.185.
- ³⁵ Vin.I.4., Horner, IV.5.
- ³⁶ M.I.247–248. Horner, p.302.
- ³⁷ Findly, p. 135.
- ³⁸ Vin.I.8., Horner, IV.12–13.
- ³⁹ Vin.I.34., Horner, IV.44.
- ⁴⁰ Vin.I.41., Horner, IV.55.
- ⁴¹ Vin.II.256–257., Horner, IV.356–357.
- ⁴² Vin.IV.300., Horner, III.329.
- ⁴³ Vin.IV.299., Horner, III.328.
- ⁴⁴ Vin.IV.262., Horner, III. 250.
- ⁴⁵ Vin.IV.259–260. Horner, III. 247.
- ⁴⁶ Vin.IV. 278., Horner, III.283.

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- ⁴⁷ Vin.IV.295., Horner, III.317.
- ⁴⁸ Vin.IV.218., Horner, III.169.
- ⁴⁹ Vin.IV.277, 294., Horner, III.281,315.
- ⁵⁰ Ohnuma, R., ‘Bad Nun: Thullanandā in Pāli Canonical and Commentarial sources’ in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol.20, 2013, pp. 18–66. p.19.
- ⁵¹ Vin.IV.257., Horner, III.238.
- ⁵² Vin.IV.335., Horner, III.396.
- ⁵³ Vin.IV.223–224., Horner, III.178–179.
- ⁵⁴ Vin.I.19., Horner, IV.26.
- ⁵⁵ Vin.IV.21., Horner, II.204.
- ⁵⁶ Vin.III.186–190, Horner, I.330–335.
- ⁵⁷ Vin.III.30–31., Horner, 49–50.
- ⁵⁸ Vin. I.325–326. Horner, IV.467–468.
- ⁵⁹ Vin.I.332., Horner, IV. 477.
- ⁶⁰ Vin.IV.312. Horner, III.350.
- ⁶¹ Vin.II.215–216., Horner, IV. 301–302.
- ⁶² Dasgupta, Nupur, ‘Tracing the Word of Authority: From Aśoka’s Dhamma to the Buddhist Roots of Social Regulation’ in *Early Indian History and Beyond (Essays in honour of B.D. Chattopadhyaya)*, Osmund Bopearachchi and Suchandra Ghosh eds., Primus Books, Delhi, 2019, p. 444–449.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ D.II.40., Rhys-Davids 1899, p.78.
- ⁶⁵ Thapar, Romila, *The Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2017, pp. 410–412.
- ⁶⁶ V.I.38., Horner, IV.51., V.I.100., Horner, IV.130–131.

Conclusion

Transition of the Communicative Modes and the Creation of a Polite Mode of Discourse

The various modes of address, that we have examined so far were composed, crafted and primarily uttered and re-uttered inside the saṅgha, but we have also seen that, they were woven into a dialogic relationship with an extended community, comprising diverse groups outside the saṅgha. The audience, both inside and outside the confines of the saṅgha and recipients of the addresses on one level, were also participants in the sense, that they were not only expected to emulate the conventions of public speaking laid out in the texts, but also entered the addresses as archetypal figures with distinctive voices which would add to the complexity of the communicative surface. Thus, the Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka reveal a communicative space which was complex and polyphonic, yet, worked on a synthesis to project a hegemonic voice of morality and tranquility. The alternative contours of this communicative space are also audible in the texts and operate as subterranean undercurrents to comment on the main programme of the texts themselves. This, as we have seen, is particularly noticeable in the Vinaya Piṭaka.

We have also tried to underscore the importance of the addresses as speech-acts. The notion of immediacy and action is immanent within it. We have seen that the utterances are laden with intent and were delivered to impact the listeners in one way or the other. As we perceive the utterances as acts, they were also designed to evoke action. Kunal Chakrabarti, while talking about the Purāṇas has indicated the function of the texts in propagating the Brahmanical ideals of social reconstruction within a wider circle.¹ The idea of action is implicit within it. Here too, we have seen, normative utterances, propping up patterns of social behaviour are foregrounded in the discourses. Now the time has come for a closer look at the community of composers and disseminators of these addresses and also at a wider cross-section of the recipients and facilitators.

Creation and Compilation of the Addresses: The Composers and Disseminators within the Saṅgha

From the earliest period, the words of the Buddha and the *Dharma* were transmitted not only by the Buddha but also directly from disciple to disciple. Both monks and nuns elucidated the teachings of the Buddha and reached out to initiate others into the order. Thus, Sāriputta imbibed the teachings of the Master from Aśvajit, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha and in his turn taught his fellow ascetic Mahāmoggallāna the summary of it. As it turned out, these two Brahmins soon became foremost disciples or *śrāvakas* of Buddha and played a major role in the dissemination of the discourses. Likewise, Purna Maitrāyaniputra was designated by Buddha himself as the principal expounder of *Dharma*, while Katyāyana was the chosen one who explained the discourses of

Tathāgata most succinctly. This mode of transmission, most notably, also involved the senior nuns. Dhammadinnā and Paṭācārā mastered the Dharma and the Vinaya respectively and were foremost preachers of the order, who converted hundreds to the Great Samana's way of life. All the foremost preachers of the order were described not only as wise but also as very eloquent.

An analysis would bring us to a very interesting phenomenon in Buddhist discursive practices. It has been argued that recitation and oral transmission had been prevalent since the time of Buddha. Sona reciting the *Suttanipāta* to please the Buddha is an imagery that has endured. In the *Suttavibhanga* of the *Vinaya* there is a *pācittiya* rule that prohibits those who had not taken the higher ordination from being taught the Dharma by being made to recite it word for word. This rule came into being because some monks were teaching in a faulty way. Again there are many references to reciting the *patimokkha*. In the *Samgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we have separate sets of imageries: ²

1. The Buddha teaching the monks and the lay followers
2. Sāriputta reciting the summary of the Doctrine to the monks as he had learnt
3. Monks reciting in unison

The word *vāceti* to signify teaching really conveys the notion of someone reciting after the teacher. This mode of teaching and learning does not encourage innovation and performative recitation. As huge portions of the texts were in prose form and the emphasis was on group recitation there was no room for individual innovations. The focus was on fixed wording and standardized diction. *Samgīti Sutta* brings up the problem of inauthenticity and pleads with the monks to learn a lesson from the

disarray in the Jaina fold after Mahavira's death.³ In the Aṅguttara Nikāya the Buddha himself declares that *Dharma* disappears with the wrong arrangement of words and letters and with wrong interpretation of the meaning.⁴

This verbatim transmission was made possible by several groups of *bhāṇaka* or reciters associated with one or other genre of texts. The *Vinaya* tradition asserts that the *bhāṇaka* was shouldering this arduous task from the time of the First Buddhist Council itself. Yet the establishment of the institution of the *bhāṇaka* could not have been that simple. As K.R. Norman asserts⁵, It would have involved-

4. A homogenization of the dialect
5. Historical issues that impinged on the doctrines had to be sorted out
6. Classification and exegesis had to be carried out

So, it can be argued that the *bhāṇaka* did not immediately take over as the custodians of a fixed body of texts and there was a brief period of free transmission, when the dialogues, discourses, stories and anecdotes were remembered, compared and discrepancies were glossed over. This brings us to a particular moment in Buddhist history when the undifferentiated *bhāṇaka* system was crystallizing itself and striving towards a more cohesive yet more diversified structure of textual tradition signalling the closure of this period of free transmission.

Can we talk about a 'textual' tradition as far as early Buddhism was concerned? Because talking about texts bring in the analogy of the literary in the contemporary parlance. The Buddhist discourses on the other hand were taking shape and rooted within a primarily oral culture.

The word text has no etymological connection whatsoever with written letters and simply indicates weaving. The oral discourses of the early Buddhists were being structured and stitched together almost from inception. This process of weaving was very complex to say the least. Even assuming that the earliest disciple-teachers like Sāriputta, disseminated the teaching just as they had heard it from the Buddha himself, one performance could not have been an exact replication of another and discrepancies must have come in. The question is whether the principal content was tampered with or whether subsidiary details were added or omitted. With the Buddhist texts it is more likely that the details within the frames of the discourses could have been altered, like the name of the place where the sermon was given. This would also be rare as some of the discourses were embedded in the context and the context was significant. For example, in the *Sāmañña-Phala* sutta, the Buddha's presence in Rājagaha is necessary as he engages in a conversation with the king of Magadha, Ajātasattu.⁶ This conversation need not have been real, but the sutta was composed with the intention of placing the Buddha in close contact with a historical ruler and of elevating him to a position of the Teacher in relation with the king. In this way, it furnishes us with circumstantial historical evidence. Similarly, the *Samgīti* Sutta could not have been uttered at a venue other than the Ubbhataka, the high-roofed assembly hall of the Mallas of Pāvā, because the news of Nāṭaputta's death in Pāvā initiated this remarkable pedagogical exercise from Sāriputta.⁷ The in-text audience originally conceived at the time of composition could also have changed in the process of dissemination, but the chance of its changing the basic texture of the discourse was unlikely. As we have seen, the in-text audience simply provided a smoke-screen for broader dialogues that were carried out beyond the texts. As we talk

about the creation of the Buddhist texts, we do not simply mean thinking it through, the thought is associated intrinsically with the act of utterance.

It is clear from the way that the Nikāyas had been formulated that there were differences between them presumably because they were remembered differently by the different groups. Nevertheless, as recent researches suggest these discrepancies were not too serious.⁸ Considering the disparate nature of the material with which the *bhāṇakas* must have started this is puzzling. As has been mentioned earlier, just as the act of speaking correctly was valorised in the text the faculties of listening, learning and retaining correctly was also valorised. The word ‘bahussuta’ underscores the importance of imbibing the teaching through listening.

Still there are verses and utterances which differ if we compare the various Nikāyik traditions, there are also different takes on stories from the Buddha’s life and subtle differences as far as historical issues were concerned.

As far as the oral composition and utterance of the early Buddhist texts were concerned there are two diametrically opposite positions taken by more recent scholarships. One point of view had as its champion L.S.Cousins who argued that the suttas would be tailor-made to suit a particular situation. They could be shortened or lengthened as desired and an experienced chanter would draw from a reservoir of traditional narratives to illustrate the spirit of the sayings. Thus each performance of the *bhāṇaka* would be different and the notion of a fixed text would be impossible to conceive.⁹ However, others have argued that the early Buddhist literature even if we have it in a very different form today varies essentially from material which was composed orally. One of the foremost to argue along these lines was of course K.R. Norman who

asserted that the majority of the suttas are in prose and cannot be coaxed into the straightjacket of contemporary theories explaining ancient oral epics.¹⁰ Richard Gombrich has also pointed out that the early texts were of such a peculiar nature that the incorporation of complex and logical arguments was imperative and hence exact wording was what mattered most.¹¹ Recently, in an extremely well-argued article, based on internal evidences of the texts, Alexander Wynne has also supported a situation of verbatim transmission of the discourses after a brief period of free transmission.¹²

It is clear from the extant Pāli texts that an acute anxiety for the accurate transmission of Dharma surfaced from an early period. The most compelling account of this anxiety comes from the *Samgīti sutta*. To stem the flow of discord within the order after Tathagata's death Sāriputta came up with an inventory of his teachings, divided into categories. He further asserts that, the teaching should be remembered just as it had been pronounced and monks should recite them in unison, without disputation. Each category is followed by a refrain, which reiterates that the teaching should be preserved as it had been pronounced.

Transmission of the Addresses

In the previous section, we encounter problem of inauthenticity which had surfaced as early as when the first council was held. In Rajagṛha, 500 learned monks recited the teachings of the Tathāgata. This council redacted the *mula-saṃgaha* or the 'root-compilation'. The *Buddhavaṇṇa* was divided into parts and given to groups for safe keeping. Buddhaghosa gives us the information that the Vinaya was entrusted to Upāli and his disciples, Dīgha was entrusted to Ānanda, the Majjhima to Sāriputta, the

Āṅguttara to Aniruddha and the Saṃyutta to Mahākāssapa.¹³ The way they were shared out already signals the division into Nikāyas. A hundred years later, a second council was held in Vaiśali to settle a dispute over ten points of monastic discipline.

After the second council the order gradually splintered into several schools and there is a perceptible shift in the narratives. Now the accounts of the councils reflect school-specific congregations and validation of the scriptures of a single school, invoking the authority of a single lineage.

Some of the earliest written donative records from India refer to the *bhāṇaka* or the reciter, recording their contribution for the construction of stupas. Thus we can trace the reciters at the same time that the art of writing is starting to develop. At Bharhut we come across specialists in the *pṛtakas* as well in the five *nikāyas*. In the donative inscriptions we have the names of seven bhanakas as donors. One of them Isipālita, a superintendent of new work donates the magnificent Ajatashatru pillar.¹⁴ The interesting thing is that the inscriptions do not mention which branches of learning they specialised in.

A reading of the inscriptions brings us to a particular moment in the history of Buddhism when the undifferentiated *bhāṇaka* tradition was trying to coalesce into a more structured textual tradition. Another dimension was the evidence of a dynamic interaction with the emergent literary culture. When a monk whether he was technically a *bhāṇaka* or not we would never know, took the visitors for a ritual circumambulation of the sacred space he had the scribbled label inscriptions to jog his memory and could tell the tale in the proper way. This dynamism bridged the gap between orality and literacy. It would be simplistic to assume that writing would replace oral narration at one go. Thus one can say that the

period between 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE was very important as far as Buddhist scriptural history was concerned, as during this period the reciters thrived and were immortalized with some of the most spectacular monuments of early India and at the same time the literate culture evolved. Recitation, visual representation and writing went on side by side. Oral transmission did not simply peter out but took on a new function and a new context.

The *Dipavamsa* contains no information as to how the canons were written down. We can only guess that what was being remembered and recapitulated were recited in the presence of the scribes, who wrote it down verbatim. We can assume a coordination between different schools of *bhāṇakas*. We can also assume that the discrepancies within the Nikāyik tradition were once again smoothed over and simultaneous changes were being made for further homogenisation of the texts. However, the *bhāṇakas* are still mentioned in the commentaries which suggests that the oral tradition continued alongside the written canonical texts, though there is the possibility that the reciters were functioning in a different way, that they had to relearn their Nikāyas to keep up with the homogenised readings.¹⁵ So we can assume, that though the *bhāṇakas* of different Nikāyik traditions were brought together to help with the editorial process, coordination among the divergent traditions was by no means complete. The question is whether the *bhāṇaka* simply recited the texts but was also allowed to contextualize his utterances and if a difference was recognised between the reciter and the custodian of a tradition, between teaching and reciting.

Despite the care that the *bhāṇakas* must have taken to ensure an accurate transmission it is inevitable that mistakes must have crept into the texts because of the problems inherent in the oral tradition itself, particularly

when monks in all parts of the subcontinent were reciting the texts without any communication among each other. The other issue was of course the waning of interest in a particular kind of religion and a particular set of texts. If there is no one to receive a text it would die a natural death. This fear resonates in the stories of the Sri Lankan chronicles when war and famine and sickness struck the monastic system itself and as Buddhaghosa recounts, only the one *thera* stood alone with his knowledge of the *niddesa*. Such stories undoubtedly articulate the fear of the *saṅgha*, that the whole canon would someday disappear into oblivion if the oral tradition died out.

The Canonisation of the Texts: Imbuing Words with Authority

The texts that were transmitted orally were gradually being written down, arranged and categorised. This protracted process cannot be equated with a full-scale process of canonisation, which implied a body of discourses being imbued with an authoritative value, were normative and were to an extent standardised.

The division of the discourses into *Piṭakas* and *Nikāyas* simply signified a specific kind of arrangement of the discourses. The term *Piṭaka* did not contain a sense of authority that reflected on itself. In the Pāli collection the term that exuded a sense of utmost authority was *Buddhavacana* or the words of the Buddha. The *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions four sources of authority which had to be verified in determining whether a particular set of discourses was *Bhagavatovacanam*- one had to check whether the discourse came from the Buddha, a community of elders, a group of elders and a single elder. The underlying meaning of the declaration is that when the Buddha would no longer be available to authenticate a body

of discourses anything that was consistent with the *Sutta* and the *Vinaya* was acceptable.¹⁶ Whether a monk repeated a discourse claiming he had heard it straight from the Buddha, or from a community of learned elders, a group of elders or an individual monk, the onus is on the recipient to put it beside the Suttas and compare it with the Vinayas before accepting it as an authoritative utterance. The interesting thing is that the categories like Suttas and Vinaya are mentioned as parameters for ascertaining the authenticity of a discourse, the word Piṭaka is never mentioned in conjunction. It seems the idea of the Piṭakas and the Nikāyas were still unformed and even if they were known and used, the idea of the Piṭaka as a collection containing authoritative utterances was not in vogue. But there is no doubt that a preoccupation with what constituted the authoritative utterance surfaced from a very early period, was articulated in the texts themselves and was attempted to be clearly spelt out. Thus, the notion of a body of texts with a certain kind of authority came into existence very soon after Buddha's death and might have been embryonic during his lifetime. This collection, we must remember was still open.

If however, *Buddhavadāna* was interspersed with utterances made not by Buddha himself but by one of his close followers, if some question was answered by some other authority apart from the Buddha and they were still accepted as parts of the canon, it was because the disciples of the Tathāgata would make utterances as learnt from him or would answer exactly as he would have. That is why the portions of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* that describes the events immediately after the Great Demise would still be recognised as 'canonical'.¹⁷

Another thing that we have to consider is that the Pāli canon was distinctive in the sense, that it did not merely reflect theoretical principles, but also strands of cultural practice. Thus, a Faultline between

norm and practice is not that clearly delineated in the texts. Thus, imprints of ‘practice’ are also implicit in the ‘canons’.

Buddhaghosa while describing the First Council recounts that the *Khuddaka Nikāya* contained whatever teachings of the Buddha were not incorporated within the other four *Nikayas* and as he lists the texts in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, he duly mentions texts like the *Thera* and the *Theri Gāthā*, *Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu* and *Apādāna* which are attributed to other people.¹⁸

Buddhavadāna thus has a broader connotation and included not simply the sayings of the Buddha but also utterances that the Buddha would have made, or utterances about the Buddha. Thus, there would also have been a time when the Theravādi canon was still open. Some portions of the texts were canonised early. This might have been the case with the Theravādi *Vinaya*. It describes the events that led to the convention of the Second Council most vividly but is totally silent about the Third Council held approximately 150 years after the death of the Buddha. Presumably, the *Vinaya* of the Theravadis was open up to the Second Council but was closed by the time the Third Council was convened. Hence though the first century after the Buddha may not have witnessed the formation of a canon but at least a basic stock of texts for such a canon must have been formed.

According to the tradition of the chronicles, a complete canon of sacred texts was compiled on the occasion of the third council, at the time of Aśoka.¹⁹ It is certain that, at that time the saṃgha was divided into several schools. This was a period of ideological contestations and therefore it is possible that the need for holding on to a notion of a fixed body of texts

became more important and also claims to uphold the original utterances of the Buddha had become more palpable.

But on the whole it can be said that no complete text was added into the Theravādin canon after the Council at Ālokavihāra in the 1st century BCE. The Milindapañha or the Petakopadesa, revered by the commentators all along however, did not make it into the canonical baskets most probably because they were late to travel to Sri Lanka. These texts also contained fragments of utterances made by the Tathāgata which are not to be found within the canon. Buddhaghosa was probably aware of this fact when he mentioned some of the sayings were not included in the texts. Some of the stories appear only in the commentaries but not in the main body of the Pāli texts. However, the same stories are embedded in the canonical traditions of other north Indian schools. This suggests an early closure of the *Sutta* and the *Vinaya* literature.

Just as the writing down of the texts prevented any further changes in the language of the texts it also prevented any changes in the contents of the canon, except some additions into some of the texts whose structure permitted it. This also was finally stopped by the accretion of commentaries starting to sprout around 5th century CE. The earliest literary evidence of the existence of the three baskets and of the Nikāyas is only to be found in the Milindapañha, a work, the bulk of which can be dated to 1st century CE. This claim is further buttressed by the non-canonical Pāli literature, the chronicles of Ceylon and a rich commentary literature. All these works assert that the three piṭakas were in existence as early as the early centuries CE.

Lamotte categorically stated that the body of material as a canon did not exist prior to the Mauryan period.²⁰ The canon as a collection of

scriptures, whether it is oral or written, gives a certain authority to the texts included in it. The collection may be open for varying periods of time and therefore there is a possibility that new texts will be added to it. The idea of canon is also exclusivist, as it articulates clearly what is non-canonical. The Theravādin literature is no exception. There is in the texts an enumeration of genres which were thought to encapsulate notions of Dhamma. This is a different conceptual division of the body of literature as we know it today as the canon. The Dhamma is articulated through nine aṅgas- *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyakaraṇaṃ gāthaṃ udānaṃ itivuttakaṃ jātakaṃ adbhutadhammaṃ vedallaṃ*²¹ - the discourse in prose, in prose and verse, the expositions, verses, inspiring verses, the aphorisms, birth-stories, wonder-discourses and the miscellanies. The Dhamma is imbibed from these discourses through intuitive wisdom. The discourses cannot be understood through gossiping and bad mouthing. Sometimes this is taken as the older division of the canon that was in vogue even during the time of the Buddha and which later gave way to the division as we have it today-the division into three piṭakas and then into five Nikāyas. But if we look carefully at the nine-fold division it is merely an enumeration of literary genres rather than individual texts which made up the sacred body of literature. The terms Piṭaka and for that matter Nikāya are pretty late entrants in Buddhist discursive practices. The term three Piṭakas crop up in the latest sections of the Vinaya (*tipeṭakī*)²² and again in the Milindapañha the phrase *tepiṭakam buddhavacanaṃ* crops up.²³

As for the notion of the division into Nikāyas it is intrinsically bound up with the tradition of the reciters. But the institution of the Bhāṇakas has no mention in the texts themselves. They are mentioned in the commentaries, although they are also mentioned in early inscriptions. There are of course early references to Nikāyas in inscriptions, but we

have no way of knowing what constituted the Nikāyas in the late centuries BCE or have no glimmerings of its contents. The idea that the institution of the reciters came into being on the very occasion of the First Council is not very viable in this context. The Dīgha or the Majjhima Nikāya as complete texts could not have been formulated at such an early period. Nor could have the names and specific modes of arrangements have emerged.

The corpus already extant would have been open with the possibility of new texts being added to them, according to certain principles, according to the four sources of authority chalked out in the Dīgha Nikāya itself. The crux of the matter was whether the new bit of material or teaching could be accepted as *Buddhavacana* and was consistent with the spirit of the sutta and the Vinaya. Then it would be imbued with a sense of authority. This is not deny the very real possibility of a large body of oral texts accruing immediately after his death, which had existed in an embryonic form during his lifetime.

The other problem is that non-canonical works like the Milindapañha or the Peṭakopadesa contained verses and utterances ascribed to the Buddha or prominent theras but were never included in the canon. That is why it seems that after 1st century CE no complete texts could have been incorporated within the canon. Perhaps these were the bits and pieces Buddhaghosa was referring to as the *pāli-muttaka*, teachings not included in the canon.²⁴ We must also remember that Buddhaghosa was drawing from earlier commentarial literature and this assertion has presumably an earlier basis, So that the canon could have closed effectively much before his time.

Aśoka's Bairat inscription in which he recommends seven texts for the saṃgha is not easily explicable. He clearly had knowledge of some individual texts but it proves that the texts were still thought of as individual suttas and not embedded in a Nikāyik context.²⁵ But on the other hand, Aśoka could give titles to the suttas which indicates they were more or less complete and with markers to make them available for the monks to be recited and even communicated to the laity. In that sense we can say that though the collections or Nikāyas as we know them were not extant with its distinctive arrangement, a collection of *Buddhavaṇṇa* was in existence and was cut and dried to be communicated to the laity.

If we accept the date latest for the closing of the canon as the time of Buddhaghosa, we also have to concede that this was in so far as the title and the arrangement of the texts were concerned, not the actual contents of individual texts. Though as a general principle, only when a text has been commented upon it is presumed closed, this cannot be applied to all the parts of the suttas. If a portion of a text is not commented upon it is unequivocally taken as a later addition.

Another factor is of course the writing down of the texts which would prevent changes in the contents of the texts, with the exception of additions to texts whose structures permitted it. Such additions were finally stopped by commentaries made upon them mainly during 5th-6th centuries CE. Although we must keep in mind these commentaries were based on earlier material. The texts were written down in times of conflicts and contestations and hinged onto the notion of the authenticity of a particular set of texts. This mood coincided with the shift to literary culture, a corpus of seemingly frozen texts and the motivation to lay claim to a set of teachings as the original *Buddhavaṇṇa*. This ambience

came about because of an aggressive showdown between the adherents of the Mahāvihāra tradition and the rival tradition of Abhayagiri **The**

Authority of the Speakers within the Extended Community

Thus, in the first phase we have the discourses which were disseminated verbatim, recited, taught and learnt by heart. In the next phase this memory had to be contextualized, each memory thread had to be reiterated with reference to specific settings. As we have seen, this process started with the coming of organised monastic Buddhism and the attempts of the saṃgha to link itself to temporal events. This would initiate the process of narrativisation of memory and appropriate doses of stylization. The narrative context, framing of the content and mode of delivery had to be kept flexible and variable to highlight interchange of views in different situations, reaching out to an expanding and ranked community. Thus, even before the compilation of the suttas and the making of separate texts the process of narrativisation had begun. These early attempts of narrativisation would leave its imprint on finished ‘texts’, where phases of narrative formation are found in fossilized forms.

In the Nikāyik programme the Buddha as the authoritative figure towers over everybody else as the principal speaker, yet it also has the underpinning that the disciples are to realize and experience the truth by themselves.

In the Nikāyas and the Vinaya Piṭaka it has been underlined again and again that the Dhamma had to be taught energetically and in full detail. The teaching had to be carried out in the form of suttas, both in the prose and verse forms. The *acārya* and the *upajjāya* were the two conventional

terms that denoted a teacher. Among the two, the latter was connected with the formal ceremony of ordination and therefore most probably held a more prestigious position in the early Buddhist pedagogic system. After ordination a person could become a full-fledged disciple. Now the preceptor and the disciple lived together, sharing resources and caring for each other. As a special provision the preceptor gave permission to the disciple to seek out a special *ācārya* for specific branches of study.²⁶ The figure of the *ganācārya* surfaces recurrently in the Nikāyas but his role as a leader is underscored more than his role as a teacher.

On the other hand, the epithet of *satthā* applied almost exclusively to the Buddha. The *satthā* is more than a teacher or a master. He is the one who sends a message or *śāsana*, which is authoritative in the sense that it produces an effect. Nupur Dasgupta has very recently pointed out that the authority of the charismatic leader, the moral preceptor par excellence was projected through words in the early days after his demise, recited by the *bhikkus*, meditated on by the *sutamtikas*, *pamcanekāyikas*, *peṭṭākinas*, and *vināyakas*, or promulgated in public by the *Bhāṇakas*.²⁷ The authority of the teacher was embedded in the utterances which would be imbued with an idea of infallibility within the Theravāda tradition. This notion of authority took shape right from the earliest period, as the phenomenon of gatherings and congregations feature prominently in the early parts of the Nikāyas and dialogic devices and the importance of public address were not only foregrounded in the texts but were also valorised as legitimate methods for winning over supporters. Nupur Dasgupta opines that there were certain epithets ascribed to the Buddha which indicated his status as an acclaimed teacher, a leader. The epithet '*Bhagavā*', for instance, is found repeatedly in the four Nikāyas and even in the Aṭṭhakavagga of the *Suttanipāta*, considered as one of the oldest portions of the Pāli canon.

The other epithet '*Satthā*' which distinguished the Buddha from the other contemporary or previous teachers like him might have layers of meaning but in early Buddhist parlance would denote a leader of a band or a teacher.²⁸

It is stated in the texts that when a *samaṇa* or a *Brāhmaṇa* attained a higher state of mind, it was imperative that he imparted his knowledge to others. Thus, when the *Brāhmaṇa* Lohikka tried to assert that speaking out to others implied a new form of entanglement and manifested itself as a form of lust, the Buddha was quick to refute him. The Buddha said that the person who reaching a perfected state of mind remained aloof did not have the welfare of others in his mind, rather he was beset with jealousy and enmity and this was a sign that his doctrine itself was unsound. In the same sutta the Buddha says, that that the perfect teacher has the appearance of the Tathāgata, who preaches and accomplishes a change of outlook in his hearer. There are all sorts of false teachers who having not attained the perfection of mind themselves advises others to follow some procedure or other to attain a higher state of mind. There are other teachers who are ineffectual, who while having attained a higher state of mind themselves cannot inspire others and all their disciples run amok.²⁹ At the same time it is not the responsibility of the teacher to make the recipient responsive to the message. In the Nikāyik universe the receiver has to pursue the goal. Thus, the naked ascetic Upaka the Ājīvika remains unresponsive to the words of the Buddha and goes another way.³⁰ But on numerous occasions the message first and foremost brought about a change of perspective that imbued the mundane words with transcendental meanings. In the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* ordinary words assume different meanings when the robber experiences a change in perspective and veers away from a worldview dominated by lust and greed.³¹ Thus

teaching in nikāyik parlance is also experiential. The exterior and interior aspects of the true path are to be elaborated and pointed out.

It is also important to note that the message was to be disseminated within an extended but ranked community. Though in the Nikāyik world the notion of the samagra saṃgha comes up again and again it hardly contradicts the existence of hierarchical alignments within a harmonious framework. The saṃgha as the universal order or the order of the four quarters incorporated all disciples and transcended time and space. But there is another dimension of the saṃgha- the local and the temporal- which included five groups of mendicants. Only mendicants over twenty were usually allowed full ordination, while boys and girls over fourteen could be initiated (pavvajjā) and could enter as novices- samanera and samanērī.³² When a female novice turned eighteen she could qualify as a probationary nun. All these five categories are clubbed together in the texts and are known as five groups of mendicants. Laymen and women (upāsaka and upāsika) were added to form the seven groups. Since the precepts differed for each of these categories the entrant had to choose whether she/he wanted to remain as a lay follower or enter into the life of a mendicant. After her/his ordination under an experienced upajjāya the process of learning intensified. It has been reiterated in the texts that just as the ocean becomes deeper as you move further into it, so does study in the order progress gradually. The monk- disciples fall into various categories as far as their progress along the path towards the realization of the Truth is concerned. Some are the learners or the sekhā who need detailed elucidation on matters of doctrine. The others are the sekhā or the masters to whom the deliberations could be given in summary. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya the anāgāmī or the non-returner, who had broken free from the shackles of rebirth and re-death through pursuing his/her

ultimate goal in solitary striving comes to the master before departure and asks for a brief summary of the doctrine.³³

The scholastic community of the saṃgha identifies itself in the early corpus of inscriptions of Sanchi and Bharhut. The inscriptions on the ground balustrades of Bharhut and Sanchi are more or less contemporary with a similar written formula and have been assigned a time-range starting roughly from circa.2nd century BCE. This is the earliest corpus of inscriptions at Sanchi, coming just after the Aśokan edicts. In Sanchi 147 out of the 349 legible inscriptions retrieved from the ground balustrade of Stupa I are donative records of the ‘monastic’ Buddhists, as all of them try to underpin the specific position of the donor within the community. The rest of the donative records delineate a hazier ‘lay’ community. The lay community takes little pain to define themselves as part of the lay community, mostly marking their identity with a name, place of residence or profession. Only a small number identify themselves clearly as a part of the laity by stating their status as a Upāsika or Upāsikā. The monastics on the other hand, are keen to foreground their position within the community.

Apart from the simple epithet of bhikkhu, who makes his presence felt permanently and palpably by donating an architectural piece and recording it on the ground balustrade itself (For example, Dhamarakhitasa bhichuno danaṃ)³⁴, we have common epithets like aya, bhadata, sutatika, antevāsin, thera, pacanekayika or peṭakino from Sanchi and Bharhut. The epithet bhānaka is more common in Bharhut than upon the ground balustrades of Sanchi. What is significant is the presence of the antevāsin who mentions the name of his teacher and his specific position within the saṃgha. Thus Balamita who is an antevāsin mentions his preceptor as aya³⁵. Thus there is an attempt to foreground spiritual descendancy.

Prominent scholastic lineages were being forged along with familial relations. Thus the sapurisa Gotiputa of Sanchi (found in an earlier context, namely the reliquary caskets of Stupas 2 and 3), has kinship connections with Subāhita, a rāja lipikara, who with his wife is a prominent donor at Sanchi³⁶ and Bhaṇḍuka, a monk and a teacher in his own right.³⁷ Thus, the epithet sapurisa, which literally means a saintly man, could have been a monastic luminary of the region, a prominent teacher associated with widespread propagation. These people interestingly are also the foremost among the donors, donating multiple architectural pieces. In Sanchi, the heaviest and the most visible architectural pieces like the coping stones were donated by the various categories of monastic Buddhists. The donative inscriptions on the inner face of the ground balustrade is also dominated by the monks, thus these records were only visible to those who were doing the ritual circumambulation along the inner face of the balustrade. Thus it seems that the rarer pieces with greater symbolic value were donated by the monastic community.³⁸ On the other hand, the balustrades of Bharhut are hardly in-situ and no such reconstructions are possible.

Thus the notion of authority resided not only in the discourses but also in the speakers, who recited, taught and interpreted the discourses. This indicates the hegemony of the speaker/custodian within the extended community. The intellectual hegemony of the Buddhist monks in this respect is accentuated and articulated in a much more complex way in the Pāli Jātaka collection.

The Authoritative Discourse in the Jātakas

Conventionally the *Pāli Jātakas* or the *Jātakāṭṭhavaṇṇana* is a collection of 547 birth stories of the Buddha specially associated with the early Theravāda tradition. The stories are arranged in 22 *nipātas*. This division has been made on the basis of the number of verses or *gāthās*. The extant *Jātakatthavaṇṇana* is a commentary of the *Jātakapāli* in the 10th section of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.

As a distinctive and purposive narrative genre, the Jātaka collection took shape over a longer period of time than the Nikāyas. Some of the narratives at the core, may have been extant since Buddha's times, as many of them are found in the Nikāyas, often in a proto-Jātaka format. The Gāthas, original and oral, are generally held to have been completed by 2nd century BCE, most probably with an earlier commentary attached to them. The Jātaka Atthakathā, the final form in which we find it today crystallized much later, around the middle of the first millennium A.D.

Structurally each of the stories contains four components-

1. The *gāthā* or the core of the narrative, composed in archaic Pāli. This is the canonical part.
2. *Atitavatthu* is often the lengthiest part of the narrative where the contexts of the verses are explained. The story of the past always describes a previous birth of the Buddha. The stories too are found in other canonical and non-canonical texts.
3. *Paccupannavatthu* is the story of the present. It frames the entire narrative and represents the context in which the Buddha uttered the story of the past. A link had been forged between the verse and the introductory story by using a catchword, the first words of the subsequent verse. This is a strategy to establish absolute unity between the prose and verse.

4. *Samodhāna* is the portion of the narrative that provides the logical thread between the past and present, identifies the characters of the past with the characters of the present, provides the link between separate temporal planes through a seemingly spontaneous recollection by the Buddha.

If the *gāthās* are taken as the original, fixed points of the narrative, the prose sections signify the accretive elements and they on the other hand, interlock the divergent components within an essentially Buddhist scheme. There are two distinct aspects to be discussed here- a) the *Jātakas*, original and oral had been extant since Buddha's times as many of them are found in the *Nikāyas*, the composition of which are generally held to have been completed by 1st century BCE; b) the *Jātaka Atthakathā*, the final form in which we find it today crystallized much later, around the middle of the first millennium A.D. and frozen into the written form. But we must remember that the *gāthās* were attached to some kind of oral commentary from a very early period, as most of them are incomprehensible without some sort of explanation of the context. The later commentaries probably built upon the earlier ones. But whether they adhered to its basic content or altered it radically is a thing that cannot be determined with any certainty.

The entire narrative is fitted into a dialogic frame which props up more than one narrative surface and projects multiple narrators. The story of the present is related by an anonymous narrator who delineates the context of the utterance. The story of the past is related by the Buddha himself as he recollects the events of the past voluntarily and also with a definite purpose. As he tells the story he distances himself from the past and uses the third person. He only makes the connection in the *Samodhāna* and switches into first person narration.

This distinctive structure of these narratives sets them apart from other Buddhist birth stories like the *Apadānas* and even the different collections and fragments containing the stories of previous births of the Buddha himself and other personalities within the Buddhist universe. Canonical literature classifies the Jātakas as a separate category, with specialist narrators.

Apart from the structure what makes the Jātaka collection stand out within the entire body of the Pāli Suttas and the Vinaya is the imagery of the Bodhisattva which hardly surfaces in the Nikāyik texts. The Bodhisattva often plays a marginal role in the unfurling of the narrative, but sometimes has a principal role to play. The figure of the Buddha as the narrator is superimposed on the story of the past. He is the narrator par excellence as he is the only one who can remember past deeds unrestrictedly. He is able to do this as he himself asserts because he had attained the perfections through the aeons. The prominent lay follower Anāthapiṇḍika praises the Buddha by saying that the truth is only known to him but he makes it clear to everyone just as the full moon dispels darkness.³⁹ Without any doubt he is the leader who asserts his moral superiority through his omniscience and his exclusive ability to articulate it at the right moment. In the story cited above, five hundred associates of Anāthapiṇḍika after embracing the Dhamma in a moment of inspiration while listening to the Buddha's discourse, reverted back to their old faiths as soon as the Buddha left Sāvatti. As this was reported to the Buddha when he was back in Sāvatti, he narrated a story in which a young merchant lost all his men and merchandise because of ill counsel, while on the other hand, the Bodhisattva who was another merchant managed to steer his men and goods to safety because he kept his own counsel. The foolish and vacillating lay followers are being equated with the gormless

merchants who had foolishly forsaken the true refuge. The other interesting thing is that in the story of the past the Bodhisattva who is an ambitious leader of merchants comes upon the dead bodies of the foolish merchant's troop and observes loads of costly merchandise strewn about. The Bodhisattva without batting an eyelid confiscates the carts and goods of the dead merchant and later sells them well above the market price. This act does not live up to the ideal of how a Bodhisattva should behave. But as the Buddha is a figure, who is distanced from the Bodhisattva temporally as well as by moral standards and the narrative devices accentuate this distance, this does not impede the purposive flow of the narrative. The Buddha by his moral superiority has the authority to speak. The superiority of the Buddha over Bodhisattva is also reflected in the sculptural programme of early Buddhist Stūpa sites. In Bharhut, the stories from the Jātaka collection with their labels were the ones which articulated Buddhist ideals. Yet they were displayed on the inner face of the railing or on the coping stone panels far above the eye level. On the other hand, the pride of place went to the captioned scenes from the life of the Buddha. The presence of the historical Buddha in the sacred site and assertion of his superiority over the more fallible Bodhisattvas is an undercurrent running through the Jataka stories and has been projected in the sculptural schema of Bharhut.

The Jātaka collection embody the spirit of purposive storytelling and as a distinctive literary genre, had multifarious roles to play within and beyond the Buddhist discursive universe. Emergence of the Jātaka genre signifies a novel attempt to build a channel of communication between the composer, the narrator and the audience.

Yet the Jātaka stories are essentially Buddhist. Without venturing into metaphysical subtleties, the prose portions also contain short phrases on

cardinal Buddhist doctrines. These doctrinal utterances were accommodated in the stories as the typical compositional invariants of the oral narrative- the conventional phrases and expressions. For example, in the story of the merchants the Buddha gives a speech on Truth, incorporating the path towards arahantship and went on to expound the Four Noble Truths, while the story of the past was neutral as far as Buddhist doctrinal element was concerned and the Bodhisattva could be the common man who faltered and stumbled.

The Jātaka tales are edited and reworked by the Buddhist monks. Though drawn from a common stock of stories the tales become essentially Buddhist, once they enter the Jātaka collection and constitute a distinctive narrative genre, which reasserts the hegemonic role of the Buddha as a speaker and underlines that different components of the narratives had a distinct role to play and were geared to different addressees.

Naomi Appleton argues, that the texts were not composed for the laity alone and had a significant role to play within the *saṅgha* itself. She has argued that most of the frame- stories have a monastery for a setting, the major characters are monks and nuns, they engage with monastic issues and norms of monastic behaviour and Buddha the head of a *saṅgha* is omnipresent as the narrator. According to Appleton, almost eighty percent of the stories are directed towards a group of monks or an individual monk. Thus, the stories must also have some significance for the monks. The tales foreground the actions of the Bodhisattvas performing significant acts pertaining to the notion of *karma* and map out a path for the Bodhisattva.⁴⁰

Rather than labelling the Jātakas as tools for reaching out to the laity or a manual for the Bodhisattva to follow, one could imagine a wider

communicative space where the monk and the nun, the layman and the laywoman participated. The hegemonic presence of the speaker in the gāthā and the framing story is in contrast to the story of the past, which is the domain of the flawed Bodhisattva and constructed in the mould of didactic narratives with plenty of action and shifts of the narrative axis.

They could be uttered in diverse situations- in a ritual context, in a situation of monastic dispute or in response to a question by a lay interlocutor. But the authoritative utterances were made by the Buddha within this communicative space and the monks were projected as the recipients and custodians of the speeches and stories. The authoritative discourse and narratives had an ideological scaffolding in the sense that this authority was not something given, but had to be justified, analysed and explained.

From the narrative presented here, a boundary can be imagined between the narrative elements of the story and the discourse. The story marks out a trajectory of what happens while the discourse or the content of the narrative goes beyond the ‘happenings’ within the story. The interpretive community which we have imagined is a complex entity, with diverse interpretative tools. It can read the surface formations of the narrative and simply follow the trajectory of the story or can delve into the deeper structures and access the discourse. The Jātaka narratives are authoritative utterances as they pack this discourse in a way to transcend the story and create multiple fault-lines, with diverse messages for the layered interpretive community.

The Broader Communicative Scope and the Creation of a Polite Mode of Discourse

Conze has argued that in its essence and core Buddhism is a movement of the monastic ascetics.⁴¹ Coming back to the Nikāyas, if we look at the in-text audience the number of sermons directed towards the laity was not insignificant. In many suttas lay followers came to the Buddha of their own accord and asked for advice. A common refrain can be found in the four major Nikāyas, where the laity approaches the Buddha and declare their this-worldly and other-worldly desires. The list of these material as well as super-mundane desires run along a predictable line- from the desire for progeny to the procurement of sandalwood from Kāsi, the wish to possess fine fragrances, garlands and unguents as well as plentiful gold and silver. The wish- list would be winded up with a desire to be reborn in a pleasurable realm.

Among the four major Nikāyas the Aṅguttara has the largest number of suttas directed to the lay people (125 out of 8122), followed by the Saṃyutta (121 out of 2904). But the Dīgha has the highest percentage of suttas addressed to the laity (44% approximately), followed by the Majjhima Nikāya (roughly 33%). But drawing conclusions from this would be problematic as many suttas in the Aṅguttara and the Saṃyutta do not have elaborate frame stories and do not indicate the in-text addressee clearly. These two texts use template or flow-chart like arrangements to describe different phenomena.

In the four major Nikāyas more roughly three hundred suttas are directly addressed to different groups of the laity, For example, the gahapatis top the list with 121 suttas directed towards them, followed by Brāhmaṇas (99), kings (36), Brāhmaṇa students (18), headmen, ministers, Lay women (18) etc.

Pasenadi, the king of Kosala is the most prominent individual to be addressed directly, 30 suttas have been addressed to him. Not surprisingly, the most prominent householder Anāthapiṇḍika follows with 23 suttas to his name. Mahānāma the Sakyian (17) and Visākhā Migāramātā(6) are the other personalities who feature as in-text audience.

In the Vinaya Piṭaka the moral codes for the monks and nuns are laid out. The rules are directly promulgated by the Buddha with the monastic community as recipient. But as we have already seen, the idea of an integrated interpretive community was in currency within the text.⁴² This integrated community did not seem to exist on an ideational plane alone but sought to penetrate into the domain of public etiquette. The lay follower was posited in the public forum as a moral agent speaking and behaving according to the Buddhist mores of public behaviour. Thus, addresses in the Vinaya Piṭaka which usually arose from a disturbance or discomfiture within the monastic life could be addressing questions coming from within the order, as well as from the outside world.

The interpretive community encapsulated the speakers, reciters and audiences from the monastic community and the laity whom we have categorized earlier. These categories are integrated by some distinctive interpretive strategies that are fashioned within the Buddhist order and also seeps into the wider network of readers, interpreters, interlocutors and facilitators outside the saṅgha, who have deep-rooted community assumptions. They have clear notions as to how the addresses are to be read. The principal categories forming this wider network have been shown in the preceding paragraphs. Some of them as we have seen and shall see further are displayed as moral and intellectual agents in the public forum. What is interesting is that they also play a part in shaping the addresses. Not only are the refracted voices of these agents audible in

the addressees, they are posited both as facilitators and interrogators of the Buddhist discourse and are important determinants in the flow of the addresses. The polite mode of discourse that we have seen especially in the context of the developed layers of the *Dīgha* and the *Majjhima Nikāyas* are particularly fitted for these agents and facilitators.

As we analyse the presence of the various social groups as in-text audience we are aware that each text had a different role to play and were geared towards different social groups as audience.

As we have seen, the king Pasenadi is the most prominent addressee in the *Nikāyas*. However, most of the addresses directed to the king of Kosala are clustered in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. The king is shown as being initially quite skeptical of the spiritual prowess of the Buddha because of his young age. He is finally won over by the Buddha through analogical reasoning. The young bhikkhu is compared to the young prince, the snake and the fire. All of these are apparently innocuous. For example, a flicker of fire seems harmless, but it has tremendous appetite and can flare up and consume dense forests at a moment's notice. The young bhikkhu is lit up with an ardent flame, equipped with righteousness and non-attachment and hence his power is immeasurable. Thus, the wise man is advised to be at his best behaviour with such a young bhikkhu. Pasenadi is so impressed with this discourse that he then and there expresses his intention of turning into a *upāsaka*.⁴³ Thus, in the first sutta of this series Pasenadi appears as a doubtful interlocutor. After this sutta, there is a series of further suttas where the king ruminates on his thoughts to the Buddha, which arose during solitary meditation and repeats the teachings of the Buddha which dispels all his confusions. These are monologues on metaphysical matters, mostly on the question on consciousness, sometimes confirmed by the Buddha at the end. Except for the first sutta,

in all the other suttas the king asks a single question and receives an explanatory flat discourse from the Buddha or repeats and confirms the teachings of the Buddha in a monologue. Thus, the role of the king as an addressee and his role within the interpretive community changes.

In the Dīgha Nikāya majority of the suttas directed towards the laity had upper caste individuals or groups as audience. In the Dīgha 47% of the suttas are addressed to the Brāhmaṇa audience and deal with the phenomenon of conversion. Thus, the in-text audience would be essentially Brāhmaṇa ideologues who would be won over from a prior world view. In the Majjhima Nikāya we have a long-drawn-out dialogue with the learned Brāhmaṇa youth Assalāyana, on the issue of caste and on the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa caste.⁴⁴ After a statement by the youth, asserting the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa, the Buddha himself turns into an interlocutor and questions the young man until the young Brāhmaṇa himself comes round to the view that it was the element of good conduct that defined the true nature of the Brāhmaṇa. As soon as he was led into uttering it by the clever manipulation of the conversation by the Buddha, he was transformed and tuned into an upāsaka.

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, on the other hand, more than half of the lay suttas are directed towards the vessas and householders, who are already adhering to the teachings of the Master and most of the suttas are oriented towards leading people to a good rebirth. In the Aṅguttara ninety-seven suttas can be identified which are directed to the goals to be achieved in this life and the next. The interesting thing is that these suttas circumvent the issue of liberation that is foregrounded when the monks are present as audience. Ugga, the householder of Vesālī, offerd the Buddha yāgu or some sort of gruel made from the Sāl flowers, Sūkara-maṇsa, rice with curries and condiments and all sorts of cooked vegetable that the Buddha

accepted. He also offered silk from Benares, a couch made of sandalwood, covered with soft fleece and deer-skin rug. After offering these splendid gifts, Ugga sat down at the side most reverentially and said that he had heard from the Tathāgata that a giver of fine (*manāpa*) things attains rebirth in a superior realm. Though his humble gifts were not really worthy of the Tathāgata, they were worth a fortune and would he accept them out of pity. The Tathāgata accepted the gifts and told him that a good giver should always expect to gain good in the present life and the next. Many years later, Ugga died and was reborn in a supermundane realm. The Buddha was residing in Sāvattthī when he revisited the Buddha in his newly gained resplendent form and told him that he had gained what he had hoped for, proving that the Buddha was in the right.⁴⁵ Similarly, in another sutta the Buddha says, that wherever a person shows reverence to his parents and is showered with their blessings, looks after his wife, children and the extended household, cares for the labourers in his fields and the businessmen within his territory, offers oblations to the deities and offers his hard-earned honest wealth to the Sāmaṇa and the Brāhmaṇa, is praised in the present life and in the luminous world in which he is reborn.⁴⁶

The story of Jīvaka Komārabhacca features prominently in the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka. Here he is portrayed as rising from an obscure background, growing up in royal care and choosing the craft of a physician. He travelled to Taxila and turned into an incomparable healer, curing all the great kings of the realm and the Buddha himself. He is esteemed in the Vinaya Piṭaka as a representative of the professional class with close personal and professional ties with the saṅgha.⁴⁷ He receives regular talk on Dhamma from the Buddha himself. In the Majjhima Nikāya, Jīvaka interrogates the Buddha on killing animals for meat and

asks whether the people vilifying the Buddha for meat-eating ever mention the Buddha's own responses regarding this matter. The Buddha replies that they are only bent on carrying out their malicious mission and never repeats the Buddha's opinions or justifications regarding the matter of meat-eating. Again, through a series of questions, cross questions and explanatory comments the Buddha leads Jīvaka to the conclusion that the monks partake of blameless food. Jīvaka repeats his convictions and enrolls as a lay-follower.⁴⁸

As far as the lay suttas are concerned, a meagre number of sermons are directed towards women. Roughly 26 suttas can be winnowed out as having lay women as audience. In the Dīgha again, we do not have a single sutta addressed to a lay woman. In the Aṅguttara on the other hand, we have the highest number of suttas being addressed to women. It can be argued that women could be present as in-text audience even when they were invisible. As the householders came for consultation, they could bring their wives along though their presence has not been noted in the texts. In the king's retinue also, women were present, though the texts merely mention them and present them as silent listeners.

Joy Manné has classified three main types of addresses- sermons, debates and consultations. Most of the sermons are unsolicited sermons where sequential instruction is given by the Buddha. This type of address does not arise from a challenge or a question. More often than not Anāthapiṇḍika is a recipient of this kind of sermon.⁴⁹ In all these suttas he is discoursed on the qualities of a ideal householder, which underscores the benefits of dāna. Though it seems that he has a more substantial and complex role to play as an in-text audience. Various modes of communication fan out when he is projected as the recipient of a discourse. In a very interesting conversation, the Buddha asks

Anāthapiṇḍika whether his family gave out alms. The householder replied that the alms given out by his family consisted mostly of broken rice and sour gruel. The Buddha replied that if alms were given considerately and with one's own hand it mattered little what one offered. Then he related the story of Velāma the Brāhmaṇa, who offered magnificent donations, offered them in the correct spirit but could not reap the benefits of his donations as he did not have the appropriate person to give to. Then he went on to relate step by step to explain the benefits of donating to the person with the Right View, starting from the ordinary wise man to the arahant, the fully awakened Tathāgata, to the topmost tier of Tathāgata and his order of the monks. Then he related the supreme gift to be made to the Buddha and the order of the monks- the gift of the monastery.

⁵⁰The imagery of the ideal donor and the donee and notions of appropriate items of gift were converging around the figure of Anāthapiṇḍika through these discourses. In a different context, we have the Ditthi Sutta, where Anāthapiṇḍika meets a group of wanderers who subscribe to various philosophical views. As he approaches the group of philosophers in a park they were engaged in boisterous conversation. But as soon as they recognized Anāthapiṇḍika as a follower of the Samaṇa Gotama they became quiet, because they appreciated the fact that Gotama and his followers were given to calmness and sober conversation. The effect that the presence of Anāthapiṇḍika had on the wanderers is a familiar situation in the Nikāyik framework. But this has been associated with the presence of the Buddha or one of his chief disciples. For example, in the Kutuhalasālā sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya the presence of the Buddha brought about this kind of awed silence among the wanderers. This incident brings out the special status of Anāthapiṇḍika within the textual universe. Furthermore, Anāthapiṇḍika also propounded the doctrine of impermanence to the wanderers when he was challenged to establish his

own view. It is interesting that he let the wanderers articulate their views one by one before explaining his own. This also follows the dialogic pattern adopted by the Buddha and his principal disciples in a debate. As the wanderers ask him questions, he explains that he does not know the whole truth as is known by the Buddha, nor has the wisdom of the monks who had imbibed the teachings of the Buddha. But he could with absolute ease relate his own gleanings from the teaching. This speech of Anāthapiṇḍika directed towards the wanderers offers an interpretation of the doctrine as understood by the supremely gifted householder and leaves the interlocutors utterly defeated and speechless. After this incident, Anāthapiṇḍika visits the Buddha and reports the whole sequence of events. The Buddha was all praise for him and declared that those people with false views had to be refuted again and again. After this he directs a sermon to Anāthapiṇḍika which is again a plain sequential sermon that only reaffirms the views of Anāthapiṇḍika. Later, he almost presents Anāthapiṇḍika's feat to the monks as something to be emulated.⁵¹ In a very similar context, the householder Vajjyamāhita has a conversation with members of other sects and later reports to the Buddha the way in which he brought out the truth in the teachings of the Master in an act of erudition. This again elicits a similar response from the Buddha.⁵² But the imagery of Anāthapiṇḍika as a householder with special access to the doctrine is further intensified in the Majjhima Nikāya when he receives a fuller discourse on the Doctrine from Sāriputta, on his deathbed. Sāriputta asserts that householders usually do not have access to such talk. Anāthapiṇḍika pleaded with him that such discourses be imparted to young householders, who had clarity of vision but were declining because they had no access to the Dhamma.⁵³ Thus, Anāthapiṇḍika emerged as a multifaceted figure who embodied the values of an ideal householder and donor and yet had a profound

understanding of the doctrine which could also be emulated by the monks.

Sometimes a sermon is given in response to request by an individual or by a group. For example, the Koliya householders request the Buddha to instruct them on attaining happiness in this life and the next.⁵⁴ Sometimes the mode of address is made further complex when the Buddha leads the listener through a series of questions. In the Kālāma Sutta, the whole address is taken up in a series of questions and answers all flowing from the Buddha himself.⁵⁵ In a further elaboration of this very same device, the Buddha starts the sermon by asking a question by himself. Thus, in the Aṅguttara, the householder Dārūkammika approaches the Buddha and the Master asks him a question about gift-giving. He receives an answer from the householder and embarks on a sermon on the merits of giving gifts to the saṅgha.⁵⁶ Sometimes the teaching is prefaced by or is included in a story. In the Kuṭadanta Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, the Brāhmaṇa Kuṭadanta was taught about the types of sacrifices that were more meritorious than animal sacrifice, The story of the ancient king Mahāvijita was recounted in this context.⁵⁷

Sequential sermons of this kind were more common in the Aṅguttara and the Saṃyutta. Storytelling and dialogic devices were more common in the other two major Nikāyas. The element of consultation when a question is asked or the element of debate, when a challenge is posed is more frequent in these two collections, as the suttas were longer and more elaborate. At the same time, it can be said that the interlocutor as a high caste male is perceived as most appropriate in the texts. The Dīgha and the Majjhima having the bulk of the higher caste male as the addressee thus would spin out more stories and dialogic devices as well as addresses in the format of a debate or a consultation.

On the other hand, generally the low caste and the women were recipients of sequential plain sermons. Women were instructed on issues of generosity, marriage and domesticity while the vessa householders would be lectured on how to fulfill the goals in this life and to achieve a good rebirth in a heavenly realm. In a discourse to Visākhā Migāramātā the womenfolk were instructed to win acclaim in the world. The word ‘analasa’ is used to prop up the image of the wife who not only manages the servants and household resources to perfection but also pleases her husband with her proficiency and pleasant demeanour. She is also advised to take an interest in whatever industries he is engaged in, though it is clear from the next part that it is principally the textile industry that is being referred to. She guards his wealth and keeps away from everything that displeases him.⁵⁸ A group of young girls about to be married are advised to please their husbands chosen by their parents, with hard work and gentle behaviour. At the same time, they are advised to be liberal and charitable towards mendicants.⁵⁹ The shrewish wife is rebuked as the seven kinds of vices the wives could be beset with are enumerated. The lustful wife, the thief, the lazy wife, the shameless glutton, the bad-tempered shrew or the pitiless wife can be a killer and a tyrant who causes interminable sufferings for the husband.⁶⁰ Such suttas are always directed towards lay women in a flat monologue. They would have importance for a broader cross-section. The qualities of women as donors were foregrounded and the compassion, liberality and charitable qualities of virtuous housewives were praised as a matter of immense social significance. The suttas portraying women as innately impure, as being tied to the forces of Māra, with passion and lust always leading them astray, are on the other hand, specially directed to the monks, as seen earlier.

It is interesting that we have suttas directed towards the individual lay woman yet no sutta in the four Nikāyas are directed exclusively towards a nun. On the basis of this Hinuber has argued that the order of the bhikkhunīs was not in existence at that point of time but was started just after the death of the Buddha, when the order split into two factions, one splinter group led by Ānanda and another led by Mahākassapa and the initiative for founding an order of the nuns came from the latter.⁶¹ This does not seem feasible as we have seen the presence of the nuns within the body of the texts repeatedly and the frame stories could be the later additions. The qualities of a bhikkhunī are dealt with in detail mostly in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Even these suttas have monks as their in-text audience.⁶² It could be that the order of the nuns was so completely dominated by the order of the monks that any discussion pertaining to the behaviour of the nuns was ultimately seen in the texts as a concern of the monks. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, The names of most prominent nuns are mentioned along with the monks. Mahāpajāpatī Gotami, Khemā, Dhammadinnā or Paṭācārā are mentioned as outstanding bhikkhunīs. Yet in the same collection, Mahāpajāpatī Gotami, the aunt and foster-mother of the Buddha stood weary and tearful to persuade the Buddha to allow women to enter the order. Ānanda, as the mediator, repeatedly described the pitiful condition of Gotami and tried to persuade him. Ānanda then argued that if women had the potential to attain arahantship, they could be allowed to enter the order. At this point the Buddha uttered the eight cardinal rules that had to be adhered to by the women if they were to be allowed ordination or Upasampadā. These eight rules actually delineate the minimal space allocated to a nun within the order. Even if a nun spent hundred years in the order, she had to pay respect, rise up and greet a newly ordained monk. The rainy season of the nuns would be spent under the supervision of a resident monk. Every ritual observance had to be

carried out under the watchful eyes of the monks and a nun could not disrespect or abuse a monk. These rules were to be could never be transgressed. Even when these were accepted by Gotami, the Buddha is not at all optimistic about it and tells Ānanda that without the order of the Nuns the pure life would have been kept intact for a thousand years. With women coming into the fold, it would be cut short to just five hundred years.⁶³ A lay woman was however different from the perspective of the texts. The nun as an in-text audience is peripheral, almost non-existent because the order of the nuns as a formal institution is completely marginal. The lay-women, on the other hand, are important as allocators of household resources, as would be attested by a plethora of donative inscriptions mentioning women donors from the earliest period of donative recordings.

The interesting thing is, that within these literary dialogues there are extra-textual referents that indicate broader frameworks of historical interactions and social communication that may have existed outside the universe of the texts. The texts present the act of public speaking as a distinct moral practice that exudes calmness even in polemical situations. The emphasis is on speaking in a pleasant manner to various social groups. The early Buddhist texts were pleading for a polite discourse and trying to underscore specific patterns of cultural behavior, which could be emulated and consumed in a broader urban ambience. Going a step further we can say, that the literary dialogues and discourses are actually artefacts that indicate the possibility of an array of social conversations that could take place outside the sangha. The models of such polite conversations had a resonance outside the inner ring of the monkish circles.

There are certain features of this kind of polite discourse that draws from the rarefied universe of the ascetic which is supposed to be qualitatively different from the conversations of the laity. Take for example the spirit of detachment that the ascetic was supposed to have cultivated which sets him apart from the householder. But as this aspect is fleshed out by the Buddha in the Nālaka Sutta, the neutrality of the sage is given a material context and describes how a dispute might be resolved through this kind of arbitration. While the detachment that comes from complete severance of ties that the ascetic represents, the issue of independence or *anissa* that is intrinsically linked with it has a more potent social value. Here the preacher or arbitrator is again and again urged not to be led astray by discordant voices. Here the models of social dialogues could base themselves on this spirit of independence and impartiality. Not shaking in the middle of blame and praise, not caught up as the wind is not caught up in a net, not defiled by passion as the lotus is not defiled by water, to be a leader of others, not to be led by others.⁶⁴

Another feature could be complete equanimity in polemical situations, which seems unattainable again in a householder. But the calmness and absence of pride reiterated in the text are qualities that operate positively in complex negotiations among diverse groups. Emotive conversations laden with everyday life values are to be got rid of. For example, in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya the older Brāhmaṇa Pokkharasāti asks his young student Ambaṭṭha to visit the Buddha and test whether he is truly wise. The younger man approaches the Buddha not to seek unsolicited advice but rather to challenge him. The petulant student does not greet the Buddha and remains standing. Then he hurls insults at the Buddha bringing into question his noble birth. The Buddha in his turn reveals that Ambaṭṭha is actually descended from a slave girl. The mud-

slinging continues as the audience jeers at Ambaṭṭha. The Buddha saves the situation for the youngster by taking Ambaṭṭha's side and engages him in a conversation on merits of birth vs. the value of moral conduct. The Buddha's engagement with Pokkharasāti on the other hand is different. The tone is gracious right from the start. This conversation also dispels darkness and reveals the Truth like flash of lightning.⁶⁵

In the Sigālovāda sutta, Sigāla the householder's son in Rājagaha was worshipping the quarters of earth and skies prescribed by his forefathers. The Buddha interrupts and reiterates that the religion of the Ariyan householder is something quite different. Thus, a long discourse on moral conduct ensues, which is as relevant for the house holder cutting across all social ranks. First the young man is discoursed on avoidance of evil acts like taking life, thieving, sexual misconduct and lying. He is exhorted never to be blinded by rage, delusion, desire or fear, to safeguard his wealth and choose worthy companions. The six quarters are identified with one's parents, teachers, wife, friends, servants and workers and Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas, who are to be respected and cared for by a householder and will reciprocate likewise. Thus, the six quarters of the earth and the skies are stripped of their purely ritualistic connotations and are revealed to the householder with a clearer and graspable new meaning. The young man is marvelled by the eloquence and the clarity of the message and he says that it was as if long hidden things were being disclosed or a road was revealed to one going astray or a lamp was brought into darkness.⁶⁶ The moral conduct of the householder projects him as a social being, in a web of intricate social relationships. Ariya Vinaya not only encoded a set of moral values to be pursued outside the sangha but also the correct way of arranging and expressing these values.

Polite discourse as a distinct practice was sought to be asserted and disseminated by the Buddha. In the Brahmajāla Sutta, the Buddha said to the monks that to be swayed by the praise and dispraise of outsiders as that would stand in the way of one's own self conquest. When faced with opposition, the falsity of the opposition's statement had to be analysed with clarity.⁶⁷

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha discourses Cunda Kammāraputta on the worthlessness of rituals performed by the Brāhmaṇas of the West. Instead he is exhorted to follow the religion of the Ariyas that could be followed by all for the betterment of all. He speaks of defilement of body, speech and mind. The most interesting aspect is the stress on perfect speech. The liar, the slanderer and the harsh speaker are to be derided. The person who stirs up quarrels or spends time in idle chatter, has no trace of discipline in his speech is not worth listening to.⁶⁸

In the Majjhima Nikāya for the benefit of the Sākiyas, a learner's course or a sekho pāṭipado is delivered by Ānanda for inculcating moral habits of not being driven by sense perceptions and moderation in wants and speech.⁶⁹ Similarly Potaliya was lectured on the true meaning of giving up all occupations.⁷⁰

All these addresses encapsulating distinctive cultural practices and courteous articulations come from a developed stratum of the canonical texts. Most of them are composite suttas like the ones from the Majjhima Nikāya weaving together old and new material. Some are unitary like the Ambaṭṭha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya which contain legendary and miraculous elements indicating lateness of composition. Even Nālaka Sutta from the Sutta Nipāta is from a later stratum as has been discussed earlier. This phase saw doctrinal development and metaphysical

intricacies. Yet doctrinal elements were still at a semi-developed stage as attested by the incomplete notion of the jhānas in particularly the Majjhima Nikāya Suttas. Side by side with these however, as we have seen, the conversations and dialogues continued, which sought to convey unambiguous regulative messages on refined speech and cultural conduct. These hegemonic messages though were couched in a polite mode of address. This technique seems to have taken deeper roots as a resonance of these hegemonic voices cast in a polite address is also found in later speech-acts attributed to individual monks and nuns in distinctive forms.

The Heirs to the Buddha: The Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā

The Gāthās of the Theras and the Therīs as finished texts, also had a long drawn-out biography. Some of them were composed long after the Great Demise of the Buddha according to conventional in-text evidence and were not even composed before the time of Aśoka, let alone become the part of a collection. The Gāthās were embedded in a 6th century C.E. commentary without which some of the shorter utterances would become quite cryptic.

The Therīgāthā and the Theragāthā are collection of verses strung into gāthās or poems of varying lengths and are attributed to some of the earliest members of the Buddhist saṅgha, female and male. Most of the 73 gāthās contained in the Therīgāthā and 264 gāthās contained in the Theragāthā have been ascribed to specific authors. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain whether the names attached to the gāthās introduce us to the real composers or to Therīs and Theras who had uttered the verses at an opportune moment. For example, in the Theragāthā, a large number of poems were originally uttered by the Buddha and the Thera was the

recipient. But in the Theragāthā, the person who imbibed the sermon and re-articulated it on an appropriate moment was the one who became intrinsically linked to the poem. The same thing happens in Therīgāthā. Though the texts differ from each other in terms of the tonal quality, content and mode of address as stated by Kumkum Roy in a recent study,⁷¹ there are certain formalized sections of the texts that describe the transcendental experience of nibbāna and the articulations linked to it, that are more or less similar, except some subtle differences brought out very aptly by Kumkum Roy.

These formalized sections almost become normative and hegemonic especially in the Theragāthā and in some of the verses from the Therīgāthā. In the Theragāthā some of the Theras have been unequivocally called the heirs to the Buddha. Singālapitā, a Thera, claimed to be an heir to the Buddha, aspired to put an end to all desires.⁷² The Thera Koṇḍañña declares that he is the successor of the Buddha to have attained enlightenment and broken free from Māra's snare.⁷³

Koṇḍañña has a fairly longish speech to his name. These brothers are depicted not simply to have followed the straight and narrow path towards Enlightenment. They are also the ideological heirs of the Buddha and were associated with authoritative utterances that had broader intellectual and cultural scopes. After a longish discourse on how to bring about the cessation of pain, he declares himself as the recipient of the Buddha's teachings and as someone who had put down the heavy load.

Vaṅgīsa sought out the Buddha when he was consumed by the desire for sensual pleasures. The Buddha elucidates on the perversion of perception from which Vaṅgīsa suffered and then moved on to the craft of speaking in a correct way. One should oneself be purified and shorn of false pride

before speaking to others. The words one speaks should not torment others, should be pleasant and received with happiness. Then the great teachers of the order are introduced, who are adept in this form of address. First comes the Buddha himself, who speaks the sure word to dispel the illusion and puts an end to all desires and pain. Next Sāriputta is introduced as the most acceptable teacher of the order. He is said to have profound wisdom and is the most adroit in choosing right over wrong. He can be succinct, yet he can also spin out lengthy discourses, his voice has the pleasant lilt of a bird and he is also equipped with a ready wit. Everyone is mindful and eager when he speaks. Up to this point the merits of pleasant-speaking are foregrounded. Then the grandeur of an assembly who receive this teaching comes to the fore. The five hundred bhikkhus who were assembled to get rid of worldly fetters are compared to the ministers of a wheel-turning monarch. The teacher himself is the monarch, who has a domain encompassing the entire sea-girt earth. The Teacher is further equated with the victor in a battle and a caravan-leader. These are the true ‘sons’ and heirs of the Blessed One. Vaṅgīsa then repeats what he has learnt and how he has learnt it. He states that the deities like Sakka, who have all-round vision and the wise Brāhmaṇas hang on to the words of the Buddha for their ultimate release from pain. He is the supreme Teacher, the moral guide and the authoritative leader who shepherds the brethren along the tortuous path towards Enlightenment.⁷⁴

The supreme moral leader showcased in the previous poem is enshrined in hegemonic utterances. Here he and his heirs are located in a monkish circle, with monks as direct recipients of the teachings. Yet this format of polite discourse propped up with authoritative literary imageries could have a currency in wider non-monkish circles. Adhimutta, when faced

with a gang of ferocious robbers, keeps his cool and talks to them on the cessation of pain and the merits of living the holy life. Hearing his strangely exciting discourse where he is unperturbed by what happens to his outer physical frame, the robbers laid down their weapons. Some of them gave up their heinous calling, while others went forth from home to homelessness.⁷⁵

In the *Therīgāthā*, Subhā, the goldsmith's daughter, relates how the Teaching changed her life and she clearly saw all her perils. She expounds elaborately on the deadliness of the *Āsavas* and narrates how she perceived all her kinsmen as enemies who tried to woo her back to the world of sense desires. She asserts that she follows the Ariyan Eightfold Path as the Mahesino or great saints before her had done. She is worshipped by Sakka and his retinue. Here, Subhā depicts herself as a representative of a long and much-admired tradition and thus, Subhā, who is the daughter of a humble craftsman is elevated to a position, which even the deities pay homage to.⁷⁶

The two collections are unique in the sense, that the poems are not connected to the Buddha primarily. Even if he was the original speaker the verses are linked to individual monks or nuns. It is very clear that they mark out a path towards Enlightenment for some of the foremost adherents to the Buddhist way of life and the Buddhist Order. Sometimes the poems trace the progression of an individual monk or nun through a series of births. In spite of shifts of emphasis in certain aspects, both the texts have formalized contents with purposive addresses, which highlight specific communicative functions. The imageries that tumble out of the texts are not simply picked out of thin air. They are created deliberately to offer certain 'models' of public speaking in the public domain, which were embedded in a convention of moral speech and behaviour, evolving

within the saṅghic intellectual orbits. These didactic utterances follow the pattern of Nikāyik discourses in this sense. But the variety of the Nikāyik communicative devices is not to be seen here. This is a different format of short and incisive speech-acts clustered around the individual intellectual heirs of the Buddha. The Gāthās without the commentary are often terse and cryptic, with little signs of narrativization and a single narrative axis. But they are alternative tools to fashion out a polite mode of discourse, embedded in ethical motivations, that would transcend boundaries.

Creation of a Communicative Space: Intellectual Traditions and Transitions

Addresses underscoring ethical conduct delivered to various groups outside the Saṅgha were powered with a resonance that went beyond the conventional understanding of reciprocity- Dāna and Puṇya. Rather, what was being offered was a more enduring model of social dialogues to experiment with. The intention was to reach and activate moral agents, who would be visible and audible in the public sphere. Circumventing doctrinal elements these snippets of conversations are connected in the sense that these are linked to the experiential world, yet bring in a notion of transcendence through speech. The idea that conversations change the very basis of one's life is the premise of these addresses. The sense of clarity that is reiterated after each discourse conveys this transcendence. These addresses were being put together at a time of doctrinal developments, yet packed with a different kind of resonance. Thus, embracing the way of life that the texts project also entails the adoption of a new form of communication that infused new meaning into conventional social relationships.

In the early layers of the Sutta Nipāta the spoken word is already imbued with a notion of authority, cutting itself loose from organic bonding with the potential listeners, with the formation of an organized community of monks. Yet, we have also seen that as organic ties are loosened, new intellectual ties are formed and conversations on social and moral issues start to surface. This propensity is also manifest in the earliest layers of the Dīgha and the Majjhima Nikāyas. In the pedagogic discourses laid out in the Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas, we have distinctive hegemonic messages delivered in specifically delineated assemblies. Thus, the speech-acts, which are laden with intents are bound with notions of moral speech and moral action, underlining moral leadership. This phase also reflects formal intellectual ties of the speaker with the listeners. In the Vinaya Piṭaka, though the speech-acts are addressed directly to monks only, we have seen how they mirror social conversations for the consumption of a wider community and how moral and intellectual agents and facilitators both inside and outside the saṅgha were shown to operate. Especially, in parts of the Dīgha and Majjhima Nikāyas and also in other later texts, these hegemonic speech-acts were cast into a distinctly polite frame of conversation, which had resonance in a wider communicative space. This was happening in a phase when doctrinal elaboration was under way with a greater intensity. Yet, we have seen, the polite conversations on cultural behaviour were accommodated side by side as a prominent form of discourse. This points to a multi-layered communicative space where a speakers and recipients are drawn into a vortex of intellectual exchange that sought to build up cultural norms that set the community apart from others, forums of intellectual exchange. This process of othering is also brought out in sharp relief in the discourses from an earlier phase and was sharpened into a higher pitch in the later layers. The imagery of the Buddha, Buddhist monk, nun or even

the eminent Buddhist lay follower coming upon the cacophonous paribbājakas airing their views and hushing them into an awed silence is very prominent in the Nikāyas. The tone of the Buddhist follower would be very different, as will be the content. Everyone else breaks off their strained colloquy and listens spell-bound. Afterwards, their perceptions change. The transformative nature of the conversation is what sets the Buddhist speaker apart from the other forums of traditional intellectual exchanges. Yet, as we have seen the Buddhist speech-act though premised on unconventional social relationships was slowly rooting itself into a traditional forum of normative transmissions and assertion of difference.

Notes

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Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
BaudhDhS	<i>Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra</i>
BU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
CU	<i>Chandogya Upaniṣad</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dip	<i>Dīpavaṃsa</i>
J	<i>Jātaka</i>
KU	<i>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
Mil	<i>Milindapañha</i>
ṚgVeda	<i>ṚgVeda Saṃhitā</i>
S	<i>Samyutta-Nikāya</i>
ŚB	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
SN	<i>Sutta-Nipāta</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī</i>
VaṣDhS	<i>Vaśiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya-Piṭaka</i>

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