

The Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā

by

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by

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A Thesis

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GLOSSARY

The following Pāli terms are used throughout the thesis with no italics since usage is frequent and consistent.

Arahant: One who has attained the goal of liberation.

Āsavas: "That which flows". The Pāli-English Dictionary identifies the term as referring to intoxicants and discharges, understood in terms of psychology as the intoxicating ideas of sensuality, lust for life, speculation, and ignorance that obstruct one's concentration on liberation. K.R. Norman leaves the term untranslated, pointing out that it has been translated as "canker", "passions", "intoxicants", "cravings", "sin or sinful inclinations", and as "influx of *karman*" (*Thag*, n. 47, p. 134-5).

Bhikkhu: A male Buddhist renunciant.

Bhikkhunī: A female Buddhist renunciant.

Dhamma: The term used for the teachings of the Buddha.

Thera: One of the ascribed authors of the *Theragāthā*.

Theri: One of the ascribed authors of the *Therīgāthā*.

Thag: An abbreviated form of *Theragāthā* used in notes.

Thig: An abbreviated form of *Therīgāthā* used in notes.

Samsāra: The endless cycle of rebirth from which the theris and theras seek to extricate themselves.

Saṅgha: The Buddhist community of renunciants.

Vihāra: A building or group of buildings in which Buddhist renunciants dwell.

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INTRODUCTION

Now the Order of Bhikkhunis being thus well established, and multiplying in divers villages, towns, country districts, and royal residences, dames, daughters-in-law and maidens of the clans, hearing of the great enlightenment of the Buddha, of the very truth of the Norm, of the excellent practices of the Order, were mightily pleased with the system, and, dreading the round of rebirth, they sought permission of husband, parents, and kin, and taking the system to their bosom, renounced the world. So renouncing and living virtuously, they received instruction from the Master and the Elders, and with toil and effort soon realized Arahantship. And the psalms which they uttered from time to time, in bursts of enthusiasm and otherwise, were afterwards by the Recensionists included in the Rehearsal, and arranged together in eleven cantos. They are called the Verses of the Elder Women...

Dhammapāla
Paramatthadīpanī¹

The term "liberation" in the title of this thesis has a double meaning. First, and primarily, it refers to *nibbāna*, liberation from the cycle of rebirth, the religious goal of early Buddhism. Secondly, however, it also refers to the feminist concept of women's liberation from gender constraints, the goal of contemporary feminists. To the modern reader, this may seem anachronistic, as though a

1. Translated by C.A.F. Rhys Davids, Psalms of the Sisters (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1909 [rpr. 1964]), p. 8.

twentieth century concept were being imposed upon an ancient text. But the Therīgāthā ("Verses of the Elder Women") bears witness to the claim of feminist scholars that women have a history of independent thought and action. Though the text is far from a feminist rebellion against sex discrimination, it does relate the experiences and perceptions of a group of women who decided to determine their own lives. As such, it is an important document for modern scholars searching to recover the lost, forgotten, or concealed history of women.

This study of the Therīgāthā is very much in the tradition of feminist historical scholarship. My primary interest is with the ~~text and its companion volume~~ focus on women's religious experience and ~~its claim to female authorship~~. But the text and its companion volume, the Theragāthā ("Verses of the Elder Men"), also provide us with a unique opportunity to glimpse the excitement and devotion of early Buddhist monastics. Because these texts represent both women's and men's experiences of Buddhist renunciation, ~~they present us with a more complete record of the early sangha² than any of the other texts included in the Pāli canon~~. Thus the texts are interesting from the perspective of Buddhist as well as feminist scholarship.

2. Pāli terms used frequently throughout the thesis will not be italicized. See the glossary for definitions.

The ~~Therīgāthā~~ and ~~Theragāthā~~ are collections of verses compiled into poems ascribed to the earliest followers of the Buddha, female and male, respectively. Both collections are arranged by ascending number of verses per poem, from shortest to longest. The Therīgāthā is a collection of 522 verses compiled into 73 poems. The Theragāthā has 1279 verses arranged in 264 poems. All the poems in both collections are ascribed to specific people, but the actual authorship of the poems is impossible to ascertain. Many of the poems are addressed to or are about their ascribed authors and three of the poems in the Therīgāthā have their author unnamed (1, 23, 67).⁴ Although many of the longer poems are carefully crafted as coherent units, others are obviously compilations with various fragments joined together somewhat arbitrarily. And, as K.R. Norman points out, at the time of compilation some verses explaining the circumstances of the poem's utterance were added by the redactor(s).⁵

Thus, the ascribed authorship of the poems cannot be trusted; we cannot know if the theris and theras

3. The term "poem" is used out of convenience to designate compilations of verses attributed to an author or group. No aesthetic or technical meaning is implied.

4. The numbers in parentheses refer to verse numbers. When a whole poem is implied, only the first verse number is cited.

5. Elders' Verses Vol. I and II (London, Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1971), p. xx and p. xxvii; hereafter cited as Thag and Thig, respectively.

actually composed the poems or if they ever uttered them. But the structure of the poems does provide an indication of the method by which they were constructed. The verses in both collections are very repetitive.⁶ The identical terms, phrases, and verses used in the poems indicate the presence of a large pool of refrains and phrases that was available to the bhikkhunīs and bhikkhus. K.R. Norman thinks it likely that "some of these verses and pādas are very old, perhaps older than Buddhism, for they are found also in Jain and Brahmanical literature."⁷ Anyone who so desired could choose appropriate verses from this pool and construct a unified poem from the pieces. Once the verses or poems were constructed, they were memorized and, according to Norman, "recited as they were remembered, no distinction being made between 'verses by...' and 'verses to...'. "⁸

Some of the poems are very beautiful and dramatic compositions. In his study of Pāli metre, A.K. Warder distinguishes Subhā Jīvakambavanikā's poem (Thiq, 366-399) as a particularly good example of lyric poetry that appears to have been performed as a dramatic production resembling, but ante-dating classical Sanskrit drama.⁹ The entertain-

6. See William Stede's "The Pādas of the Thera- and Therī-gāthā" (Journal of the Pāli Text Society 1924-27, pp. 31-226); especially his table of repeated pādas, pp. 197-226.

7. Thag, p. xxi.

8. Thiq, p. xxiv, Thag, p. xxiv.

9. Pāli Metre (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1967), p.

ment value of some of the longer poems is very high--even in translation, they continue to evoke humour, sadness, and joy.

But the poems are not only entertaining, they are also educational. ~~The major emphasis of the poems is the quest for liberation (nirbāṇa), the ultimate religious goal of early Buddhists.~~ Both texts are devoted almost entirely to descriptions of liberation, methods to attain it, or characteristics of those individuals who have attained it. ~~All the authors of both collections are described by the commentary as having attained liberation, i.e., having become arhants.~~¹⁰ These "devotional" sections that comprise the vast majority of repeated phrases and verses are juxtaposed with poetic accounts of the situation, setting, and emotional state of the authors.

In a comparative study of Prakrit poetry and the Therī-Thera-gāthā, Seigfreid Leinhard points out the difference between the more "poetic" segments of the poems and the devotional, or "Buddhist" segments.¹¹ This study provides considerable evidence of a borrowing of poetic motifs and composition styles from secular poetry. Again

136. Warder bases this early dating of the poem on strophe length, level of complexity, and the linking of verses through verbal and rhythmic repetitions and patterns which, he claims, are techniques of Middle Indian lyric poetry (p. 137).

10. Sisters, p. 8. See the opening quote to this introduction.

11. "Sur la Structure Poétique des Thera-Therīgāthā" (Journal Asiatique 263/3-4 [1975]: 375-394).

we see the method by which the poems were constructed. The authors¹² could select situations and motifs from secular and devotional poetry, constructing their compositions by uniting the various elements together. These constructions serve the dual purpose of entertaining and educating simultaneously.

These features of the texts' construction and content provide us with a hint of a possible reason for the texts' preservation. Their educational and entertainment value are given additional credibility by the status of the ascribed authors, the foremost of the earliest bhikkhunis and bhikkhus. The poems of the Therī- and Thera-gāthā are not only beautiful, devotional, and instructive, they are also reputed to be the records of the experiences of the Buddha's first followers, all of whom are accredited with arahanthood. Furthermore, as Etienne Lamotte reports, the Buddha is recorded to voice his approval of chanted verses (in this case, the theras' verses):

"Excellent, excellent, O monk! You have a fine voice, well articulated, neither muffled nor gulped, and which makes the meaning clearly understandable."¹³

12. Throughout the thesis, I make a distinction between "authors" and "theris or theras". By "authors", I refer to the actual composers, recognizing that these authors may in fact have been the redactors or reciters who may have transformed the utterances they were attempting to preserve. "Theris or theras" refer to ascribed authors, the names of whom are used for convenience, recognizing again, that these ascribed authors may not correspond with the actual composers.

13. History of Indian Buddhism, trans. Sara Webb-Boin

Dhammapala's commentary, written in the sixth century CE, further emphasizes the status of the ascribed authors by frequently alluding to the sutta in which the Buddha categorized all his followers according to their special abilities.¹⁴ Though many of the verses are addressed to or are about the theris and theras to whom they are ascribed, the association alone imbues the poems with the weight of a traditional veneration for those individuals thought worthy by the Buddha.

Thus, we can easily imagine that the early saṅgha had a high regard for the verses and poems. These features help us understand how the texts survived a long period of oral preservation.¹⁵ The metre, repetitiveness and emotional power could help reciters' memories, and the high status of the arahant authors would provide the motivation for recitation, preservation, and eventual inscription.

This lends credibility to the traditional assumption that the verses originate in the earliest period of

(Louvain-La-Neuve: Peeters Press, 1988), p. 161, quoting the *Samyutta Nikāya* I, p. 209 and the *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 34-5.

14. *Anguttara*, I, 25.

15. Norman dates the text from the end of the sixth century to the end of the third century BCE with their final redaction occurring at the third council (c. 236 BCE) [p. xxxi]. He and other scholars, however, agree that at least some of the verses may have been first uttered during the Buddha's lifetime. As with all the texts of the Pāli Canon, the *Therī-* and *Thera-gāthā* were apparently preserved in an oral tradition until the first century BCE when they were committed to writing in Sri Lanka.

Buddhism's history. Though we cannot know for certain when the verses were composed, or if they have been preserved accurately, we can suspect that they contain at least remnants of the early followers' expressions. This is especially significant for the Therīgāthā since it is so rare among the world's scriptures as a text that is devoted to women's religious experience and that claims female authorship. A close reading of the Therīgāthā should thus tell us much about the experiences and perceptions of women in early Buddhism.

But this raises the question of the female authorship of the Therīgāthā. The emphasis of this thesis on women's conceptualization of liberation makes an argument for the viability of the claim mandatory. In order to conclude that we have uncovered a feminine perception of the goal in early Buddhism, we must establish that the Therīgāthā was, in all likelihood, composed by women. But this cannot be done by reading the Therīgāthā in isolation; we must have a basis for comparison. The Theragāthā, as a companion volume that is almost identical in vocabulary, structure, and dating, but which claims male authorship, is a convenient text by which to establish the distinctiveness of the Therīgāthā.

Upon first reading, the texts appear very similar. I found, however, that I enjoyed the Therīgāthā more than the Theragāthā, a preference I attributed to its emphasis

on relationships. But it was not until I had read the texts several times that I began to understand that this initial observation reflected the texts' differing presentations of liberation.

Both texts present liberation as a psychological transformation accomplished by the complete comprehension of the impermanence of everything in one's experience, including physical, emotional, and intellectual facets of one's own being. This realization results in a psychological detachment from ordinary sources of pleasure and pain and a concomitant release from the cycle of rebirth, that is, from the underlying cause of all human suffering. Liberation involves the conquest over various conditions--rebirth, fetters, desire, āsavas, darkness, pain and fear--and the attainment of others--knowledge, teaching, peace, and rest. But the Therīgāthā emphasizes those terms and conditions that suggest the conceptual aspects of liberation involving conquest. The Theragāthā emphasizes those conceptual aspects involving attainment.¹⁶

Thus we see that the Therīgāthā presents liberation as a struggle to overcome the bonds of *samsāra*, as freedom from the suffering and futility of ordinary existence; the Theragāthā presents it as the quest to attain completion,

16. See the Appendix for a chart containing the detailed calculations underlying this dramatic difference in emphasis between the two texts.

as freedom to be peaceful. The central question of this thesis is why the Therīgāthā emphasizes struggle.

This difference in perspective between the texts is truly remarkable when we consider that the texts use identical terminology and structure. It reveals the presence of very subtle differences in emphasis that I believe suggest pervasive differences in the characteristic attitudes of the authors. This, in turn, lends credibility to the traditional assumption of the female authorship of the Therīgāthā.

Most scholars have accepted this claim to female authorship, but there have been some who dispute it. K.E. Neumann, the first translator of the Therī-Theragāthā into German, stated that all the poems in both the Therīgāthā and the Theragāthā were the work of one man.¹⁷ But, as Winternitz asserts, Neumann's evidence proves only that the poems "bear the stamp of the Buddhist mind."¹⁸

More recently, another scholar has questioned the validity of the traditional claim to female authorship. In her article, "Nuns and Benefactresses", Janice Willis states categorically that "the authors of [Buddhist] texts in all cases were men."¹⁹ Further, in the footnote to this

17. Sisters, p. xxiii.

18. M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, Vol. II (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1933).

19. In Women, Religion, and Social Change (eds.) Y. Haddad and E. Findly (N.Y.: State U of NY Press, 1985, pp. 59-86), p. 60.

statement, she claims that

even the Therīgāthā, a collection of hymns recording the 'triumphant songs' (or *aññās*) said to have been composed by women *arhatīs* upon their attainment of deliverance, was compiled, written, edited, and extensively commented upon by a monk named Dhammapāla. All the texts comprising the orthodox Buddhist Canon (of whatever country) were authored exclusively by men.²⁰

I disagree with this claim, and question Willis' reading of the Therīgāthā. First, the claim ignores the long oral history of the text. Dhammapāla may have set the poems down in writing (though this is far from conclusive), but he, or whoever was the compiler, worked from an oral tradition several centuries old. The exact "authorship" of the verses is, therefore, impossible to prove.

More importantly, her readings of the text are questionable. For example, in a paragraph relying extensively on the Therīgāthā to prove the canonical perception of women's capacity to attain liberation, she claims that "while individual nuns are praised as great teachers, they are always depicted as imparting teachings only to other women" (emphasis mine).²¹ This claim is directly refuted by Sukkā's poem, which deplores the ignorance of men who ignore her teaching:

What have these men in Rājagaha been made (= what has been done to...?); they remain as though having drunk wine, who do not attend upon Sukkā

20. Ibid, n. 3, p. 78.

21. Ibid, p. 64.

preaching the Buddha's teaching. (54)²²

Furthermore, Punṇikā's poem is comprised of her conversion of a brahman by her refutation of his brahmanical practices of purification; a conversion that could easily be interpreted as teaching (236-251). And, Vaddha's Mother's poem consists of a tribute from Vaddha to his mother in honour of her instruction which led to his attainment of liberation (Thiq, 210-11; Thaq 335).

Perhaps preaching, conversion, and instruction do not conform with Willis' conception of teaching. If this is the case, a definition of "teaching" is certainly called for and these examples from the text should be addressed.

Curiously, after denying the female authorship of the text, Willis goes on to use it as the basis of her assessment of women's religious experience in early Buddhism. This is clearly problematic.

With the exceptions of Neumann and Willis, all the scholars who have examined the text in detail agree that the traditional assumption of female authorship is most probable, though their reasons for acceptance are based on differing considerations. Winternitz accepts the tradition for two reasons. First, he can see no reason for the

22. Translated by K.R. Norman, Elders' Verses, Vol. II (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1971). All citations are from this translation, unless otherwise specified, and will be cited parenthetically.

bhikkhus (who generally show a lack of sympathy for bhikkhunīs) to want to ascribe female authorship to their own compositions. Secondly, he claims that "in the songs of the nuns, a personal note is very frequently struck which is foreign to those of the monks."²³

Similarly, C.A.F. Rhys Davids, the first translator of the two texts into English, claims that they differ in idiom, sentiment, and tone. Furthermore, she claims, "even the 'common stock' of refrains is different."²⁴ Along the same theme, she states poetically that

these little women of old were every whit as human as we, and I am convinced that the glory of sainthood was for them [the therīs], and at first--when they hymned it--no white light, but prismatic through the circumstances and temperament of each.²⁵

In other words, Rhys Davids is claiming that the differences in idiom, sentiment, tone, and the characteristic differences in usage of the stock refrains derives from the differing experiences of the authors. Modern scholarship, sensitive to issues of feminism, would attribute these differing experiences to the authors' experiences of gender.

I.B. Horner picks up this same theme in her study of women in the Pāli Canon. Though she nowhere makes an

23. A History of Indian Literature, (op cit), p. 102.

24. Sisters, p. xxiii.

25. Ibid, p. xxv.

argument for the female authorship of the Therīgāthā, its assumption is very clear throughout the two chapters she devotes to the text. In her closing comments to these chapters, she states:

The actual form in which arahanship was conveyed to each [theri] was to a large extent congruent with her circumstances before entering the Order. If, for example, the conditions of her life had been difficult and irksome, her finding of Nirvāṇa would be negatively presented as Freedom, Comfort, End of Becoming, End of Craving, or as Rest.²⁶

Although she, like Rhys Davids, does not attribute this feature of the text to the authors' experiences of gender, we can see how women's circumstances prior to renunciation would differ from men's.

K.R. Norman, the most recent translator of the texts into English, concurs with these assessments of the probability of female authorship. Basing his conclusion on the Therīgāthā's descriptions of experiences unique to women, his assessment is cautious, but still strong: "Although some of the verses are of such a nature that it is impossible to tell the sex of the authors, many are indubitably by women."²⁷

In the most recent contribution to the argument for female authorship, Karen Lang argues that the texts show subtle distinctions in the way they use stock phrases. By

26. Women Under Primitive Buddhism (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1930), p. 209.

27. Pali literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), p. 76.

comparing the usage of the stock phrase, "lord death's snare" between the texts, Lang concludes that the "fear of both sexuality and death coalesce" in the Theragāthā's presentation of women's bodies, thus illustrating the theras' perceptions of women as enemies. The theris use the same language and imagery not to denounce men but to educate them on the futility of their sexual desires. The theris thus perceive both women and men as susceptible to the deceptive bonds of sensuality, whereas the theras perceive only women as irreconcilably bound.²⁸

Thus, we find that scholars generally agree that the texts' subtle differences derive from gender-differences between the authors. In this thesis, I will contribute to these arguments by examining the texts' presentations of the social setting, the human body, and the physical surroundings of the authors. My own argument for female authorship will be postponed until the conclusion of the thesis, where I will compile the evidence brought out by these discussions. For now, I think the differences we have discovered in the use of terminology for liberation and the arguments raised by other scholars give sufficient grounds for maintaining the assumption of female authorship throughout the following discussion.

The central question of this study is why the

28. "Lord Death's Snare" (Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 2/2 [Fall, 1986]: 63-79), pp. 77-78.

Therīgāthā presents liberation in terms of struggle. My answer to this question is that the theris perceive liberation as struggle because they have experienced greater difficulties than the theras with the prescribed lifestyle and in attaining liberation. The difficulties experienced by the theris are much more extensive than those experienced by the theras because the theris are women. The social and religious environment described in the texts is one in which greater restrictions were placed upon women than on men. The theris' struggle against these restrictions is expressed in their conceptions of the religious goal.

The plausibility of this contention will be demonstrated throughout the thesis by three arguments: (1) that struggle pervades the Therīgāthā much more than the Theragāthā; (2) that the Therīgāthā provides reasonable evidence of female authorship; (3) that the social and religious setting presented in the texts places differing expectations and limitations on women and men.

In these arguments, I am assuming that religious experiences and their formalized expressions do not exist in a vacuum. In complex ways these experiences both reflect and influence our ordinary experiences. Gender plays such an important role in our lives that it cannot be inconsequential to supra-normal experiences, particularly the communication of those experiences. Though we cannot

assume that the texts accurately portray the social setting and actual experiences of the theris and theras, we can assume that the authors had reasons for using certain terms and images and describing certain situations as relevant to their quest for liberation. Furthermore, since the texts were preserved, compiled and edited as part of the orthodox canon of Theravādin Buddhists, we can assume that the religious expressions contained therein were greatly valued for their ability to communicate certain religious truths.

My goal is to uncover the attitudes and assumptions contained in the Therīgāthā and Theragāthā and compare them to see if they reveal gender differences and how these differences relate to the authors' struggle for liberation. My focus, however, is firmly on the Therīgāthā. I use the Theragāthā only for the purposes of comparison. No attempt is made throughout the thesis to present a balanced discussion of the two texts. The themes I explore are those that are prominent in the Therīgāthā. The presentation of an absence or relative paucity of these themes in the Theragāthā is not intended to be descriptive of the text, as the themes prominent in it are not explored in this thesis.

The analysis presented in each of the following chapters relies upon numerical calculations of the frequency of occurrence of certain terms, situations, and

cognitive or emotional states reported by the authors. Because precision is required in counting these terms and situations, I have used Norman's very literal translation in conjunction with the Pāli text more frequently than Rhys Davids' more poetic translation. However, I have opened each chapter with a quotation from Rhys Davids' translation to poetically evoke the prevailing sentiment discussed in the chapter.

This numerical basis of analysis, while not common in Pāli scholarship, is also not entirely innovative. In her study of liberation in the Aṭṭhakavagga, Grace Burford illustrates the value of establishing a numerical basis for analysis. As she says, "the frequency of occurrence [sic] of a word and its various derivations...provides one indication of its importance and, in turn, of the relative centrality of the concept it signifies within the text."²⁹ Furthermore, Burford's methodological motivations are applicable to my own work:

One need not blindly accept that we have counted the occurrences [sic] of particular words accurately and no major conceptual hermeneutic differences could possibly arise with reference to the actual process of counting terms. In applying a method of analysis that has a statistical basis, we are attempting to avoid blind acceptance of an external account of the characteristics of the material under discussion and to relegate hermeneutic differences to the second stage of analysis.³⁰

29. The Ideal Goal According to the Aṭṭhakavagga and its Major Pāli Commentaries (Northwestern University, June, 1983), p. 8.

30. Ibid, p. 10.

In other words, the frequency of occurrence of terms, phrases, and situations is easily testable and, one may assume, indicates something of the relative value placed upon them.

In the following discussion, the argument that gender is the source of the differing perceptions of liberation is developed by an examination of three topics. First I investigate gender roles in the social setting presented in the texts. This chapter lays the foundation for the argument that the theris experienced greater difficulty in gaining permission to renounce, in living the prescribed lifestyle, and in developing the emotional detachment required for the attainment of liberation. The second chapter investigates attitudes towards the body, arguing that the theris internalized social and religious conceptions of femininity. The third chapter on attitudes towards the physical environment demonstrates that the theris were also restricted to dwelling communally. Furthermore, this chapter argues that their struggle against socio-religious stereotyping evident in the two preceding chapters is extrapolated onto their use of environmental imagery as symbols.

In the conclusion, the results of these topical analyses are compiled and related back to the arguments that struggle pervades the experiences and expressions of the theris, that the Therīgāthā's claim to female author-

ship is probable, and that the Therīgāthā's perception of liberation as struggle derives from the authors' experiences as gendered individuals in a setting that places greater restrictions on women than on men.

CHAPTER I

The Social Setting

Woeful is woman's lot! hath he declared,
Tamer and Driver of the hearts of men:
Woeful when sharing home with hostile wives,
Woeful when giving birth in bitter pain,
Some seeking death, or e'er they suffer twice,
Piercing the throat; the delicate poison take.
Woe too when mother-murdering embryo
Comes not to birth, and both alike find death.
Kisāgotamī
Therīgāthā, 216-17¹

The lives and experiences of women and men differed in ancient India, as they do today in every culture around the world. Biological differences such as menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation are obvious differences which may have a profound impact on the ways in which women and men perceive and experience the world. But social conceptions of gender may have an even greater impact on the way we conceptualize and evaluate our experiences.

Recent scholarship in history, sociology, psychology, and religion shows us that the use of gender as a category of analysis can reveal exciting levels of comp-

1. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, trans., The Psalms of the Sisters (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1909 [reprint, 1964]), p. 108-109.

lexity in our understanding of human behavior and perception. This scholarship reminds us that ideas do not exist in isolation. Even our deepest religious beliefs are to some extent conditioned by and reflective of the social network in which we are imbedded. The recent work of Caroline Walker Bynum is particularly relevant since she investigates the influence of gender on the use and understanding of religious imagery. In her work on medieval Christian women's religiosity, Walker Bynum illustrates how social, psychological, and religious traditions influence the ways women understand and express their religiosity.² Walker Bynum's central thesis in all her works is that all persons work within the constraints of their social and religious milieu in interpreting and expressing their religious experiences. This milieu presents different types of constraints for females and males. Thus, gender differences pervade the religious expressions of women and men. Moreover, since the social

2. Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: U. of Calif. Press, 1987); Introduction, "On the Complexity of Symbols" pp. 1-20 and " '... And Woman His Humanity': Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages" pp. 257-288 in Gender and Religion, ed. with Steve Harrell and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). In particular, see "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols" in Anthropology and the Study of Religion eds. Robert Moore and Frank Reynolds (Chicago: Centre for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1984, pp. 105-125) for a comparison of female and male differences in their expressions and characteristic use of religious experiences and symbols.

milieu provides differing opportunities for fulfilling the requisites of what is considered to be a religious lifestyle, the experiences of women and men also differ.

These observations and their underlying methodological premise are supported by my research on the Therīgāthā and Theragāthā. As we have seen in the introduction, the texts differ significantly in their use of terms for liberation (see the appendix for detailed charts documenting the references to synonyms for liberation). In this chapter I shall establish the platform for the argument that these differences derive from the differing social experiences of the authors. Following Walker Bynum's arguments on how medieval conceptions of women as inherently physical, nurturing, weak, and vulnerable contributed to a religiosity in which women emphasized Christ's and their own physicality, care-giving, and suffering, I shall argue that ancient Buddhist women's experience of struggle against societal conceptions of them as ideally subordinate daughters, wives, and mothers has contributed to their conceptualization of liberation as struggle.

Thus, my goal for this chapter is to examine the social world of the theris and theras. This task is made exceedingly difficult by uncertainties in dating, authorship, and geographical location of the authors, as we have discussed in the introduction. The Therīgāthā's

unique status as the only text in the Pāli canon claiming authorship by women further complicates the attempt to contextualize its social setting: if it is indeed the only text composed by women, we can safely assume the perspective of the authors concerning their social experiences would differ significantly from that of their male contemporaries. Furthermore, the unknown chronology of the texts prohibits us from consulting the social setting reported in other texts as authoritative for these texts, though this practice is by no means unheard of in the history of Pāli scholarship.³

Therefore, in this study of the authors' social setting, I shall be relying extensively on what the Therī- and Theragāthā present as the social setting. Secondary sources will be consulted, but their findings will be tested by an examination of the texts themselves. Thus, this study attempts to see the social world of the texts through the eyes of the authors. I am interested in what they have to say about their cultural milieu.

My central argument in this chapter is that the texts portray a setting which is far more restrictive of women than of men. Power and authority are wielded by men over women. Fathers determine marital partners for their daughters, husbands have the right to expel their wives

3. See for example, I.B. Horner, Women Under Primitive Buddhism (London: George Routledge, 1930).

from their homes, and girls are trained in appropriate subordinate behavior in preparation for their eventual marriages. In the secular realm, women's lives revolve around men.

Buddhism offered women an alternative lifestyle of renunciation. Yet even this lifestyle was formally dominated by men. According to the Vinaya rules of ordination and practice, the women's order, the bhikkhunī-saṅgha, was subject to the men's order, the bhikkhu-saṅgha. Each of the eight rules allegedly instituted by the Buddha at his initiation of the bhikkhunī-saṅgha subordinates the bhikkhunīs to the bhikkhus: senior bhikkhunīs had to pay homage to all bhikkhus; women could not spend the rains independently from men; bhikkhus set the dates for important rituals; women had to "confess" before men and submit to discipline from them; women must be ordained by both saṅghas; and women could not revile or censure men. These rules were applicable only to women.⁴

Despite the overt domination in this model, the authors of the Therīgāthā do not concentrate on rules or disciplinary codes, but rather emphasize their freedom from all types of bondage and, as Karen Lang has pointed out, interpret their experiences as typical of human suffering.⁵

4. The Book of Discipline Vol. V, trans. I.B. Horner (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1938), pp. 354-5.

5. "Lord Death's Snare", (Journal of Feminist Studies

There are definite indications of male domination presented by the texts, but I must emphasize that the theris did not openly rebel against it. Nor, according to Nancy Falk, "did they consider themselves inferior; what little record we have of their thoughts suggests that they either regarded themselves as equals or simply did not think to compare themselves with the men at all."⁶

We should remember, therefore, that this study of gender distinctions between the texts represents a category of analysis unknown to the theris and theras. They do not question the gender-stereotyping of their cultural setting, but rather assume clear distinctions between feminine and masculine roles. It is these assumptions that form the basis of this study. The differences discussed here represent the results of a close reading of the texts in which careful attention is devoted to differences in frequency of occurrence, context, and phrasing of social situations in which gender plays a role.

In order to demonstrate that the social sphere presented in the texts is one in which greater restrictions are placed upon women than upon men, I have split the chapter into three sections. First I examine gender roles

in Religion 2/2 (Fall, 1986): 63-79), p. 78.

6. "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns" in Unspoken Worlds (eds.) N. Falk and Rita Gross (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980, pp. 207-224), p. 215.

in the texts. In this section, I argue that women's primary role is in the domestic realm and that feminine stereotypes reflect positive and negative reinforcement for domesticity and subordination in women. In the second section, I examine how the encouragement for women to remain in their homes and perform domestic duties influences the theris' perceptions of their lifestyles prior to renunciation. My argument here is that the theris' appropriation of social stereotypes is reflected in their tendency to define themselves by their relationships with others. In the third section, I investigate how social conceptions of gender impact upon the experiences of female and male renunciants, and how they portray their encounters with others. This section uncovers evidence of gender-discrimination in the social world of the theris and theras by highlighting the theris' more frequent encounters with disrespect. It also confirms the findings of the second section, illustrating how the theris' emphasis on relationships continues in the saṅgha. In the conclusion, I synthesize these findings and arguments, describing how the social world was more restrictive of women than of men.

Gender Roles in the Texts

Many scholars examining the social setting of ancient India have commented on the explicit subordination

of women advocated by Hindu lawbooks. Awe for the powerful forces that enabled a woman to bear children and the parallel conception of woman as too weak to adequately control those forces produced a conception of women as requiring masculine control. In Nancy Falk's words, this control is ensured by "the *dharma* teaching that a woman must always be subordinate to some man: in childhood, to her father; in maturity, to her husband; in old age, to her sons."⁷

This conception of woman's ideal role as subordinate to a man finds many echoes in Buddhist literature. For example, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* reports the Buddha's advice to girls to learn subordination in preparation for their eventual marriage:

To whatever husband our parents shall give us, for him we will rise up early, be the last to retire, be willing workers, order all things sweetly and speak affectionately. Train yourself thus, girls. ✓

...A wife like this,
Who with her husband's wish and will complies,
Is born again where lovely devas dwell.⁸

This passage indicates that a woman's responsibilities include service to her husband and respect for his decisions as well as tending to the household and its members. Thus, her subordination is linked very

7. "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns", p. 221.

8. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, III, 36; *Gradual Sayings* trans., F.L. Woodward (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1955), pp. 29-30.

closely with the role of wife and mother strongly encouraged by the social setting.

Even I.B. Horner, whose work on women in early Buddhism reveals a deep respect for Buddhism, in part because of its high regard for women,⁹ acknowledges the presence in ancient India of a strong encouragement for women to stay at home and bear children, particularly sons. If women failed to bear sons, or otherwise please their husbands, they might be "superseded by a second and a third wife or even turned out of the house."¹⁰

Although Horner is here referring to the Brahmanic emphasis on the necessity of sons for the correct performance of the ancestor rites rejected by the Buddha, Isidāsī's reported marital circumstances in the Therīgāthā reveals the power men held over women. Isidāsī first describes her father "giving" her in marriage to a rich merchant (406), to whom she offers what she deems to be the best of service: paying obeisance to his parents "as [she] had been instructed" (407); giving up her seat to his relatives (408); serving food (409); arising before her husband and approaching him respectfully (410); dressing him as would a servant-girl (411); and cooking and washing

9. For example, Women Under Primitive Buddhism (op cit) reads very much like an apology for any misogyny in the Pāli Canon.

10. Women in Early Buddhist Literature (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1961), p. 5.

for him (412). Despite all this service, her husband rejects her, insisting that she return to her father's house (414). She is particularly bewildered by this rejection since she was "an affectionate servant, with humbled pride, an early riser, not lazy, virtuous" (413).

While this poem is atypically intense in its description of female subjugation,¹¹ its acceptance of women's normal role of subservience and its concomitant acceptance of the male right to determine a woman's welfare is typical of the sentiment found quite frequently in the Therīgāthā. Moreover, its inclusion in the text and the careful crafting evident in its construction indicates that the sentiment of acceptance so prominent in the poem found at least a tacit approval by those who preserved and compiled the collection.

Three of the poems in the Therīgāthā, however, do not promote this acceptance, though they do provide further evidence that women's primary role is in the domestic sphere. Muttā's and "A certain unknown bhikkunī's" poems both associate the authors' freedom from domestic work with

11. C.A.F. Rhys Davids finds this poem atypical for other reasons as well. She states that the phraseology, setting, and Jain overtones make it discordant with rest in the collection which may indicate a later date of composition (Sisters, p. xxii). K.R. Norman disagrees with her by identifying the metre, unknown to Rhys Davids, as *Āryā*, a very ancient metre that went out of practice at a relatively early date in Buddhism's history (Pāli Literature [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983], p. 76).

their freedom from their husbands. Muttā is released from the three crooked things:

I am well-released (*sumuttā*), properly released (*sādhū muttā*) by my release (*muttiyā*) by means of the three crooked things, by the mortar, pestle, and my crooked husband. I am released (*muttā*) from birth and death; that which leads to renewed existence has been rooted out. (11)

The unknown bhikkhunī is released from the pestle and her "shameless man":

Well-released, (*sumuttike*) well-released (*sumuttikā*), properly released (*sādhū muttika*) am I from the pestle. My shameless man, even his sun-shade, etc. (disgust me)... (23)

The Theraḡāthā contains a remarkably similar poem following the same structure and using the same phrasing:

Well-rid (*sumuttiko*), well-rid (*sumuttiko*), very well-rid (*sāhū sumuttiko*) am I of the three crooked things; well-rid are the sickles of me, well-rid are the ploughs of me, well-rid are the curved spades of me... (43)¹²

Though identical in phrasing and vocabulary, these poems reflect interesting gender distinctions. While the women associate their husbands with their domestic responsibilities, the man makes no such association of their wives with their domestic jobs.

12. This variation in Norman's translation of these similar poems is very interesting, especially considering his painstaking attempt to provide a literal translation. One wonders what connotations he intends as he translates *sumutta* as "well-released" for the theris and as "well-rid" for the theras. Rhys Davids' translation also reflects this difference; she translates *sumutta* as "free" and "gloriously free" for Muttā (11), as "set free" for the unknown bhikkhunī (23), and as "well-rid" for Sumaṅgala (Thaḡ 43).

Somā's poem provides an interesting example of the association we have discovered between women's subordination and domestic work. Confronted by an adversary, who questions her intelligence as a woman, her response rejects his sexist assumptions of her inherent incapacities:

That place, hard to gain, which is to be attained by the seers, cannot be attained by a woman with two-finger-intelligence (= very little intelligence).

What (harm) could the woman's state do to us, when the mind is well-concentrated, when knowledge exists for someone rightly having insight into the doctrine? (60-61)

Somā's response that her "woman's state" does her no harm when her mind is concentrated indicates her interpretation of the adversary's disparagement as a gender rather than a personal attribute.

Jean Baker Miller's theory of dominance and subordination patterns helps us to see this attitude as indicative of pronounced dominance in the social setting: "Subordinates are usually said to be unable to perform the preferred roles. Their incapacities are ascribed to innate defects or deficiencies of mind or body, therefore immutable and impossible of change or development."¹³

Significantly, if we accept the commentator's explanation of "two-finger intelligence", Somā's adversary associates her incapacity to attain the highest religious

13. Toward a New Psychology of Women 2nd. Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p.7.

goal with her socially defined job of cooking. Dhammapāla tells us that "women, from the age of seven or eight, boiling rice at all times, know not the moment when the rice is cooked, but must take some grains in a spoon and press it with two fingers; hence the expression 'two-finger' sense."¹⁴ B.G. Gokhale elaborates upon this interpretation stating that she is "barely able to understand if the rice is cooked or not by crushing a cooked grain between her thumb and index-finger."¹⁵

While we cannot know if the author of the poem intended the disparagement of women's intellectual capacities to be associated with their typical domestic responsibilities, we can see a clear statement of an attitude that may have been pervasive. The poem, however, is not about women's incapacities, but is about the irrelevance of gender to one's ability to attain the highest goal.

And yet, as I will argue throughout the following chapters, cultural notions of gender capacities and incapacities affect the ways in which the goal is to be attained and the ways in which it is perceived by the theris and theras. The gender stereotyping of the surround-

14. Sisters, p. 45.

15. "The Image-World of the Thera-Therī-Gāthās" (in the Malalasekera Commemoration Volume, [ed.] D.H. De A. Wijesekera, Colombo: Kularatne and Co. Ltd., 1976, pp. 96-110), p. 104.

ing social and religious milieu dictates the particular obstacles and potentialities of women and men.

Women's negative stereotype as wives performing domestic service has a correspondence in a positive stereotype as loving mothers. In a recent article, Nancy Schuster Barnes claims that Buddhists believed women were, by nature, more inclined to involvement with the world because of their nurturance of life. Citing the Dīgha Nikāya, she claims that "'Women's thoughts' (*itthacittā*) were presumed to be of life in the family and of the continuation of life, while 'men's thoughts' (*purisacittā*) were of intellectual and spiritual matters."¹⁶

In the Theragāthā, we find evidence of an acceptance and Buddhist adaptation of the stereotype of women's inherent capacity for, and preoccupation with, maternal love. Advocating Buddhist compassion, Sopāka advises his listeners to be good to all living creatures, "just as a woman would be good towards her beloved only son" (33).

The theris appear to adopt this stereotype of a

16. D. ii, 271-73; cited in Nancy Schuster Barnes "Buddhism" in Women In World Religions (ed) Arvind Sharma (NY: SUNY, 1987, pp. 105-134), p. 113. The situation to which Barnes is referring here is the curious circumstances of Gopika, who attained rebirth as a masculine deity after she abandoned "women's thoughts" and cultivated "men's". It seems clear to me that her elevation in status is expressed both in her rebirth as male and as deity, an elevation deriving from her assumption of masculinity while still female.

woman's maternal love for her children. There are nine references to the theris' children (18, 51, 97, 127, 133, 163, 204, 213, 312). In contrast, only three theras admit to being fathers (177, 299, 512). Since we have three additional references in the Therīgāthā to bhikkhus leaving their children (289, 300, 327), we have evidence that the theras were not as willing as the theris to discuss their parenthood. By implication, we see that parenting was more important to the theris than the theras.

Furthermore, we should note the disproportionate percentage of references to sons rather than daughters. Sopāka's paradigm involves a mother's love for a son, and eight of the nine references to the theris' parenthood specifies the male sex of their children. Apparently sons were considered more valuable than daughters.

This stereotyping of women's maternal love has several implications for women choosing the path of Buddhist renunciation. Following Walker Bynum's discovery that women's conceptions of the nature of the divine reflect their appropriation of cultural and religious stereotypes,¹⁷ we find that the theris adapted doctrine to fit their experiences and their appropriation of the

17. "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols" (in Anthropology and the Study of Religion, [eds.] R. Moore and F. Reynolds, Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1984, pp. 105-25), p. 117.

stereotype.

Kisāgotamī's poem provides a revealing statement of how the Buddha's doctrine of *sarvaṃ dukkhaṃ* (the pervasiveness of suffering) relates specifically to women's experience. The poem opens with general references to the four noble truths which outline the way to abolish pain (*dukkha*). As the poem progresses, it narrows its focus to women and then to Kisāgotamī's specific experience as a woman:

One should know pain, and the uprising of pain,
and (its) cessation, and the eight-fold way, even
the four noble truths.

The state of women has been said to be painful
by the charioteer of men-who-are-to-be-tamed; even
the state of being a co-wife is painful; some,
having given birth once,

even cut their throats; (some) tender ones take
poisons; gone into the midst of people-killers (=
in hell with murderers?) both (groups) suffer
misfortunes.

Going along, about to bring forth, I saw my
husband dead; having given birth on the path, (I
had) not yet arrived at my own house.

Two sons dead and a husband dead upon the path
for miserable (me); mother and father and brother
were burning upon one pyre. (215-219)

Note that the general pain of womanhood is particularized to women's experiences as wives and mothers. The implication of childbirth as a painful experience is elaborated upon by Kisāgotamī's experience of giving birth on a path, outside her home, and we may assume, far from any assistance she might expect from relatives or friends. Her pain is intensified by the deaths of her children and family. As we shall see in the next section of this

chapter, the particular grief associated with death is presented in the texts as a suffering unique to women. This is not to say that men did not grieve over the deaths of close family members, but to emphasize the fact that the men presented in the Theragāthā do not mention feeling this type of pain.¹⁸

Moreover, Kisāgotamī reports an important social ramification of her experience. As she describes herself viewing her sons in the cemetery (221), she reports being "despised by all" (*sabbagarahitā*),¹⁹ by implication, as a result of being bereft of a family. By the loss of her family, Kisāgotamī is deprived of a social role and is, therefore, a social pariah.

The fate of a widow in ancient India is well-documented. As Gokhale claims, an old widow faces disdain and humiliation.²⁰ Kisāgotamī's experience of social reprobation for losing her family is repeated in Candā's and Vāsiṭṭhī's poems in the Therīgāthā. Candā describes herself as lacking in food and clothing and begging from door to door for seven years, because she was a childless widow (122-23). Vāsiṭṭhī describes herself, distressed

18. Sundarī's mention of her father's grief over the death of his son is the only exception in either text (Thiq, 328).

19. According to the Pāli Text Society's dictionary, this term additionally connotes "blamed or reproached by all". Rhys Davids captures more of the essence of this tragedy by translating it "herself outcast" (Sisters, p. 109).

20. "The Image-World of the Thera-Therīgāthās", p. 104.

over the death of her son, wandering naked for three years dwelling in rubbish heaps, cemeteries, and highways (133-34).

The implications of these poems are that women without family, specifically without male support, have no means of supporting themselves. This represents the fulfilment of the indications of male dominance introduced at the beginning of this section (p. 28). We have seen that women are associated with their social roles of wives and mothers, both of which are under male control. We have found positive encouragement for women to fulfil these roles in the stereotype of the loving mother and negative consequences for failing to fulfil the roles in the stereotype of the suffering widow. We have also discovered some evidence that the Theravāda appropriate the stereotypes and adapt basic Buddhist doctrine to encompass their experiences and self-perceptions.

This brings us to a theme of women's social definition in terms of their relationships with others. Young women are defined by their fathers; adult women are defined by their husbands until they have children when they are defined by their sons; older or unfortunate women are defined by their lack of husbands or sons. None of these situations are under the control of the women themselves. In contrast, men are defined by their occupations or accomplishments.

Lifestyles Prior to Renunciation

When we compare accounts of the theris' and theras' lifestyles prior to renunciation, we find a striking difference. A significantly greater proportion of the theris report situations and conditions of their lives prior to renunciation. 23 out of the 73, or 31.5% of the ascribed authors of the Therīgāthā provide some kind of history for themselves.²¹ In the Theragāthā, 20 out of the 264, or 7.6% of the ascribed authors provide details of their lives prior to renunciation.²² Furthermore, the theris report their previous situations and experiences in greater detail.

While we cannot assume these accounts reflect the actual experiences of the theris or theras, we can assume that the authors or compilers of the collection had certain reasons for emphasizing or de-emphasizing the authors' previous lifestyles. Perhaps the differences reflect a didactic impulse behind the texts. Karen Lang thinks that the differing uses of vocationally oriented images indicate the texts' differing audiences.²³ Presumably an audience composed of women would identify more closely with the

21. Cited according to the first verse number of their poems: 11, 18, 23, 25, 63, 72, 87, 97, 102, 107, 122, 127, 133, 145, 151, 163, 213, 224, 252, 312, 338, 400, 448.

22. 43, 72, 108, 157, 219, 283, 299, 345, 375, 423, 429, 473, 510, 557, 620, 632, 842, 866, 892, 1209.

23. "Lord Death's Snare", p. 77.

plight of a childless widow, whereas men might understand a contingent of warriors throwing down their weapons.

This explanation also helps us understand the greater proportion of theris that record their situations prior to renunciation. If, as we have argued in the last section, women were primarily responsible for the nurturing of others, we can expect to find patterns of socialization in women that encourage greater attention to the welfare of others. According to Carol Gilligan's theory of psychological development, in a social setting such as this, women should learn to define themselves and their actions in terms of their relationships with others. Men learn to define themselves by their attainments outside the home and separate from other people.²⁴ The details of previous life experiences and relationships would thus be more interesting to women than to men. Men would be more interested in the activities and accomplishments of men in isolation. This theory accords well with my findings from the Therī-Theraḡāthā.

Given the indications of male dominance we have discussed above, we might expect that the theris would have experienced more difficulty leaving their homes to live the life of renunciation. But, with one important exception,

24. Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

the Therīgāthā is strangely hesitant in portraying a woman's struggle to attain permission to leave. The exception, Sumedhā's poem (448-522), presents a lengthy argument between her and her parents as she pleads with them to allow her to evade her arranged marriage and join the saṅgha. This poem is the longest in the collection, and devotes 68 verses to the conflict. Sumedhā resorts to extreme measures such as refusing to eat (460) and cutting her hair (514), but does not receive their permission until her suitor petitions her parents on her behalf (515).

The Theraḡāthā presents two situations of conflict associated with a thera's desire to go forth, but nowhere in the text is the conflict as vividly portrayed as it is in Sumedhā's poem. In the first, Ātuma states that he finds it "hard to go forth because of the wife who has been brought home" (72). His request for permission seems directed at his parents. His relationship with his wife is abstracted; he does not refer to her relationship with him, but rather calls her the "wife who has been brought home". The conflict here is underplayed. We suspect conflict, but the poem refrains from exploring it in detail.

The second example from the Theraḡāthā raises some interesting questions about the familial relationships of the theras. Cūḷapanthaka reports:

Sluggish was my progress; formerly I was
despised, and my brother turned me away (saying),
"Go home now."

Being turned away at the gateway to the Order's park, I stood there discouraged, full of longing for the teaching. (557-58)

Again, the conflict is suggested rather than overt and its source is not Cūlapanthaka's desire to obtain permission, but rather his brother's reluctance to allow him entrance into the park. Norman's translation provides no hint as to the source of this reluctance, but Rhys Davids' suggests that Cūlapanthaka's sluggish progress is the reason for his brother's "judgement" that he is not ready for admittance.²⁵

Interesting as both these examples are, they do not contain the rich detail articulating the conflict and the reasons underlying it found in Sumedhā's poem. Though Sumedhā's poem is unique in the Therīgāthā, it does give us an indication that women might have experienced greater difficulty going forth.

Another indication of the theris' difficulty in renouncing is the high proportion of theris who are freed of social obligations. Their freedom derives from widowhood or the renunciation of family members, the deaths of children, their advanced age, or their previous lifestyles as prostitutes or renunciates in other groups.

In contrast, the theras do not refer to their social connections, but rather to their occupations prior

25. Sisters, p. 258.

to renunciation. Significantly, those women that seem to be young and of child-bearing age, are the ones that report conflicts with individuals or groups pressuring them to resume their social roles. The theras also encounter conflict, but again, the conflict takes different forms and is more vividly portrayed in the Therīgāthā.

Six of the theris that record their lives prior to renunciation report being freed by family death or renunciation. Baddhā Kapilānī reports the renunciation and spiritual attainments of her husband Kassapa, announcing that they had gone forth together (66). Sundarī reports her father's renunciation as a result of his grief for the death of his son (328), and subsequently also renounces (328). Candā (122), Pañcasatā Paṭācārā (127), Vāsiṭṭhī (133), and Kisāgotamī (213) report their extreme grief over the deaths of their children. As we have noted above (p. 36), none of the theras report the deaths of family members, nor do they record feeling grief.

The Theragāthā, does, however contain an interesting hint that the theras' families were not always overjoyed at losing their sons to the saṅgha. Sānu's poem presents a gentle reprimand to his mother:

Mother, they weep for one who is dead, or for
one who although alive is not seen. Why, mother,
do you weep for me who am both alive and seen? (44)

The text also presents three occurrences of family renunciation. We have already discussed Cūlapanthaka and

his brother. We also see Bhārādvāja reporting his happiness at seeing his son's attainment of liberation (177), and Vaḍḍha acknowledging the accomplishments and instruction of his mother and sister (Thiq, 210-212; Ihaq, 335-39). By implication, Bhārādvāja's son is freed by his father's renunciation and Vaḍḍha is freed by his mother's renunciation.

Again, we see the abstraction of the Theraḡāthā. Sānu reports his mother's grief, and Bhārādvāja and Vaḍḍha report only happiness and good family relations. Cūlapanthaka reports being despised and discouraged, but gives us no details of his plight with which we can sympathize. There is simply no comparison with Candā's, Vāsiṭṭhi's or Kisāgotamī's vivid descriptions of their family's deaths and their subsequent hardships.

When we compare accounts of previous occupations we discover other kinds of differences. Two of the theris, Addhakāsī (25-26) and Vimalā (72-76), were prostitutes prior to renunciation. Addhakāsī describes the large wages she earned, which she claims were set by the townspeople (25). Vimalā describes the artifices she used to enhance her beauty and the adverse affects her profession had on her attitudes towards other people (72-74). While both have an independent source of income (in contrast with the fate of widows discussed above), they are still dependent upon the whims of men for their livelihood. If they ceased

to be attractive to men, for example, by growing old, they have no alternate vocation. Indeed, Ambapālī, a courtesan renowned for her beauty describes in graphic detail the aging decline of her beauty (252-70).

In accounts of other types of occupations, we find, as we might expect, that the Therīgāthā specifies the occupations of men, in particular the men important to the theris. Anopamā (151), Sundarī (312), Subhā the "smith's daughter" (338), Isidāsī (400), and Sumedhā (448) record the occupations of their fathers or suitors. Three poems repeat Paṭācārā's image of young brahmans ploughing fields, "nourishing [their] wives and children" (112, 117, 175). Puṇṇikā records the water-carrier occupation of the brahman she converts (236), and Cāpā reports that her now-renounced husband was previously an ascetic and deer-hunter (291).

Isidāsī's poem provides us with the greatest detail and with the most explicit statement of a woman defining herself by her menfolks' occupations. She informs us of her father's occupation (405) and that of her first (406) and third husbands (422). Then, relating details of her past lives, she presents her occupation when she was male (435), but refers to her father's occupation again when she was reborn female (443) and concludes with her husband's occupation in that lifetime (444). Note that, as female, she reports the occupations of the men with whom she is related; as male, she reports her own occupations.

In the Theragāthā, the theras also refer to the occupations of men, though not as frequently as the Therīgāthā. Soṇa Kolivisa reports being an attendant of a king (632), Adhimutta records his conversion of a band of thieves (705), Bhaddiya "the son of Kāligodhā" is, by inference, a king or lord of some kind (842), Aṅgulimāla admits to previously being a thief (880), and Anuruddha records his previous incarnations as food-carrier (910) and king (914).

Thus, we see that women's status is defined by the occupations of the men around them and their usefulness to those men. Men's status is defined by their own occupations and by birth. Although the status accorded by birth is not limited to men--both the theris and the theras record their wealthy backgrounds--we find differences in attitudes towards their previous wealth or poverty.

In the Therīgāthā, Sujātā (145), Anopamā (151), Sundarī (312), Subhā "the smith's daughter" (338), Isidāsī (400), and Sumedhā (448) report a wealthy situation prior to their renunciation. Although they all abandon their wealth as a requisite for going forth, only Subhā and Sumedhā actually condemn wealth as an impediment to their spiritual progress. I think this lack of condemnation as indicative of the theris' greater respect for the mundane world. Furthermore, as we might expect from our discussion of widowhood above (p. 37), the theris attribute their

wealth to others. When they discuss themselves as wealthy, they also stress how that wealth depends on their usefulness to others. Anopamā's poem is unambiguous in its definition of her usefulness:

I was born in an exalted family, which had much property and much wealth. (I was) possessed of (good) complexion and figure, (being) Majjha's own daughter.

I was sought after by kings' sons, longed for by merchants' sons...(151-52)

Anopamā defines herself as the daughter of Majjha, beautiful and sought after by wealthy men. These attributes have little to do with who she is as an individual, but reflect her desirability to the men around her. Apparently her value was quite high; one of her suitors offered her father eight times her weight in gold and jewels (153).

In contrast, the two references in the Theragāthā referring to the theras' prior wealth reflect the impact of the theras' wealth upon others, not how others define their usefulness. Bhaddiya, the son of Kāligodhā, describes the soft clothes he wore and rich food he consumed (842). Later in his poem he reports that:

Guarded by men who had swords in hand, I dwelt trembling in a city with high circling walls, and strong battlements and gateways. (863)

For Bhaddiya, wealth is equated with the service of others. Similarly, Anuruddha indicates his previous wealth by his repeated reference to being "attended by song and dance,

[and] awakened by cymbals and gongs" (893 and 911) . None of the theris define themselves this way, but rather, explore how they may serve the interests of others.

Circumstances of poverty are also portrayed differently in the texts. In the Therīgāthā, Candā's and Vāsītthī's poems describe extreme deprivation. As we have seen above (p. 38), their situations result from family death. In Candā's words,

Formerly I fared ill, a widow, without children. Without friends and relations I did not obtain food or clothing.

Taking a bowl and stick, begging from family to family, and being burned by cold and heat, I wandered for seven years. (122-23)

Her livelihood was totally dependent upon her social connections. Without appropriate connections, her opportunities were extremely limited. Sunīta's poem in the Theragāthā also presents a situation of hardship deriving from his lowly birth, but at least he is able to earn a subsistence living:

I was born in a humble family, poor, having little food; my work was lowly--I was a disposer of (withered) flowers.

Despised by men, disregarded and reviled, making my mind humble I paid homage to many people. (620-21)

Candā's fate is the result of the loss of those who could support her; Sunīta's is the result of his low-caste birth. Again, we see the theri defined by her usefulness to others. Once she no longer has anyone to whom she is useful, she is deprived of sustenance. In contrast,

Sunīta's fate, while deriving from his birth, has little to do with his social relations. Also, we see here another instance in which the description is much more detailed in the Therīgāthā: both are without food, but Candā has no clothing, and is burned by cold and heat for seven years.

In conclusion, we have found much evidence that the theris tend to define themselves by their relationships with others. In contrast, men, as presented in the texts, define themselves in isolation from other people, according to their occupations and accomplishments. These differences can be seen as a natural outcome of the encouragement for women to assume domestic responsibilities seen in the previous section (p. 31). Also, we have found evidence that women depended on men for their livelihoods. In such a situation, it would be odd if women were to refrain from seeing their relationships with others as important.

Finally, we have noted in passing that those women who were not freed of their social obligations by age, widowhood, family renunciation or death, or by their occupations encountered conflict with persons exerting pressure upon them to resume their social roles. Given the tendency for women to define themselves by relationships with others and the strong encouragement for women to remain in the domestic sphere, we can expect to find repercussions in the theris' attitudes toward the laity and

fellow bhikkhunīs. Now we will turn to the social experiences of the renunciants to investigate how these repercussions are expressed in the social discourses recorded by the theris and theras.

The Social Experiences of Renunciants

In her study of the decline of the bhikkhunī-saṅgha in India, Nancy Auer Falk argues persuasively that the decline of the women's order is attributable to the low status of female monastics and corresponding disrespect of the laity towards them. These in turn derive from the discriminatory rules for the bhikkhunī-saṅgha, all of which subordinate the women's order to the men's, as we have seen in the introduction to this chapter (p. 25).

The discriminatory provisions meant that women would never be leaders in the life of the whole community or have any decisive voice in shaping its direction. They meant that the men would never be beholden to any of the nuns.... They communicated a damaging image to the greater world that picked up the monastic community's tab, because they affirmed that the monks were the more significant and worthier part of such a community. In other words, the discriminatory rules implied that the men deserved the richer offerings, the more elaborate buildings, and the greater opportunity to shine in court and in public confrontations.²⁶

As we noted in passing, the theris do not talk about these rules. But we do have evidence that the surrounding community was disrespectful of the women. One

26. "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns", p. 216.

of the most striking differences between the Therīgāthā and Theraḡāthā is the marked presence of conflict in the former. The theris are presented as often confronted by adversaries attempting to tempt, frighten, or coerce them into activities inconducive to their chosen lifestyle of asceticism.

In the Therīgāthā, Selā (57), Somā (60), Khemā (139), Cālā (182), Upacālā (189), Sīsūpacālā (196), and Subhā Jīvakambavanikā (366) record a confrontation with an adversary. Of these, Somā is confronted with doubt of her abilities as a woman to attain the highest goal (see above, p. 32), Uppalavaṇṇā is confronted with fear of a being woman alone in the forest, Cālā is confronted with doubts of the efficacy of the Buddhist path, and Sīsūpacālā is confronted with the temptation to work towards a divine rebirth. Selā, Khemā, and Subhā Jīvakambavanikā are tempted with the pleasures of sexual intimacy. Significantly, as we shall see below, Selā's and Subhā's adversaries both emphasize the fact that they are alone. In fact, Selā's adversary makes the only reference to a theri's seclusion in the Therīgāthā:

There is no escape in the world; what will you
do by means of seclusion? Enjoy the delights of
sensual pleasures; do not be a repentner afterwards.
(57)

Subhā Jīvakambavanikā's poem (366-399) presents the most prolonged and explicitly sexual confrontation in

either text. A rogue stops her on her way to the woods. Her response indicates her bewilderment that he should obstruct a bhikkhunī:

"What wrong has been done to you by me, that you stand obstructing me? For it is not fitting, sir, that a man should touch a woman who has gone forth." (367)

He responds that she is young and not ugly and should, therefore, throw away her yellow robe to enjoy the spring with him (370). As part of his temptation, he questions the pleasure she will find in the wood, highlights its dangers to a woman alone, and offers her beautiful clothing, a house, jewelry, a soft bed, and his service if she appeases his desire (372-78). She lectures him on the impermanence of bodily beauty and finally removes her eye and gives it to him since it is the source of his desire (396).

Here we see a remarkable and entertaining juxtaposition of world-views. For our purposes, though, we should note in particular Subhā's confusion that the rogue should not respect her status as a renunciant. His suggestion that she throw away her yellow robe is particularly revealing: he is not simply asking her to disrobe; rather, he is suggesting that she renege on her vow of celibacy. Furthermore, he attempts to bribe her with the very things she has chosen to renounce: varied clothing, ornamentation, and soft beds. This wealth will

be hers if she has sex with him.

Sumedhā's confrontation with her parents over her desire to go forth also highlights this association with sex and wealth (448-522). Part of her parents' arguments for her to get married is that as her suitor's wife, she would enjoy wealth and authority (464). The suitor repeats her parents' suggestion in more detail:

In kingship there are (giving of) orders, wealth, authority, happy enjoyments; you are young; enjoy the enjoyments of sensual pleasures; happiness(es) from sensual pleasures are hard to obtain in the world.

(My) kingship has been bestowed upon you...(483-84)

These confrontations and the various temptations or threats contained therein confirm the findings of the previous sections. Somā, Upacālā, Uppalavaṇṇā and Subhā Jīvakambavanikā are confronted with situations specific to women. Their capacities are doubted and they are threatened with the fate of women alone, without male protection. And both Subhā Jīvakambavanikā and Sumedhā are offered the status and authority that comes from their association with powerful men. The disrespect of their adversaries for their renunciation is clear.

Subhā the smith's daughter also encounters disrespect, though, like Sumedhā, her adversaries are her relatives. Subhā's poem (338-365) provides us with evidence that the renunciants' families were sometimes ambivalent about their daughters' decision to renounce. In

this poem, Subhā twice asks "O relatives, why do you, like enemies, urge on (that same) me towards sensual pleasures?", stating first, "You know that I have gone forth, seeing fear in sensual pleasures" (346) and then reiterating, "You know that I have gone forth, with shaven head, clad in the outer robe" (348). In contrast with Sumedhā, however, Subhā reports that she has gone forth prior to her relatives' attempts to convince her to return to the secular life. We see from this that her relatives do not accept her decision and, therefore, do not show respect for the ascetic path she has chosen.

When we turn to confrontations in the Theraḡāthā, we notice that the theras do not report confrontations as frequently or as vividly, nor are the propositions involved the same as in the Therīḡāthā. Vakkali (350), Tekicchakāni (385), and Nhātakamuni (435) encounter an unnamed adversary who questions their abilities to withstand the harsh conditions of outdoor living. Nāgasamāla (267), Candana (299), Rājadatta (315), and Sundarasamudda (459) record their encounters with women as the event leading up to their realization of liberation:

Then reasoned thinking arose in me; the peril became clear; disgust with the world was established.

Then my mind was released; see the essential rightness of the doctrine. The three knowledges have been obtained, the Buddha's teaching has been done. (269-70, 301-2, 318-19, 464-65)

This stock situation does not appear in the

Therīgāthā, but, then again, neither does the sentiment expressed in it. None of the theris attain liberation as a result of seeing a man. Rather, they have attained the goal prior to the confrontation. These theras all report their attainment as resulting from the disgust that arose upon seeing a woman: Nāgasamāla sees an ornamented dancer on the street; Candana sees his wife and child; Rājadatta sees a dead woman's body; and Sundarasamudda sees and converses with a courtesan.

This last example is most significant since it contains the only incident of purposeful temptation found in the Theragāthā. All the other temptations derive solely from the theras' response to viewing a woman. In Sundarasamudda's poem, the courtesan actually presents an argument as to why he should stay with her and postpone his renunciation:

"You are young to have gone forth. Abide in my teaching; enjoy human sensual pleasures. I (shall) give you wealth; I promise you truly; (if you do not believe me) I shall indeed bring fire.

When we are both old, supported by sticks, we shall both go forth; both ways it will be a winning throw." (461-62)

Here we see an interesting inversion of women gaining wealth by association with men. More important, however, is its uniqueness as the only situation in which a woman consciously tempts a thera. The other situations show no such volition on the part of the woman; Rājadatta's "temptress" is dead and Nāgasamāla's and Candana's are

simply standing there. The temptation is found only in the theras' minds.

Curiously, the Therīgāthā presents a vivid temptation of the bhikkhu Kāḷa by his renounced wife, Cāpā (291-311). Like Subhā Jīvakambavanikā's rogue, she offers him her service (295), but, unlike the rogue, highlights the beauty of her body (297-8), and shows him their son (300). As part of her quest to coerce him back to secular life, she even threatens to kill the child (302). This poem strikes me as odd since it is primarily about Kāḷa, though the commentary points out that Cāpā also renounced and attained liberation soon after Kāḷa had gone.²⁷ Even the commentary, though, devotes more attention to Kāḷa's previous life history than to that of Cāpā.

I think part of the reason for the inclusion of Cāpā's poem in the Therīgāthā rather than the Theraḡāthā is the overt conflict contained therein. As we have already seen, Subhā the smith's daughter, Subhā Jīvakambavanikā, Sumedhā, and now Cāpā devote most of their lengthy poems to explicit conflict. These poems comprise the longest poems in the Therīgāthā and make up 184 of its 522 verses. Though Sundarasamudda's poem in the Theraḡāthā does portray conflict, the collection as a whole contains nothing comparable to the length and detail of these situations in

27. Sisters, p. 131.

the Therīgāthā: Sundarasamudda's poem comprises only 7 out of the 1279 verses of the Theraḡāthā.

If we assume that the disproportionate amount of conflict in the Therīgāthā is indicative of the public's lack of respect for the bhikkhunī-saṅgha, we have evidence to support Nancy Auer Falk's contention that the women's order was lower in status than that of the men (see above, p. 50). Furthermore, we can expect that the authors' experiences of disrespect would have repercussions in their characteristic attitudes.

Just as we found more references to the theras' parenthood in the Therīgāthā than in the Theraḡāthā (above, p. 35), so do we find a more detailed account of a bhikkhu's temptation. I think, therefore, that differing attitudes between the theris and theras is a contributing factor in the emphasis or de-emphasis of conflict. But this is not to say that the social and religious setting does not influence the attitudes expressed in the texts.

When we turn to social interactions within the saṅgha, we find the difference in attitude to be even more pronounced. The Therīgāthā provides indications of a strong support network among the bhikkhunīs. There are eight expressions of gratitude to an instructing bhikkhunī: Uttamā (42) and "A certain unknown bhikkhunī" (67) record their instruction by a "bhikkhunī who was fit-to-be-trusted"; Vijayā (170) reports the instruction of a

bhikkhunī; the "Thirty bhikkhunīs" (117), Candā (122), and Uttarā (175) acknowledge Paṭācārā as their instructor; and Subhā "the smith's daughter" claims Uppalavaṇṇā as her teacher (363). Perhaps the best example of this gratitude is found in a conversation between Sundarī and the bhikkhunī who ordains her:²⁸

"May that intention of yours, which you seek, prosper, Sundarī. Left-over scraps and gleanings (as food), and a rag from a dust-heap as a robe, these are sufficient. (You will be) without āsavas in the next world."

"Noble lady, the deva-eye is purified as I undergo training; I know my former habitation, where I lived before."

"(By me) relying on you, o lovely one, o beauty of the Order of theris, the three knowledges have been obtained, the Buddha's teaching has been done." (329-331)

Note Sundarī's respect and the instructing theri's benevolent disposition. So strong is the affection among the theris that Sumedhā even reports the friendship between herself and two other women that prevailed through thousands of incarnations together (518-19).

In the Theraḡāthā, we find no such acknowledgement of fellow bhikkhus. There are some acknowledgements of other theras' accomplishments (for example, Mahā-moggallāna's homage to Kassapa, the "heir of the best of

28. Rhys Davids follows the commentary in ascribing the benediction to Sundarī's mother, arguing that the tone of the verse reflects a lay perspective (Sisters, n. 3, p. 139). I think it is unnecessary to impose a chronological break between a coherent dialogue that is clearly addressed by Sundarī to the "beauty of the order of theris".

the Buddhas" [1109]), but no recognition of fellow bhikkhu-instruction. There is one exception, however, in Vaddha's acknowledgement of his mother's instruction (335-39). Significantly, this is also the only reference to a therī in the collection.

Instead of the close network of friendships among renunciants, in the Theraḡāthā, we find abstract axioms of how bhikkhus should associate with "good companions" and avoid bad (4, 75, 147, 249, 264, 387, 505, 610, 981-1017, 1018-19). Vimala's poem is representative of the abstraction typical in the Theraḡāthā's discussion of friendship:

Avoiding evil friends one should associate with the best of individuals; one should stand fast in his exhortation, seeking the unshakable happiness.

Just as one climbing on to a small plank would sink in the great ocean, so even one who lives a virtuous life sinks if he depends upon an inactive man. Therefore one should avoid that inactive man, who is lacking in energy.

One should dwell with those clever ones who live apart, the noble resolute meditators, (who are) continually putting forth energy. (264-66)

There is no warmth or feeling of human companionship in this or any of the other references to friendship in the text. Instead of the gratitude and mutual concern for the other's welfare evident in Sundarī's exchange with her teacher, we find Vimala comparing a friend to a plank large enough to carry him over the ocean.

Vimala's high regard for those who "live apart" is also typical of the Theraḡāthā. One of the most striking

features of the text is the solitude of the *theras*. They are frequently depicted alone and devote whole poems to the joys of solitude.²⁹ Sabbamitta's poem is perhaps the most explicit condemnation of human interaction in the text, but the sentiment expressed herein is not infrequent among the references to solitude:

People are bound to people, people depend on people; people are hurt by people, and people hurt people.

What need then has one of people, or those born of people? Go, leaving this people who have hurt many people. (149-50)

In contrast, the *theris* do not praise solitude. Though they are often depicted alone, the only explicit references to their solitude come from the mouths of their adversaries (57, 230, 372-73). Nowhere in the Therīgāthā do we find a condemnation of human interaction *per se* such as we see in Sabbamitta's poem.

In conclusion, therefore, there are many differences in the attitudes towards social interaction in the two texts. The *theris* present many more confrontations with persons pressuring them to resume their secular lifestyles. In contrast with the Theragāthā's presentation of conflict as residing only in the *theras*' minds, the *theris* report conflict from outside. The social world of

29. 6, 23, 27, 49, 54, 62, 76, 110, 141, 149, 189, 233, 239, 494-501, 537, 577, 595, 597, 600, 626, 229, 726, 898, 920-48, 1051-90.

the texts is thus presented as more challenging for the theris than for the theras.

This perception of the social world confirms the indications we have discovered of male dominance. The adversaries reflect the social disapproval of young women going out alone and living a life independent of male control, failing to fulfil the socially useful roles of wives and mothers. The one instance of explicit conflict in the Theragāthā also emphasizes the thera's youth, but we have found little evidence of this as a pervasive attitude.

Furthermore, we have discovered that the theris' tendency to define themselves by their relationships is continued, though modified, in the saṅgha. The theris often acknowledge their relationships with other bhikkhunīs and present the saṅgha as a strong network of friendships and mutual respect. The theras also acknowledge the usefulness of friends, but emphasize solitude over community. This is a further confirmation of the theras' tendency to present their secular preoccupations with independence and accomplishment.

Social Restrictions on Women's Religiosity

In the preceding sections of this chapter, we have discovered evidence of male dominance in the social world of the Therīgāthā. The strongest indications of this are in the stereotypes of women as good wives, loving mothers,

and suffering widows. I have interpreted these findings as indicative of the domesticity expected and encouraged of women in ancient India. This domesticity is presented as a lifestyle of servitude to men. Secular women seem to have little control over their own lives.

A consequence of this emphasis on female domesticity is the theris' tendency to define themselves by their relationships with others. Socialized to provide the nurturing of others, the theris record strong attachments with their children, families, and other people. This emphasis on relationships continued in the saṅgha. The theris record all types of relationships in more detail and in greater length than the theeras: from grief over family death, to adversarial confrontations with family or strangers, to friendships among the bhikkhunīs.

Within the Buddhist framework, these features of the theris' social world imply disadvantages specific to women. Women and men were both bound to the secular realm by social and familial obligations, but women were further impeded by their lack of control over their lives. By implication, not only would women have experienced more difficulty gaining permission to leave, but their own upbringing would make it more difficult for them to make the decision. Women raised to submit to the decisions of others would tend to lack the self-confidence necessary to make a decision which represented a "radical repudiation of

normal societal values."³⁰

The lack of social respect for the bhikkhunis could have been another factor impeding their desire and ability to pursue the life of Buddhist renunciation. The possibility of encounters with disrespectful, threatening rogues while alone, and unprotected by men, could conceivably be a daunting factor to women's desire to renounce.

Also, we should consider that asceticism was a lifestyle primarily for men prior to the time of Buddhism. Women were encouraged to practice their religiosity within the home rather than to leave their domestic responsibilities.³¹ In a social setting where the division of labour between women and men was as segregated as these texts present it to be, women would probably think twice before choosing a "masculine" occupation.

A final point concerns the socialization for women to form strong attachments with other people. As we have seen, this socialization found representation in the theris' self-definitions by their relationships with others. In the saṅgha, they transferred these relationships from their families to their fellow bhikkhunīs. But this tendency to form strong attachments is antithetical to the Buddhist goal of detachment.

30. "Lord Death's Snare", p. 78.

31. Women under Primitive Buddhism, p. 95.

Therefore, the theris had to struggle against family to gain permission to renounce; against their own inclinations not to make the decision to renounce; against the social disrespect for bhikkhunis; against their justified fear of being alone; and against their own inclinations to form close attachments with other people. Thus, we see that struggle pervades their social experiences.

CHAPTER II

Attitudes Towards the Body

*Behold, Nandā, the foul compound, diseased,
Impure! Compel thy heart to contemplate
What is not fair to view. So steel thyself
And concentrate the well-composed mind.
As with this body, so with thine; as with
Thy beauty, so with this--thus shall it be
With this malodorous, offensive shape.
Wherein the foolish only take delight.
So look thou on it day and night with mind
Unflinching steadfast, till alone,
By thine own wit, delivered from the thrall
Of beauty, thou dost gain vision serene.*

Sundarī-Nandā
Therīgāthā, 82-84¹

The human body has posed problems for all religions of the world. All religions have something to say about the body, whether to regulate its natural processes through rules of purity and defilement; to condemn or celebrate its biological capacities for illness, disability, or regenerative processes; to control or glorify its procreative functions; to ritualize its passages through stages of growth. Early Buddhism's response to the problem of the body was to attempt to transform our psychological attachment to it into an analytical detachment.

1. Sisters, p. 56.

The body is a particularly strong source of sensations ranging from pleasure to pain, desire to disgust. It provides the basis for our sense of self and continually imposes pressures upon our intellect and emotions for fulfilment of its biological needs. As such, the body poses a powerful obstacle for those seeking the Buddhist goal of liberation from all ties, from a delusory perception of permanence and stability, and from, above all, a false conception of self as real and abiding in any tangible sense.

The issue of Buddhist attitudes towards the body has been one of the most contentious among scholars who have studied the role and image of women in Buddhism. The vast majority of Pāli Buddhist texts are written by celibate men and reflect their perceptions of women's bodies as enticing obstacles to their quest for liberation. Many of these perceptions reveal a misogynist distrust, fear, and antagonism towards the female body.

In my opinion, the most problematic issue under the rubric of Buddhist attitudes towards the body is the fact that depictions of all bodies and bodily processes are not uniform: women's bodies are more frequently described as impure and defiling than are men's bodies; women are often presented as inherently more physical, that is, as tied more closely to bodily processes than are men; and, concomitantly, women are commonly defined by their sexuality and

are considered to be insatiably lustful.

In her work, Women in Buddhism, Diana Paul outlines this portrayal of women as purely sensual, explaining that non-Buddhist Indian texts portray women's sexual drives as stronger than men's. In the Buddhist adaptation of this belief

woman glowed with a much more intense sexual vitality and was the primeval force of fecundity, as she was in the Hindu religion. Unlike the Hindu Mother Goddess, however, the sexual energy was unequivocally repugnant in early Buddhist sects such as the Theravādin sect. What was feminine or sensual was saṃsāra, the world of bondage, suffering, and desire, which led to cycles of rebirths.²

Nancy Falk picks up the same theme more forcefully than Paul, contending,

...a woman was a veritable image of becoming and of all the forces of blind growth and productivity which Buddhism knew as saṃsāra. As such she too was the enemy--not only on a personal level, as an individual source of temptation, but also on a cosmic level, as representation and summation of the processes binding all men. And she especially had to be overcome, if liberation was to remain a possibility.³

There are many passages and incidents throughout the Pāli canon to support this view of Buddhist misogyny. For example, the Buddha's prediction that women's entrance into the saṅgha would halve the lifetime of true dhamma indicates a perception of women as dangerous. The similes

2. (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), p. 5.

3. "An Image of Woman in Old Buddhist Literature" (Women and Religion [eds.] Judith Plaskow and Joan Arnold, Missoula: Scholars Press, AAR, 1974, pp. 105-112), p. 110.

used by the Buddha to describe the harmful effect of women's presence illustrate the contaminating nature of women: the Buddha compares the saṅgha with women in it to a house prey to robbers, a ricefield struck by mildew and a sugar cane field attacked by red rust, stipulating that he had attempted to control the threat of feminine contamination by the "great reservoir" of the eight rules for bhikkhunīs.⁴

The first of the four *Parājika* offences, sexual intercourse, for which expulsion from the saṅgha is mandatory, echoes this portrayal of women as dangerously defiling and contaminating. In the account of the first infraction, the Buddha rebukes the offender stating:

It were better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter the mouth of a terrible and poisonous snake, than that it should enter a woman. It were better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter the mouth of a black snake, than that it should enter a woman. It were better for you, foolish man, that your male organ should enter a charcoal pit, burning, ablaze, afire, than that it should enter a woman.⁵

The Buddha then explains that sexual intercourse has led the offender into what is "not verily *dhamma*, upon village *dhamma*, upon a low *dhamma*". Although bhikkhunīs are also expelled for engaging in sexual intercourse, the association between women and the decline of true dhamma con-

4. Book of Discipline, Vol. V, (trans. I.B. Horner, London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1938-67), p. 356.

5. Book of Discipline, Vol. I, pp. 36-37.

tained in the Buddha's prediction upon instituting the bhikkhunī-saṅgha is clear. None of the other *Parājika* offences involve the offender's entrance into false dhamma or use snake imagery to symbolize the danger of prohibited activities.

These examples highlight the perception of women as dangerous to celibate bhikkhus and suggests that women's sexuality is the source of this danger. Other passages in the canon explicitly describe women as insatiably lustful. For example, the *Anguttara Nikāya* has the Buddha saying:

Monks, womenfolk end their life unsated and unreplete with two things. What two? Sexual intercourse and childbirth. These are the two things.⁶

And, in the same collection, we find the behavioral consequences of this inherent nature:

Monks, a woman, even when going along, will stop to ensnare the heart of a man; whether standing, sitting or lying down, laughing, talking or singing, weeping, stricken, or dying, a woman will stop to ensnare the heart of a man. Monks, if ever one would rightly say: "It is wholly a snare of Māra, verily, speaking rightly, one may say of womanhood: It is wholly a snare of Māra."⁷

Thus we see a tendency in Pāli texts to describe women as contagiously impure, powerfully dangerous, and

6. The Book of Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikāya) Vol. III, trans. F.L. Woodward (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1932.), pp. 55-57.

7. Ibid, Vol. 5, III, p. 56. See Karen Lang's article, "Lord Death's Snare: Gender-related Imagery in the Thera- and Therī-gāthā" (Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 2/2 [Fall, 1986]: 63-79).

inherently sexual. This perception of the feminine is also found in the Therīgāthā and the Theraḡāthā. In this chapter, we will document evidence for this and attempt to discover what the effects of such a self-image are upon the theris.

We have already found hints of the association of women with sexuality in the discovery that women are defined by others and by themselves in terms of relationships. I interpreted this finding as intimately related to women's appropriation of their stereotypes as serving wives, loving mothers, and suffering widows, noting that this appropriation resulted in women's concentration on their usefulness to others and their preoccupation with biological functions. Keeping in mind the extra-textual definitions of women that emphasize their sexuality, we see that all these stereotypes relate to women's sexuality: daughters are valued for their potential to become sexual objects; wives for their abilities to become pregnant; mothers for their ability to bear sons; widows for their lack of an appropriate outlet for their sexuality; prostitutes for their beauty and sexual performance; and bhikkhunīs for their renunciation of sexuality.

In order to determine the texts' attitudes towards femininity, we shall examine references to the human body paying close attention to the sex of both the body and viewer. Since these references represent three general

themes, I have divided the references into sections. In the first section, I examine the theme of impurity, arguing that the texts present only female bodies as impure and defiling. The second section describes the theme of the dangerous deception of beauty, arguing again that female bodily attractiveness is much more dangerous than male. In the third section, references to self-reflection on the impermanence and frailty of the theris' and theras' own bodies are examined. In the conclusion, I assess the differences found consistently throughout these thematic presentations of the body and relate these findings to the question of struggle in the authors' conceptualization of liberation.

Descriptions of Bodily Impurity

In metaphorical terms, bodily beauty is, for Buddhism, a social filter that colours the way we look at things and which, thereby, obstructs our vision of reality. The Buddhist goal is to destroy the filter so that the individual can see the true colours of things, instead of the colours imposed by wishful thinking and social convention. Once our perception is unfiltered, we are able to fully apprehend the falseness of believing that anything is ultimately pleasurable, beautiful, permanent.

But this belief is very strong. Our notions of

physical attractiveness may be influenced by cultural definitions of beauty, but the source of those attractions is in human sexual desires. Buddhism designed drastic measures to combat this strength, one of the most effective and dramatic of which is the corpse meditation. Buddhist practitioners are urged to meditate on decomposing corpses to understand the transiency and composite nature of the human body. Practitioners are then urged to consider how their own bodies are similarly composed.⁸

This meditation should result in an analytical detachment towards all human bodies by its vivid illustration of the true nature of the body. Every time those who have meditated in this manner see bodies, they should be reminded of the oozing putrefaction contained therein. Rather than the beautiful, timeless entity in romantic notions of beauty, they should envision the body as a composition of bones, flesh, blood, and skin. The corpse meditation reveals in dramatic and emotionally powerful images that there is no essential quality of beauty--nothing fixed, enduring, or truly substantial.

The Therīgāthā and Theragāthā contain many descriptions of the body as a composition of various substances.

8. Thanks to Kevin Trainor for allowing me to read a draft of his paper, "In the Eye of the Beholder", which steered me to the "Discourse on the Setting Up of Mindfulness" in Dialogues of the Buddha (Diḡha Nikāya) Vol II, trans. T.W. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1899), pp. 327-346.

But when we look closely at these descriptions, we discover that female and male bodies are not portrayed in the same way. None of the descriptions of post-mortem decay, bodily secretions, or internal substances refer explicitly to male bodies or bodily functions. Additionally, with only one exception (Kappa, Thag, 567), those bodies that are of an unspecified sex are designated female by the commentary.

Looking first at the Therīgāthā, we find six descriptions of bodily putrefaction, three of which are addressed to the theri: Abhayamāttā is urged (by her son, according to the commentary), "Mother, upwards from the sole(s) of the feet, downwards from the head and hair, consider this impure, evil-smelling body" (33); and both Nandās are advised to "see the body, diseased, impure, rotten" (19 and 82).

The remaining three all occur in contexts of conflict. In response to the adversary attempting to seduce her, Khemā claims to be "afflicted by and ashamed of this foul body, diseased, perishable" (140). Similarly, Sumedhā, asks her parents:

Why should I cling to this foul body, impure,
smelling of urine, a frightful water-bag of
corpses, always flowing, full of impure things?

What (do) I know it to be like? A body is
repulsive, smeared with flesh and blood, food for
worms, vultures, and (other) birds. Why is it
given (to us)? (466-67)

Finally, Subhā Jīvakambavanikā informs her adversary that her body is "full of corpses, filling the cemetery, of a

breaking nature" (380).

Dhammapāla designates the Buddha as the speaker in both Nandās' poems, explaining that he had conjured up an image of a beautiful woman growing old and decrepit because both theris' were infatuated with their own beauty.⁹ Though we must be cautious in using the commentary as our guide to interpretation of the texts, in this case, it is consistent with both texts in associating impurity and disease with female bodies.

The theras echo this use of the female body in descriptions of bodily impurity. The Theragāthā contains seven references to impurity and decomposition, none of which have the authors expressing disgust for their own bodily processes. Of those, five refer explicitly to women's bodies: Rājadatta (315) and Kulla (393) see a woman's corpse; Sabbakāma contemplates a woman's form, using imagery of post-mortem decay (453); Pārāpriya repeats this imagery, adding that the body is full of pus (736-39); and Mahāmoggallāna directs a particularly vituperative monologue against a woman which graphically illustrates his disgust for her body:

You little hut made of a chain of bones, sewn
together with flesh and sinew. Fie upon the
evil-smelling body. You cherish those who have
another's limbs.

You bag of dung, tied up with skin, you
demoness with lumps on you breast. There are nine

9. Sisters, pp. 22-23 and 55.

streams in your body which flow all the time.

Your body with its nine streams makes an evil smell and is obstructed by dung. A bhikkhu desiring purity avoids it as one avoids excrement. (1150-52)

Significantly, the commentary designates the recipient of this speech as Vimalā, the Therīgāthā's former courtesan, who allegedly attempted to seduce Mahāmoggallāna.¹⁰ Similarly, the commentary has Nandaka directing his "curse upon bodies, evil-smelling, on Māra's side, oozing" (279) to his former wife.¹¹

There is, however, one poem in the Theragāthā in which the sex of the offensive body is unspecified either by the author or commentator. Kappa's whole poem is devoted to a contemplation of the body as foul, oozing, delusory and reminiscent of excrement (567-76). The use of identical imagery to the previous examples, however, indicates common themes between this poem and the others: the body is described as "full of pus", oozing foully (568) and as composed of a "binding of sixty tendons, plastered with fleshy plaster, girt with a jacket of skin" (569). Finally, Kappa concludes:

The blind ordinary individuals who cherish this body fill up the terrible cemetery; they take on renewed existence.

Those who avoid this body like a dung-smeared snake, having spurned the root of existence, will be quenched without āsavas. (575-76)

10. Brethren, p. 383, Sisters, p. 52.

11. Brethren, p. 179.

The use of identical imagery to those poems referring explicitly to women's bodies may reflect only a common perception of all human bodies, but Kappa's conclusion is too similar to another conclusion to be considered truly generic. Sabbakāma's depiction of a woman's form as an "impure, evil-smelling (body), full of various corpses, oozing here and there, [that] is cherished" (453) recalls Kappa's individuals who cherish the body. Likewise Sabbakāma also concludes that those foolish enough to do so will "fill up the terrible cemetery" (456); "but he who avoids them as one avoids a snake's head" overcomes attachment to the world (457). These similarities give us good reasons for suspecting that Kappa's object of meditation is female.

If we accept this analysis, we see that all disgusting bodies contemplated by the *theras* are female. The use of the snake imagery to illustrate the danger of cherishing the body and the close association between impurity and death (either in the corpse imagery or in predictions of individuals filling cemeteries) is reminiscent of the imagery of the first *Parājika* offence that links female sexuality with poisonous snakes (see above, p. 68).

Turning back to the *Therīgāthā*'s descriptions of the decomposing bodies, we discover some interesting differences. Though the *theris* also concentrate on women's

bodies as evil-smelling, impure, containing corpses, and oozing, none of the theris compare their bodies to snakes, nor do they predict the demise of those foolish enough to be attracted to their bodies. Most striking, however, is the fact that the theris stress the impurity of their own bodies. None of the theras identify themselves with such graphic images of oozing putrefaction.

In a similar analysis comparing the texts' differing presentations of bodily impurity, Karen Lang has concluded that "the theme of the female body's inner impurity is not developed in the nuns' verses to the same extent it is in the monks'."¹² She supports this claim by following the commentary's designation of males as voicing these statements of female impurity in the Therīgāthā and as directed to females in the Theragāthā.

Though I agree in essence with Lang's contention that images and attitudes towards the body, particularly women's bodies, differ between the texts, I think her explanation is overly simplistic. For example, she fails to account for the fact that these utterances were preserved, we may assume, by women. If the preservers disagreed fundamentally with the image of women's bodies as putrid and defiling, one must ask why they preserved these statements. Also, Khemā, Subhā Jīvakambavanikā and Sumedhā

12. "Lord Death's Snare", p. 75.

describe themselves in this way. Though Lang's interpretation of these women's self-descriptions as exemplifying their compassion is supported by the text, we still must acknowledge an attitude of self-disgust present in these verses. This becomes more clear when we examine the imagery in both texts illustrating the deceptiveness of feminine beauty.

The Deceptiveness of Human Beauty

The Therīgāthā contains two poems describing the artifice required of women to make themselves beautiful. In the first, Vimalā describes herself as a prostitute prior to renunciation:

Having decorated this body, very variegated,
deceiving fools, I stood at the brothel door, like
a hunter having spread out a snare,
showing my ornamentation... (72-73)

She is fully aware that her attractiveness is a human construction. The men who are foolishly deceived by this artifice are compared to animals being ensnared by their ignorance of the hidden danger contained in the bait.

Here we should note that the bait is explicitly sexual. Vimalā uses human artifice to enhance her beauty, but the "snare" itself is her body which is used as a sexual object for men's pleasure. As the quotes cited in the introduction indicate, sexual contact is presented throughout the canon as particularly dangerous. In this

metaphor of the hunter's snare, we hear a lethal overtone.

Karen Lang points out that this image of a hunter laying a trap is used differently in the two texts. Whereas the theris recognize "themselves as the hunters, men the prey, and their bodies as the baited snare,"¹³ the theras see "Lord Death as the hunter, men as the hunted prey, and women's bodies as the baited snare."¹⁴

Where the women identify closely with Māra, and the realm of ceaseless reproduction and suffering he represents, the men objectify the threat, attributing it not to themselves but to women. As Lang points out, the theras Nāgasamāla (267), Nandaka (279), Candana (299), Sabbakāma (453), Sundasamudda (463), and Raṭṭhapāla (771) describe women's bodies as deceptively attractive and celebrate their escape from the trap of feeling desire for them.¹⁵

Karen Lang points out that the Therīgāthā presents one description of the deceptively attractive appearance of a male.¹⁶ What she neglects to mention, however, is that his attractiveness, although presented in similar imagery, is interpreted differently within the text. Sumedhā's suitor is, like Vimalā, "adorned with jewels and gold" (482). But in contrast with the theras' perception of the lethal trap contained in women's bodies adorned in this

13. Ibid, p. 78.

14. Ibid, p. 77.

15. Ibid, pp. 70-72.

16. Ibid, p. 76.

way, Sumedhā sees the folly of relying upon one who is ultimately impermanent:

What will another do for me when his own head
is burning? When old age and death are following
closely one must strive for their destruction.
(493)

The deceptiveness of bodily beauty is perhaps best portrayed in the image of the "painted puppet", a figure made attractive by human hands, designed to engage the audience in a pleasurable fantasy. The Theraḡāthā contains three identical verses describing the painted puppet:

See the painted puppet, a heap of sores, a
compounded body, diseased, with many (bad)
intentions, for which there is no permanent
stability. (769, 1020, 1157)

The painted puppet poses a triple danger. One of the dangers comes from the psychological suffering that results if one considers it real and abiding. If, overcome with desire for it, one tries to grasp the puppet, one soon discovers its composite and delusory nature. A second danger derives from its disease; a person coming too close risks contamination. The third danger is from the malicious intent hidden by its attractive covering.

This verse is discordant in the latter two poems, and appears to have been inserted haphazardly into a collection of sayings attributed to Ānanda and Mahā-moggallānā, respectively. But it does fit consistently into the first, Raṭṭhapāla's poem, which opens with this verse, and continues, describing a woman ornamented with jewels

and ear-rings (770), foot and face paint (771), braided hair and accentuated eyes (772). This section of the poem concludes with an allusion to the hunter imagery found in other poems: "The hunter laid his net; the deer did not come near the snare" (774).

As Lang has pointed out, the *theras* do not instruct the women trying to seduce them on the impermanence, deception, and impurity of their male bodies, but rather, hurl verbal abuses at the women's bodies. In contrast, the *theris* use this imagery in their attempts to instruct male protagonists of the futility of desiring a body that is ultimately transient, deceptively attractive, and filled with disgusting substances. But a central feature of their compassion is their adoption of the perception of themselves as defiling to men.

Subhā Jīvakambavanikā's poem is a good example of this. She instructs the rogue obstructing her on the impermanence and insubstantiality of her body. When he fails to heed her lecture and persists in his desire for her, she resorts to the imagery of the painted puppet:

...well-painted puppets, or dolls, have been seen by me, fastened by strings and sticks, made to dance in various ways.

These strings and sticks having been removed, thrown away, mutilated, scattered, not to be found, broken into pieces, on what there would one fix the mind?

This little body, being of such a kind, does not exist without these phenomena; as it does not exist without phenomena, on what there would one fix one's mind?

Just as you have seen a picture made on a wall,
smeared with yellow orpiment; on that your gaze
(has been) confused; (so) the wisdom of men is use-
less.

O blind one, you run after an empty thing, like
an illusion placed in front of you, like a golden
tree at the end of a dream, like a puppet-show in
the midst of the people. (390-94)

At the end of this speech, Subhā gives the rogue her
eyeball since it is the source of his desire. His passion
ceases abruptly and he begs her forgiveness in images
recalling the snake imagery of the misogynist passages
quoted above: "Having smitten such a person, having as it
were embraced a blazing fire, I have seized a poisonous
snake" (398).

This concluding statement is quite puzzling. Subhā
has done nothing threatening to the rogue other than to
show him the error of his ways by reciting basic doctrine.
Why then does he refer to her as a poisonous snake? In
light of the analysis of snake imagery above, we might
speculate that Subhā's lectures were effective in instil-
ling the notion of the dangerous impurity and deceptiveness
of the female body. He uses the same imagery as the theras
when describing a dangerously close encounter with a woman.

This example highlights a contrast between female
and male attitudes towards the body that pervades all the
examples cited thus far. While the women personalize
images of the body as impure, men objectify them and
project them onto others, namely women. This is graphic-

ally illustrated in a conversation in the Theragāthā between Vaṅgīsa and the Buddha. Vaṅgīsa complains of burning with desire for sensual pleasures. The Buddha's advice can be seen as an invitation for him to project his desires outward:

Your mind is on fire because of perversion of perception. Avoid pleasant outward appearance, accompanied by desire.

See the constituent elements as other, as pain, not as self; quench the great desire, do not burn again and again.

Devote the mind, intent and well-concentrated, to contemplation of the unpleasant. Let your mindfulness be concerned with the body...(1224- 25)

His instruction for Vaṅgīsa to "devote his mind, intent and well-concentrated, to contemplation of the unpleasant" [*asubhāya cittaṃ bhāvehi ekaggaṃ susaṃāhitaṃ*] is one of the few phrases that is repeated identically in the Therīgāthā in the poems attributed to Nandā (19 and 82). Significantly, the commentary places this advice to the theris in the mouth of the Buddha. But there is a crucial difference in the content of the advice. While the Buddha advises Vaṅgīsa, the thera, to see the "constituent elements" (i.e., the body) as other, he advises Nandā, the therī, to see the unpleasant body as herself (83).¹⁷ Nowhere in the Therīgāthā are the theris directly advised to abstract an unpleasant vision of the body away from themselves.

17. Rhys Davids' translation cited as the opening quote for this chapter brings out this aspect of the poem better than Norman's.

Instead, they internalize it and encourage others to project disgust onto their own female bodies.

But this feeling of disgust appears to be a necessary realization that impels the individual towards liberation. When everything is considered absolutely disgusting, one neither desires nor believes anything to have intrinsic beauty or value. In this way, one frees oneself from the suffering that results from desiring something that is baseless, and impermanent.

The Authors' Reflections on their Own Bodies

Many of the theris and theras report the realization of bodily impermanence as the final step to attaining liberation. But again we find gender differences in the presentation of that realization. While the theris discuss their own aging processes in detail, the theras' descriptions of aging are often abstract and lacking in detail. We can see this as additional confirmation of the theris' tendencies to personalize and the theras' tendencies to objectify doctrinal conceptions of the body.

The Therīgāthā contains five references to the theris developing this notion of their own physical impermanence as the final realization leading to liberation. Dhammā describes herself weakly gathering alms then falling to the ground, "having seen peril in the body", as her mind

was completely released (17). Aḍḍhakāsī does not see peril in the body, but she describes her renunciation of prostitution as a result of her disgust and concomitant disinterest with her figure which led to her liberation (26). Abhayattherī announces her decision to "throw down this body" in response to a short warning: "fragile is the body, to which ordinary individuals are attached" (35). The final example, Nanduttarā's poem, refers to her religious activities prior to her conversion to Buddhism as "ministering to the body" (89). Her conversion is the result of her "seeing the body as it really was" (90).

Again, though, Nandā's poem (see Rhys Davids' translation in the opening quote) provides us with the best example of a therī attaining liberation as a result of discovering the true nature of her own body. After Nandā is advised to view a decomposing body and consider its similarities with her own, she attains her goal:

By (this same) me, vigilant, reflecting in a reasoned manner, this body was seen as it really was, inside and out.

Then I became disgusted with the body, and I was disinterested internally. Vigilant, unfettered, I have become stilled, quenched. (85-86)

In the Theraḡāthā, there are seven references to theras contemplating their own bodies, none of which are as vivid as Nandā's. Two of the references are very abstract: both Sītavaniya and Soṇa Koḷivisa report the necessity of practicing "mindfulness concerning the body"

for one seeking the goal of liberation (6 and 636). Adhimutta's poem is somewhat less abstract, but still lacks a detailed explanation as to why he is discontented with his body:

I am dissatisfied with the physical frame; I am not concerned with existence. This body will be broken, and there will not be another. (718)

Similarly, Tālapuṭa rhetorically questions when he will realize the utter impermanence of the body, and thereby attain his goal (1093).

The final three theras that contemplate their own bodies use stock references to them "looking at the doctrine as a mirror" and perceiving the emptiness of their own bodies (169-70, 171-72, and 395-96). Interestingly, the last of these examples, Kulla's poem, describes his contemplation as resulting from his meditation upon a female corpse in the cemetery. This is the only reference in the text in which a thera transfers the lesson of impermanence from the female body onto himself.

But this is not the only example of a thera attaining liberation as a result of viewing a female body. Four other theras, Nāgasamāla (267), Candana (299), Rājadatta (315), and Sundarasamudda (459), record their attainment of liberation as following immediately after their encounter with women (see the discussion of these poems above, p. 54). Significantly, they all report their response to the encounter as a realization of the peril of,

and concomitant feeling of disgust with, the world.

As we noted above, none of the theris report their attainments as the result of seeing a man, alive or dead. Instead, their disgust with the world is the effect of viewing their own bodies. Again we see the essential difference between the texts' portrayals of the body: whereas the theris personalize doctrinal conceptions of the body as impure and impermanent, the theras abstract these conceptions, projecting them onto others. When the theras do transfer their meditations onto their own bodies, their descriptions are less vivid and emotionally compelling and concentrate on their bodily emptiness rather than on the secretions and inner components of the body. These latter features of the body are reserved, on the whole, for women's bodies.

That is not to say, however, that the theras ignore their own aging processes. Here again, though, we find more detail and emotional resonance in the theris' verses.

The Therīgāthā contains ten poems in which the theris refer to aging or illness. Cittā (27) and Mettikā (29) report being sick and weak as they climb a mountain and attain the goal. Another Sāmā (39) and A Certain Unknown Bhikkhunī (67) open their poems with the statement that they have been renunciants for 25 years before they obtained their liberation. Sumanā (16), Soṇā (102), and Bhaddā the former Jain (107) report being old and provide

some detail about their experiences of aging: Sumanā's poem bids her to sleep happily, calling her "old lady"; Soṇā's age is highlighted by the 10 sons she records having borne; and Bhaddā's age is expressed by the 55 years she reports having eaten almsfood.

Of the poems discussing aging, Ambapālī's is by far the most vivid in either collection. 19 verses long, it is entirely devoted to a comparison of the features of her body when she was youthful and beautiful with those now that she is old and no longer beautiful. The poem begins with her hair and moves down her body through her face, arms, body, and feet, concluding with an overall assessment of her body. Each component is analyzed separately and in a detached fashion, alternating a description of youthful perfection with aged decay:

My hair was black, like the colour of bees,
with curly ends; because of old age it is like
bark-fibres of hemp; not otherwise is the utterance
of the speaker of truth. (252)

Formerly my hands looked beautiful, possessing
delicate signet rings, decorated with gold; because
of old age they are like onions and radishes; not
otherwise is the utterance of the speaker of truth.
(264)

Formerly both my feet looked beautiful, like
(shoes) full of cotton-wool; because of old age
they are cracked, and wrinkled; not otherwise is
the utterance of the speaker of truth.

Such was this body; (now) it is decrepit, the
abode of many pains; an old house, with its plaster
fallen off; not otherwise is the utterance of the
speaker of truth. (269-70)

Siegfried Lienhard has shown that the first section

of each verse, describing her youthful body, uses images from secular poetry contemporary, he argues, with the texts.¹⁸ The Buddhist adaptation of this poetry, seen in the closing phrase of each description, involves juxtaposing a romantic (secular) vision of eternal beauty with a medical (Buddhist) vision of the body as it has aged.¹⁹ This juxtaposition is clearly a meditation on impermanence using the body of a courtesan renowned in Buddhist literature for her beauty.²⁰ Although Ambapālī nowhere in the poem refers to her attainment of liberation, she clearly identifies herself closely with the doctrine of impermanence.

But the Therīgāthā also provides an exception to its detailed descriptions of the theris' experiences of aging decay. In Sumedhā's long speech to her parents on the evils of sensual pleasures, she refers to aging in abstract terms reminiscent of the theras' homilies: "When old age and death are following closely one must strive for their destruction" (493). Towards the end of the poem, she states that sensual pleasures and all births are bound up with old age, death, and sickness (511).

18. "Sur la Structure Poétique des Thera-Therīgāthā" (Journal Asiatique 263/3-4 [1975]: 375-96), pp. 379-80.

19. Thanks to Graeme MacQueen for suggesting this distinction between "romantic" and "medical" perceptions of the body.

20. See for example, the "Mahāparinibbāna sutta" in the Digha Nikāya (ii, 64, 109) or the commentary, Sisters, p. 120.

In a similar fashion, all of the Theraḡāthā's seven references to aging or illness ignore the authors' experiences of bodily frailty. The poems attributed to Uttiya (30), Kimbila (118), Kātiyāna (411), Sirimaṇḍa (447), Bhūta (518), and Tālapuṭa (1093) record abstract homilies on the pervasiveness of death, disease, and old age. Sirimaṇḍa's verse is a good example of this abstraction:

Death, disease, old age, these three approach
like huge fires. There is no strength to comfort
them; there is no speed to run away.

One should make one's day not unproductive,
whether by a little or by a much. Every (day and)
night one passes, one's life is less by that much.
(450-51)

There are, however, four references that do provide us with some feeling for the authors. Dhammasava's father claims to have been 120 years old when he renounced (108); Jambuka describes his 55 years of extreme austerities prior to his conversion to Buddhism (283); Sappadāsa reports 25 years of renunciation that culminates in a suicide attempt (405); and Ānanda describes serving the Buddha with loving deeds, words and thoughts for the 25 years he was a learner (1039-43).

But even these descriptions, while providing more detail, do not discuss the theras' personal experiences of aging to the same degree as those of the theris. The fact that the Therīḡāthā devotes a whole poem of nineteen verses to Āmbapālī's aging indicates the text's greater readiness

to portray the theris' identification of doctrine with their own bodies.

Thus we find, yet again, that the theris internalize the doctrine of aging. While the theras also internalize it, they do not do so as vividly or as personally. Though in this case the theras do not project their perceptions of the body onto others, they also do not explore the implications of these perceptions in their own lives.

The Theris' Internalization of Body Imagery

In this study of descriptions of the human body, we have found many differences between depictions of female and male bodies. None of the descriptions of decomposing corpses, bodily secretions, and internal substances refer explicitly to male bodies. Both female and male bodies are described as subject to illness and age, but female physical frailty is described in much more detail.

The texts have also displayed consistency in the degree of personalization and abstraction of body imagery. While the theris use corpse imagery to describe their own bodies and adopt a perception of themselves as impure, the theras project these images and perceptions onto others (particularly women). In their meditations of bodily impermanence, the theris turn to their own experiences of aging and illness. In contrast, the theras show a marked

preference for abstract homilies outlining the human condition as one of inevitable decay, but they refrain from examining their own physical processes of decay.

These differences indicate that the doctrinal emphasis on the necessity of overcoming attachment to the body is interpreted differently by the theris and theras. The theris view the problem of the body as an attachment to self that is to be overcome by examining their own life-histories and biological processes. The theras view the problem of attachment as desire for other which is to be overcome by projecting images of the true nature of the body as disgustingly impure onto others.

These differing interpretations explain, in part, why the theris perceive liberation in terms of struggle. Overcoming the attachment to a false conception of the body is difficult for both theris and theras. But the theris' struggle against the false conception of self is much more immediate and personal than the theras' struggle against a false conception of other. Furthermore, the methods by which the authors conquer their delusions must be different. Since the object of the theris' struggle is internal, it cannot be escaped, but must be faced; no matter what they do, the theris remain embodied. In contrast, the object of the theras' struggle is external, it can be escaped. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, it is escape that is advocated by the theras.

CHAPTER III

Attitudes Towards the Physical Environment

*If there be none in front, nor none behind
[to] Be found, [if one is] alone and in the woods
Exceedingly pleasant doth his life become.
Come then! alone I'll get me hence and go
To lead the forest-life the Buddha praised,
And taste the welfare which the brother knows,
Who dwells alone with concentrated mind.
Yea, swiftly and alone, bound to my quest,
I'll go to the jungle that I love, the haunt
Of wanton elephants, the source and means
Of thrilling zest to each ascetic soul.*

Ekavihāriya

Theragāthā, 537-39¹

There is a contention among some scholars that the earliest phase of Buddhism was one in which the Buddha and his disciples lived an eremitic lifestyle, wandering in the wilderness, coming into urban centres only to gather alms. They sometimes wandered alone, but, like other ascetic groups of the time, often gathered together for their forest-dwelling. These groups convened under a sheltered roof only for the annual monsoon when climatic conditions made outdoor living impossible. As Buddhism developed, however, at least some of the Buddhist renunciants began to

1. Sisters, p. 252.

remain in these dwellings (vihāras) year round.²

This lifestyle of wilderness-dwelling is amply verified in the Theraḡāthā, where many of the theras describe their isolation in the wilderness using beautiful and vivid images of the natural environment. The Therīḡāthā, however, displays a marked paucity of nature imagery. The reason for this may have been that, by the time of composition, bhikkhunīs had been prohibited from living in the forest. I.B. Horner informs us that the ordination ceremony for women included only three of the four permitted conditions of renunciation: almsfood (*pindiyālopabhojana*), a robe made from rags taken from a garbage (*paṇṣukūlacīvara*), and decomposing urine as medication (*pūtimuttabhesaḡja*). The condition omitted from the bhikkhunīs' list is permission for them to dwell at the foot of a tree (*rukkaḡaṇūlasenāsaṇa*).³

Horner interprets this omission by referring to the reported rape of the bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā while she was dwelling in the forest.⁴ She then claims that the record of the Buddha's request to King Pasenadi to build a vihāra for the bhikkhunīs within the city walls is indicative of

2. For example, see Sukumar Dutt, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India (London; George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1962), pp. 54-57.

3. Women Under Primitive Buddhism, p. 154.

4. Cullavagga X, 23, as cited in Women Under Primitive Buddhism, p. 155. Horner notes that this may be a different Uppalavaṇṇā than appears in the Therīḡāthā.

the new restriction on women.⁵

These examples indicate that the bhikkhunīs did dwell in the wilderness early in Buddhism's history. But none of the theris report doing so. In fact, several of the theris describe a long period of wandering that seems to end when they joined the bhikkhunī-saṅgha (e.g., Nanduttarā [87], Candā [122], and Vāsiṭṭhī [133]). Ironically, they all refer to their conversion as "going forth to the homeless state" (*pabbajin anāgāriyā*).

Scholars studying gender differences between the texts have noted that the abundance of nature imagery in the *Theraḡāthā* and the relative paucity of nature imagery in the *Therīḡāthā* is one of the most striking differences between the texts. These studies have resulted in various explanations of why this difference should exist. In an article devoted entirely to nature imagery, C.A.F. Rhys Davids hypothesizes that the "nature imposed on women has turned their vision hearthwards or heavenwards, not outwards on to the world without the house and the temple", noting that the few depictions in the text of women walking alone in the forest may represent the first time in their lives that these women have been alone.⁶ In other words, women in ancient India were socialized to stay at home and

5. Ibid, p. 156, citing the Vinaya IV, p. 264.

6. "The Love of Nature in Buddhist Poems" (*The Quest*, 1/3 [April, 1910]: 416-434), pp. 432-33.

to always travel in company.

Similarly, Winternitz explains that the theris are more concerned with external (i.e., social) experience whereas the theras are concerned with internal (i.e., meditative) experience.⁷ That is, the theris concentrate on their relationships in the saṅgha; the theras concentrate on their solitary meditations in the wilderness. In a footnote to this claim, he cites Oldenberg: "the hermit life in the forest naturally played a greater part in the case of the monks than in that of the nuns."⁸ Unfortunately, he does not inform us why this "natural" difference should exist.

Most ingenious, however, is I.B. Horner's apologetic explanation. Arguing that the paucity of nature imagery reflects the theris' general lack of concern with sensations, she states that women were not immune to the beauty of natural phenomenon,

But it was because in meditation they concentrated more intensely than men, and shut away all distracting sights and sounds by an effort of the will, determined to sunder the bonds that dragged them backward to the hither shore. In order to reach the goal these women managed to restrain the senses, and for this reason the moment of attainment and its expression (*aññā*) are free from all sensory images.⁹

7. A History of Indian Literature Vol. II (NY: Russell and Russell, 1933), p. 102.

8. Ibid, n. 3, p. 102-3; citing Oldenberg, Literatur des alten Indien, p. 101.

9. Women Under Primitive Buddhism, p. 209.

In this chapter we shall not attempt to resolve this question since its solution requires knowledge of the actual lifestyles of the authors and a precise dating of the texts, both of which are impossible to ascertain. Rather, we will examine differences in attitudes towards the authors' surroundings as they are presented in the texts.

Though the goals of this chapter are consistent with the goals of the preceding chapters, the method employed herein is slightly different. The volume and complexity of images of the authors' surroundings prohibit a detailed study of each type of image. Therefore, I have analyzed in detail one set of imagery, that of trees, as representative of tendencies in usage in the texts.

Upon examination of images of the environment, I have discovered an important distinction between those images used as settings and those used as symbols. In the first category I include references to images of the surroundings as settings for the authors, their anecdotes, and their examples.¹⁰ In the second category, I include images used as metaphors, similes, and analogies.

10. I recognize that some of these "settings" could be interpreted as metaphors for liberation, but, even if this is the case, the metaphoric use of environmental imagery as setting still displays a topographical emphasis that differs between the texts. Furthermore, even if we were to accept settings as metaphors, my findings would not be that different. Thanks to Ellen Badone for pointing out the possibility of this interpretation.

A later stage in analysis distinguished between positive (that is, conducive to meditation or liberation), negative (inconducive to either meditation or liberation), and ambivalent (neither clearly conducive nor inconducive) uses of these images. These categories should become more clear as the study of tree imagery progresses.

The following sections follow this categorization scheme. First we shall look at the use of tree imagery as setting. The argument in this section is that the forest is presented in the Therīgāthā as a dangerous, yet productive setting for the theris' quest for liberation. The second section examines the symbolic use of tree imagery, arguing that the theris do not use symbols as frequently, nor as positively as the theras. The third section presents an abbreviated chart of all the references to environmental imagery in the texts testing the accuracy of tree imagery as representative of general tendencies in the texts.

Trees as Settings

The Therīgāthā contains 16 references to trees or forests as settings, 7 of which are positive,¹¹ 8 negative,¹² and one ambivalent.¹³ In striking contrast, the

11. 24, 50, 75, 80, 81, 147, and 362.

12. 143, 230, 366, 370, 371, 372, 373, and 375.

13. 51.

Theragāthā contains 67 references to trees or forests, 62 of which are positive,¹⁴ 5 negative.¹⁵ There are no ambivalent tree settings in the Theragāthā.

Looking first at the positive settings, we notice a prominent theme in both texts is the forest as the most desirable setting for *arahants*, i.e., those who have attained liberation. In the Theragāthā we find several prescriptive passages describing the optimal psychological state and setting for the attainment of liberation. For example, Gotama's poem is clearly a recipe for liberation. Significantly, this poem refers to only one appropriate setting:

Forest lodgings, secluded, with little noise,
fit for a sage to resort to; this is fitting for an
ascetic. (592)

In another example, Sāriputta distinguishes between the setting of ordinary people and that of *arahants*:

Whether in the village or in the forest, on low
ground or on high, wherever the arahats live, that
is delightful country.

Forests are delightful, where (ordinary) people
find no delight. Those rid of desire will delight
there; they are not seekers after sensual
pleasures. (991-91)

That many of the theras follow these prescriptions

14. 6, 18, 31, 55, 59, 62, 110, 119, 155, 217, 309, 351, 352, 353, 354, 436, 466, 467, 524, 527, 528, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 563, 592, 597, 602, 626, 684, 832, 851, 852, 864, 868, 919, 920, 925, 948, 991, 992, 998, 1092, 1102, 1108, 1113, 1120, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1144, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1208.

15. 115, 219, 350, 435, and 887.

is shown by the numerous references to liberated theras dwelling in the forest, or meditating at the foot of a tree. In the Theragāthā, twelve of the authors describing themselves as liberated are situated in the forest or near trees during or subsequent to their attainment.¹⁶ The clearest example of this is Nhātakamuni's poem, in which an unnamed adversary questions the author's abilities to withstand the harsh living conditions in the forest:

Brought low by colic, dwelling in the grove, in the wood, where there is a restricted food supply, where it is harsh, how will you fare, bhikkhu?

Suffusing this body with much joy and happiness, enduring even what is harsh, I shall dwell in the grove.

Developing the seven constituents of enlightenment, the faculties, and the powers, possessed of subtlety of meditation, I shall dwell without āsavas.(435-37)

Clearly, the forest is a positive setting for those who wish to attain the religious goal.

The forest is also a desirable setting for the theris, but nowhere in the text are there prescriptive passages analogous to those in the Theragāthā. The closest comparable passage is in Subhā, "the Smith's Daughter's" poem in which an unnamed narrator intervenes with the advice for the reader (listener) to look upon her as exemplary:

See the Subhā, the smith's daughter, standing (firm) in the doctrine. Having entered the immov-

16. 55, 217, 435, 466, 537, 557, 597, 620, 842, 892, 920, 1091, 1146.

able (state) she meditates at the foot of a tree.
(362)

Despite the paucity of prescriptive passages, we do find seven of the theris who describe themselves as liberated portrayed in the forest or near trees during or subsequent to their attainment.¹⁷ Also, they use similar terminology to that of the theras to describe themselves. For example, after contrasting her former life as a courtesan, Vimalā says:

Today (that same) I, having wandered for alms with shaven head, clad in the outer robe, am seated at the foot of a tree, having obtained (the stage of) non-reasoning.

All ties, those which are divine and those which are human, have been cut out. Having annihilated all the āsavas, I have become cool, quenched. (75-76)

Similarly, we find the forest to be a desirable location for the experience itself. But, while the theras are referred to as "dwelling" in the forest, the theris are depicted as going out to the forest. For example, in the Theragāthā, Sunita's verse intimates that the Buddha himself had recommended the forest as a suitable dwelling place:

Dwelling alone in the forest, not relaxing, I myself performed the teacher's bidding, just as the conqueror had exhorted me.

For the first watch of the night I recollected my previous births; for the middle watch of the night I purified my deva-eye; in the last watch of the night I tore asunder the mass of darkness.
(626-27)

17. 51, 72, 77, 145, 224, 338, 366.

Añjanāvaniya's verse also stresses the permanence of his location:

Making a small hut, plunging into the Añjana forest, I dwelt there. The three knowledges have been obtained, the Buddha's teaching has been done.
(55)

Interestingly, the Therīgāthā also describes a liberation experience occurring in the Añjana forest. Sujatā describes herself as enjoying herself in her pleasure garden when she is attracted to a vihāra:

Having delighted there, having played, coming (back) to my own house, I saw a vihāra. I entered the Añjana wood at Saketā.

Having seen the light of the world, having paid homage (to him), I sat down. In pity (that same) one with vision taught me the doctrine.

And having heard the great seer, I completely pierced the truth. In that very place I attained the stainless doctrine, the state of the undying.
(147-49)

While this forest is clearly a positive setting for the authors' attainment of liberation in both texts, the emphases differ: Añjanāvaniya, the thera, is firmly located within the forest, having built a "hut" to live in; Sujatā, the therī, is firmly located in her house (146). Her sojourn with the forest is brief, but productive. Also, her initial attraction is to the vihāra, which is not mentioned in Añjanāvaniya's poem. Moreover, the compiler (or perhaps the author) chose to associate the name of the thera, "Añjanāvaniya", very closely with the name of the forest, "Añjana", while the therī's name reflects no such association.

Sihā's poem in the Therīgāthā also provides an interesting source for comparison with Sappadāsa's poem in the Theragāthā. Sihā describes herself as desperately unhappy as she enters the forest to commit suicide:

Afflicted by desire for sensual pleasures, because of unreasoned thinking, previously I was conceited, being without self-mastery over the mind.

Obsessed by the defilements, giving way to the notion of happiness, I did not obtain peace of mind, being under the influence of thoughts of passion.

Thin, pale, and wan, I wandered for seven years; (being) very pained, I did not find happiness by day or night.

Then taking a rope, I went inside a wood, (thinking) "Hanging here is better for me than that I should lead a low life again."

Having made a strong noose, having tied it to the branch of a tree, I cast the noose around my neck. Then my mind was completely released.
(77-81)

Similarly, Sappadāsa's poem in the Theragāthā describes him as desperately attempting suicide (405-10). The structure of his poem is also remarkably similar to that of Sihā: he is desperate after 25 years of renunciation, still afflicted with sensual pleasures, leaving his cell to sit on a couch with a knife. As he was about to cut his wrist, he attains the "release of his mind".

The difference in setting in these remarkably similar poems is very significant. While both poems stress the location of the authors' thoughts and suicide attempts (each poem mentions the location twice), the location differs: Sihā goes inside a wood while contemplating her

unhappiness, Sappadāsa goes outside a cell; Sīhā ties her rope to a tree, Sappadāsa clutches his knife on a couch. The forest setting of Sīhā's desperation reveals the greater readiness of the Therīgāthā to describe the negative features of the authors' experiences. Although the forest is the preferred setting for meditation or liberation in both texts, the Therīgāthā is more willing to situate the most graphic example of desperation and struggle in the quest for liberation in the forest. In contrast, the Theragāthā is unwilling to depict such vivid desperation in a positive setting. This becomes clearer when we examine the poems in which the authors confront adversaries in the forest.

In the Therīgāthā, two of the poems in which trees or forests appear as settings refer to confrontations with a "rogue". In the first, Uppalavaṇṇā recognizes the rogue as Māra:

"Going up to a tree with a well-flowered top,
you stand there alone at the foot of the tree; you
have not even any companion; o child, are you not
afraid of rogues?"

Even if 100,000 rogues like you were to come
together, I should not move a hair's breadth, I
should not even shake. What will you alone do to
me Māra? (230-31)

She then proceeds to recite the features of her enlightened psyche which enable her to resist the doubt and fear proposed by him (232-235).

In Subhā Jivakambavanikā's poem, the threat suggested by Māra is developed. Subhā is also described as

entering the forest alone when her path is obstructed by a rogue attempting to seduce her:

"You are young and not ugly; what will going-forth do for you? Throw away your yellow robe. Come, let us delight in the flowery wood.

The towering trees send forth a sweet smell in all directions with the pollen of flowers; the beginning of spring is a happy season; come, let us delight in the flowery wood.

At the same time the trees with blossoming crests cry out, as it were, when shaken by the wind. What delight will there be for you if you plunge alone into the wood?

You wish to go without companion to the lonely, frightening, great wood, frequented by herds of beasts of prey, disturbed by cow-elephants, who are excited by bull-elephants.

You will go about like a doll made of gold, like an accharā in Cittaratha. O incomparable one, you will shine with beautiful garments of fine muslin, with excellent clothes.

I should be under your command (= at your beck and call) if we were to dwell inside the grove; for there is no creature dearer to me than you, o kinnarī with pleasant eyes. (370-75)

We notice immediately the vividness of the description of temptation and the repeated allusions to the forest. The forest imagery itself is very sensual and intimately integrated into the rogue's sexual innuendo: the smell of the trees' fertility pervades the setting; they "cry out" as the wind shakes their flowers; and the wood is frequented with cow-elephants who are excited by bull-elephants.

In particular, though, we should note the rogue's suggestion that they "dwell inside the grove" (375). This is the only reference in the Therīgāthā, positive or negative, in which a suggestion is made that a theri dwell in the forest; clearly, the suggestion is not conducive to,

or expressive of, her liberated state.

Furthermore, as we noted above in our analysis of the social setting, both these adversaries emphasize the theris' solitude. The suggestion in the introduction that bhikkhunīs were prohibited from forest-dwelling because of the possibility of rape is supported by both these poems. Though the theris do not dwell in the forest, but have gone into the wood alone to meditate, they are, nonetheless, accosted by rogues whose advances can easily be interpreted as threatening. The forest is thus presented as a dangerous place for women.

When we look to the Theragāthā for comparable passages, we find a striking difference. There are three forest encounters in the text. The first two are practically identical (350-54 and 435-40) and are quoted above (p. 100). In both, an unnamed adversary questions the theras' capacity to survive the harsh conditions of the forest:

Brought low by colic, dwelling in the grove, in
the wood, where there is a restricted food supply,
where it is harsh, how will you fare, bhikkhu? (350
and 435)

Each author responds that he will be able to withstand the harsh conditions by developing the "constituents of enlightenment, the faculties, and the powers" (352 and 437). In other words, their progress along the path to liberation enables them to withstand hardship.

The type of difficulty encountered by the theris

and the theras differs dramatically. Uppalavaṇṇā's and Subhā's adversaries propose the dangers of human rogues to women alone in the flowering forest. The temptation in both cases involves fear and sexuality. In contrast, the theras, Vakkali and Nhātakamuni, are confronted with the possibility of starvation--a non-human threat. Also, the threat is very abstract. Nowhere in the Theraḡāthā do we find the vivid imagery employed in Subhā's seduction scene.

The third forest encounter in the Theraḡāthā is also abstract and lacking in vivid detail. In this encounter, Mahāmoggallāna directs an enigmatic tirade at an opponent identified as Māra in the last four verses. According to C.A.F. Rhys Davids, the commentary attributes Māra with entering and then leaving the thera's bowels.¹⁸ After describing the adverse affects of assaulting a bhikkhu, Mahāmoggallāna rebukes Māra directly for assaulting the Buddha:

Truly a fire does not think, "I shall burn the fool", but the fool is burned having assailed that burning fire.

Even so, Māra, having assailed the Tathāgata you will burn yourself like a fool touching fire.

Having assailed the Tathāgata Māra acquired demerit. Do you think, evil one, "My evil is not maturing?"

Evil is heaped up for you for a long time, as you do it, end-maker. Keep away from the Buddha, Māra; place no hope in bhikkus.

So the bhikkhu censured Māra in the Bhesakaḷā grove. Then that yakkha, dejected, vanished on the spot. (1204-8)

18. Brethren, p. 391.

Māra does not directly propose a threat to Mahāmoggallāna. Instead, Mahāmoggallāna appears to pose a threat to Māra. Furthermore, the tone of this passage is clearly triumphant. Uppalavaṇṇā's encounter with Māra in the Therīgāthā also depicts her as the victor, but Māra does not appear dejected and vanish. Also, this account is much more abstract: there is no reference to Māra's attempted seduction or temptation of the thera.

If we can accept the commentary, we should also note the repeated allusions to the theras' stomachs in these encounters. Vakkali and Nhātakamuni are confronted with starvation, Mahāmoggallāna with indigestion. In contrast, Uppalavaṇṇā and Subhā are confronted with seduction, or perhaps even rape.

This abstraction and the triumph evident in Mahāmoggallāna's poem, contrasted with the vividness and lack of triumph in the theris' poems, further highlights the Therīgāthā's emphasis on the negative or undesirable consequences of their renunciation. Though both texts portray the forest as a desirable location for meditation and liberation, and though both locate adverse situations in the forest, the Therīgāthā presents its authors' difficulties in terms far more graphic and personal.

As additional confirmation of this tendency in the Therīgāthā, we should note the association of Subhā Jīvākambavanikā's name with the Jīvākamba forest in which

her confrontation occurred. In contrast, as we noted above (p. 102), the Theraḡāthā associates the name of the Añjana forest with the therā's location during his liberation experience.

In sum, tree imagery is used differently as a setting in the two texts. The theris are not depicted as dwelling in the forest, though it is the preferred location for meditation and experiences of liberation. In contrast, many of the theras are depicted as dwelling permanently in the forest. Furthermore, the conflicts occurring in the forest are more frequent and more vividly described in the Therīḡāthā than in the Theraḡāthā. The threat contained in the conflicts also differs between the texts. While the theris' adversaries point out the danger of rape to women alone in the forest, the theras' adversaries point out the paucity of food to be found there. We noted too that the Therīḡāthā's descriptions of conflict are much more personal than the Theraḡāthā's typical abstraction.

Trees as Symbols

This contrast between the Theraḡāthā's abstraction and the Therīḡāthā's personalization of forest imagery is maintained in the texts' use of forest imagery as symbol. The Theraḡāthā shows a strong tendency to use positive symbols of trees or forests. In contrast, the Therīḡāthā never uses such symbols positively.

The Therīgāthā contains seven references to trees or forests as similes, metaphors or analogies. Of these, 4 are used negatively¹⁹ and 3 are used ambivalently.²⁰ In the Theraḡāthā, trees or forests are used in this way 13 times: 5 positively;²¹ 7 negatively;²² and one ambivalently.²³

For example of positive usage, in the Theraḡāthā, trees or forests are used to symbolize detachment (14), progress along the path to liberation (1121), and liberation itself (1202). In one case, Usabha is praised for desiring solitude and possessing "forest-sentiment" (110). In another case, in which Vimalakoṇḍañña claims to have been "born of the tree-named one" (64), the referent is Ambapālī,²⁴ one of the most prominent of the bhikkhunīs.

Coincidentally, Ambapālī's poem in the Therīgāthā contains all three of the ambiguous tree symbols in the collection. This poem is one of the most puzzling in the text. Ambapālī does not refer to liberation, her quest for it, or doctrine. Instead, the poem is dedicated to the contrast between the appearance of her young body and that of her aged body. The poem clearly portrays the impermanence of physical beauty, but its inclusion in the

19. 297, 394, 478, and 490.

20. 254, 263, and 267.

21. 14, 64, 110, 1121, and 1202.

22. 2, 72, 691, 762, 788, 1006, and 1007.

23. 62.

24. Thiḡ, n. 64, on p. 137; Sisters, n. 3, p. 65.

collection, particularly as one of the longer poems, is quite peculiar.

I have categorized the three tree-references as ambiguous since they have nothing to do with the quest for liberation. In all of them, parts of Ambapālī's body are likened to trees or forests:

Thick as a well-planted grove, made beautiful,
having the ends parted by comb and pin; because of
old age it [her hair] is thin here and there; not
otherwise is the utterance of the speaker of truth.
(254)

Formerly both my arms looked beautiful, like
round cross-bars; because of old age they are weak
as the pāṭalī tree; not otherwise is the utterance
of the speaker of truth. (263)

Formerly both my thighs looked beautiful, like
an elephant's trunk; because of old age they are
like stalks of bamboo; not otherwise is the
utterance of the speaker of truth. (267)

The ambiguity is clear in the inconsistency between symbols of youthful beauty and aged deterioration. Her young hair is thick as a grove, but her aged arms are like a pāṭalī tree and her aged thighs are like bamboo stalks.

When we look to the Theragāthā for comparable ambiguity, we find a difference. Vajjiputta's poem contains the only ambiguous symbol of trees or forests in the text:

We dwell alone in the forest like a tree
rejected in a wood. Many envy me, as hell-
dwellers envy one going to heaven. (62)

As a setting, the forest is clearly positive, but as symbol, both the tree and the wood are ambiguous. The

reader is unclear whether a rejected tree or the wood that rejects it are positive, negative or perhaps even both.

These examples highlight another contrast between the two texts. The Therīgāthā often associates trees with the illusory or impermanent nature of the female body. All the negative references to tree or forest symbolism in the text refer to trees as women's bodies or as sensual pleasures. For example, as a part of Cāpā's attempted seduction of her renounced husband, Kāḷa, she compares her body to a tree:

"O Kāḷa, like the sprouting Takkārī tree in flower on the crest of a mountain, like a flowering Dālikā creeper, like a Pāṭalī tree in the middle of an island,

with my body smeared with yellow sandalwood paste, wearing my best muslin garments, being beautiful, why do you go abandoning (that same) me?" (297-98)

One other symbol of bodily beauty as a tree also occurs during a seduction scene, but in this case, it is Subhā who rejects the rogue's temptation. She also compares her body to a tree, though the aim is to illustrate the illusory nature of physical beauty:

O blind one, you run after an empty thing, like an illusion placed in front of you, like a golden tree at the end of a dream, like a puppet-show in the midst of people. (394)

The remaining two negative references also occur within a context of conflict, but they liken sensual pleasures to trees. Both occur in Sumedhā's poem during her attempts to convince her parents to allow her to evade

her arranged marriage and go forth in Buddhist renunciation. She repeatedly illustrates the undesirable nature of sensual pleasures, twice referring to them as trees:

This very day, father, I shall renounce (the world); what (have I to do) with unsubstantial enjoyments? I am disgusted with sensual pleasures; they are like vomit, made groundless like a palm tree. (478)

Sensual pleasures are like the fruits of a tree, like lumps of flesh, pain(ful); (they are) like dreams, delusive; sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods. (490)

The negative references in the Theragāthā also include an allusion to the fruits of a tree, but in this case, the association with sensual pleasures is unclear:

For sensual pleasures, variegated, sweet, delightful, disturb the mind by their various forms. Seeing the peril in the strand of sensual pleasure, king, therefore I went forth.

As the fruits of a tree fall, so do men fall, young and old, after the breaking-up of the body. Seeing this too, king, I went forth. Truly the ascetic's state, being the only certain thing, is better. (777-78)

Although it is juxtaposed with the reference to sensual pleasures, this symbol is more one of impermanence and illustrates the karmic consequences of not going forth. Another of the negative symbols reflects this theme of impermanence and consequence:

Make a dam, sir, an obstruction for the streams, lest you mind-made stream fell you like a tree, violently. (762)

As in the previous example, the recipient of the speech is unnamed. Also the referent of this symbol appears to be

desire rather than sensual pleasures *per se* (see 769). But these two examples share a common context--both are part of the author's attempts to convert the unnamed listener, by illustrating the futility of remaining in the world and the benefits to being liberated.

One other negative symbol refers to desire, but its referent is unambiguous: Udāyin claims to have come from the "wood of desire to the non-wood" (691).

Three of the negative tree symbols in the Theraḡāthā are part of a stock verse repeated in all three poems:

Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, not
conceited, he shakes/plucked off evil character-
istics as the wind shakes/plucked off the leaves of
a tree. (2, 1006, 1007)

As in other cases of repeated phrases, this has no correlative in the Therīḡāthā. The final negative symbol in the Theraḡāthā, however, does reflect a similar sentiment to the negative symbols in the Therīḡāthā:

Just as a young bamboo is hard to trample down
when its tip has grown, and it has developed hard
wood, so I find it hard to go forth because of the
wife who has been brought home. Give me
permission. Now I have gone forth. (72)

Here we have the one instance of conflict associated with tree symbolism in the Theraḡāthā. Also, we see the tree associated with a woman, though it refers to her resistance rather than to her body.

But this brings us to an important contrast between the texts. With the exception of Udāyin's "wood of

desire", all the symbols in the Theraḡāthā refer to a tree or its parts falling. None of the references in the Therīḡāthā mentions the falling or dismantlement of trees.

Furthermore, in confirmation of our findings in the analysis of negative settings (p. 109), we see the Theraḡāthā's references are more abstract, reflecting less personal involvement with the symbols. The theras do not refer to trees as symbolic of themselves, but rather, as symbolic of others. In contrast, the theris' verses show a stronger personal identification with trees. Also, tree symbols are used more frequently in the context of conversion in the Theraḡāthā, but in contexts of conflict in the Therīḡāthā. Significantly, the one reference to conflict in connection with tree symbolism in the Theraḡāthā is also the only reference to a woman.

In sum, we have found some subtle yet consistent differences between the texts' usages of tree symbolism. The theris do not use symbols of trees or forests positively, in contrast with the theras. Also, although both use the imagery negatively, the theris do so more often in contexts of conflict whereas the theras do so in contexts of conversion. Finally, the theris identify more personally with trees and forests than do the theras, using trees to symbolize their own bodies. The theras use tree imagery to symbolize abstract doctrinal axioms.

Other Images of the Surroundings

These differences are also present in other usages of environmental imagery in the texts. Using the same categorization scheme, I have discovered confirmation of the conclusions to this analysis of tree or forest imagery. I have counted every instance of commonly used imagery²⁵ and distinguished between setting and symbol; positive (+), negative (-), and ambivalent (*) usages. Including the forest or tree imagery discussed above, the results of this analysis conform significantly with the findings of the discussion above:

IMAGE AS SETTING

<u>Therīqāthā</u>	<u>Theraqāthā</u>
+ 40 = 48.2%	+ 188 = 87.8%
- 29 = 34.9%	- 11 = 5.1%
* 14 = 16.9%	* 16 = 7.5%
-----	-----
Total 83	Total 214
(15.9% of all verses)	(16.7% of all verses)

IMAGE AS SYMBOL

<u>Therīqāthā</u>	<u>Theraqāthā</u>
+ 10 = 17.9%	+ 92 = 47.1%
- 33 = 58.9%	- 78 = 40.0%
* 13 = 23.2%	* 25 = 12.3%
-----	-----
Total 56	Total 195
(10.7% of all verses)	(15.2% of all verses)

25. hut, house or palace, village or city, vihāra or cell, forest or trees, mountain or rock, wild animals, tame animals, elephants (wild or tame), darkness or night, light

These findings indicate a consistent pattern of variation between the texts. Though the percentage of verses mentioning a setting is practically equivalent in the two texts (Therīgāthā, 15.9% of the total number of verses; Theraqāthā, 16.7%), the theris are significantly less willing to describe their environment positively than the theras. Furthermore, the theris are significantly less willing to use environmental imagery as symbols (Therīgāthā, 10.7% of all verses; Theraqāthā, 15.2%). When the theris do use symbols of the environment, they are markedly less willing to use them positively than the theras.

An analysis of this environmental imagery highlights another significant difference between the texts. The theras' most frequent settings are in the wilderness: in the forest, on mountains, surrounded by wild animals and rain. The settings least preferred are near stagnant water, tame animals, daylight, and houses. The theris also refer most frequently to the forest, but the subsequent references differ dramatically from those of the theras: houses, vihāras, darkness, and tame animals. The settings least frequently used in the Therīgāthā are huts, rain, stagnant water and daylight. Significantly, none of the theris mention huts, nor are any of them rained upon.

(moon, fire, lamp, or sun), rain or the rainy season, moving water (lakes, rivers, streams), and stagnant water.

The discovery that none of the theris are depicted as dwelling in the forest is confirmed and developed by this examination of other environmental imagery. The theris prefer settings of culture--houses, vihāras, and villages--to those of nature--mountains, wild animals, huts, and rain. In contrast, the theras prefer settings of the wilderness.²⁶

The Theraḡāthā contains many verses describing the beauty of the wilderness and the desirability of dwelling there for a person in quest of liberation (see above, p. 99). These verses from Bhūta's poem are typical:

When in the sky the thunder-cloud rumbles, full of torrents of rain all around on the path of birds, and the bhikkhu who has gone into the cave meditates, he does not find greater contentment than this.

When seated on the bank of rivers covered with flowers, with garlands of variegated woodland plants, happy indeed he meditates, he does not find greater contentment than this.

When at night in a lonely grove, while the sky (-deva) rains, the fanged animals roar, and the bhikkhu who has gone into the cave meditates, he does not find greater contentment than this.

When having kept his own thoughts in check, inside a mountain, having taken refuge in a mountain cleft, rid of distress and rid of barrenness of mind he meditates, he does not find greater contentment than this. (522-25)

26. This finding represents an interesting inversion of Sherry Ortner's theory of the equation of women with nature and men with culture ("Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in Woman, Culture, and Society (eds., M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, Stanford, 1974, pp. 67-87)). Males, however, are still associated with the higher-status location, though, for these texts, the wilderness is definitely more desirable than cultural settings. This finding and its relationship with Ortner's theory is certainly worthy of further research.

In an article examining the poetic structure of the Therī-Theraḡāthā, Siegfried Lienhard argues persuasively that the Theraḡāthā's poetic use of nature imagery displays a clear similarity with a genre of erotic rain poetry that predates the text. He points out that the theras adapted this poetry, interposing the perspective of the liberated therā where secular poetry would insert a poetic description of love or lovers dallying in the rainy season. In the course of his analysis, the only poem from the Therīḡāthā he considers is Ambapālī's (see above, p. 111), arguing that her poem also displays evidence of a Buddhist adaptation of secular poetry.²⁷

This finding further illustrates the differing emphases of the texts. While Ambapālī's poem adapts secular poetry's romantic vision of the female body to illustrate its true nature as an impermanent entity, the rain poetry in the Theraḡāthā adapts secular poetry to eliminate all references to relationships. This adaptation highlights the tendency in the Therīḡāthā to emphasize the theris' biological experiences and the Theraḡāthā's tendency to emphasize solitude and abstract doctrine.

27. "Sur la Structure Poétique des Thera-therīḡāthā" (Journal Asiatique 263/3-4 [1975]: 375-96), pp. 379-80.

The Theris' Struggle in the Wilderness

In this study of attitudes towards the natural environment, we have discovered many similarities and differences between the texts. While both the theris and theras value wilderness, particularly forest settings as desirable places to meditate and attain liberation, the circumstances for each are not the same. While the theris often encounter threatening situations there, the theras are more often presented as blissfully contemplative of natural phenomena. The absence of positive symbols for the natural environment in the Therīgāthā indicates that the theris have projected the personal threat of the wilderness into the symbolic realm. Since this threat is often directed towards their sexuality as women, they use trees and forests to symbolize aspects of their bodies inconducive to liberation.

We must note also that the emphasis on cultural settings in the Therīgāthā indicates that the theris dwelled in communities, protected by the walls of the vihāra, or, perhaps even the city. But city dwelling is not presented in the texts as conducive to liberation. Instead, both texts reinforce the notion of the wilderness as the most conducive setting for attaining the goal. Thus, we see that the theris were placed somewhat at a disadvantage simply because they were women. They were restricted to the vihāra, except for brief forays into the

wilderness where they could potentially meet with threatening rogues. The theras had no such disadvantage.

Therefore, we see that the theris had to struggle against the restrictions placed on them by the saṅgha to get to a conducive setting. They probably also had to struggle against their own fear once they arrived at a conducive setting, and could remain there only for a limited time.

The theras faced different obstacles. They could, and apparently did, dwell in the wilderness. They faced some threat of the harsh conditions there, but do not appear to be too bothered by those conditions. Their struggle is presented as occurring more in the communities from which they begged alms. There, they encountered beautiful women who represented the desires they were suppressing.

Thus we see that the theras' could and did escape from their greatest source of conflict. The theris could also avoid conflict by refusing to go out into the wilderness, but they then faced the potential of not attaining their goal. The theris, therefore, had to face the conflict and their fear directly. The only escape was a self-denial of the possibility of attaining the goal.

CHAPTER IV

Why the Theris Struggle for Liberation

*How should the woman's nature hinder us?
 Whose hearts are firmly set, who ever move
 With growing knowledge onward in the Path?
 What can that signify to one in whom
 Insight doth truly comprehend the Norm?
 On every hand the love of pleasure yields,
 And the thick gloom of ignorance is rent
 In twain. Know this, O Evil One, avaunt!
 Here, O Destroyer! shalt thou not prevail.*

Somā

Therīgāthā, 61-62¹

Nothing short of a time machine can prove the female authorship of the Therīgāthā or the male authorship of the Theragāthā. However, the claim of the textual and commentarial traditions that the texts were composed by women and men in the earliest phase of Buddhism's history is one that should be considered seriously. And yet, as we have seen in the introduction, there have been some scholars who question the veracity of this traditional assumption. The uniqueness of the Therīgāthā's claim to female authorship in Buddhist and other great religious textual traditions is a consideration that lends some

1. Sisters, p. 45-46.

credibility to questions of the gender of the authors. It is, therefore, necessary to provide good reasons for accepting the tradition's claim.²

The Question of Female Authorship

Throughout the body of this thesis, we have arrayed a variety of numerical differences in the use of terms, situations, and contexts between the texts. Most striking are differences in the percentage of authors referring to their own attainment of liberation (Therīgāthā, 57 of 73 or 78.08%; Theraqāthā, 93 of 264 or 35.2%); the number of verses devoted to overt conflict (Therīgāthā, 184 of 522 or, 35.2%; Theraqāthā, 7 of 1279 or 0.5%); the number of authors describing previous lifestyles (Therīgāthā, 23 of 73, or 31.5%; Theraqāthā, 20 of 264, or 7.6%); the number of authors discussing their own bodily impurity, deceptiveness, or aging processes (Therīgāthā, 23 of 73 or 31.5%; Theraqāthā, 19 of 264, or 7.2%); and, finally, the percentage of images of the surroundings used positively as settings (Therīgāthā, 48.2%; Theraqāthā, 87.8%) and as symbols (Therīgāthā, 17.9%; Theraqāthā, 47.1%).

These numerical differences reflect and reinforce

2. I note with bitter irony that the theris' struggle for recognition continues to this day. It is indeed a strong comment on the state of scholarship today that I must even address the question of female authorship.

differences in thematic emphases throughout the texts. In the analyses of the social setting, the body, and imagery of the surroundings above, we have attempted to uncover differences in the attitudes and assumptions of the authors of the two texts. The unifying theme running through these studies has been the theris' emphasis on struggle and the theras' emphasis on escape in their quest for liberation. These differing emphases can now be compiled into three categories: the authors' attitudes towards relationships; the degree of personalization or abstraction they display; and their experiences of, and responses to, conflict.

Relationships have a prominent role in the Therīgāthā. In the chapter on the social setting, we discovered that the theris tend to define themselves by relationships of all kinds: from their parenthood and the pain caused by the deaths of their children, to adversarial confrontations with others, to friendships in the saṅgha among the bhikkhunīs. In the chapter on the body, we found that many of the references to the author's own bodily processes were used to instruct adversaries on the futility of maintaining a romantic delusion of beauty. And, in the chapter on physical surroundings, we found that the theris dwell communally in vihāras.

In contrast, the theras do not discuss their relationships with others as often or as vividly as the theris. They never refer to grieving over the deaths of

family members, nor do they acknowledge their renounced parenthood as openly or as frequently as the theris. They refer to friendship only in abstract terms, and show a pronounced preference for dwelling in isolation. When they meet with the possibility of sexual encounters with women, they do not attempt to instruct the women on the error of their ways, but rather, hurl verbal abuses at them, condemning the desire they have induced as indicative of their unenlightened state.

These differing attitudes towards relationships indicate a differing understanding of the kind of detachment that characterizes a liberated individual. The theris see themselves as continuing to interact positively with others, and interpret the unenlightened state as one in which relationships are fraught with deception, hatred, and contempt. For the theris, detachment means a transformation of one's emotional response to others. The theras also describe the liberated person as one who is imbued with compassion, but their recorded social interactions display little emotion. Instead of detachment from negative emotional states, the theras' social discourse reveals their psychological detachment from all emotional bonds with others in what amounts to a complete severing of relationships.

Repeatedly throughout the thesis we have noted the difference in levels of personalization and abstraction.

In the first chapter, we found that the theris describe their previous lifestyles in much more detail and with much more emotional resonance than the theras. In the second chapter, we found that the theris appropriate the doctrine of the impurity, deception, and impermanence of the body by reflecting on their own physical experiences. And, in the last chapter, we found that the theris' negative use of tree symbolism commonly referred to their own bodies.

In contrast, the theras prefer abstract, non-personalized descriptions. They do not provide details of their previous lifestyles, nor do they describe their relationships with others in emotionally compelling detail. They do not reflect frequently or graphically upon the relevance of doctrine to their own physical experiences, and they project impure and deceptive features of the body onto others. Finally, their descriptions of overt conflict do not contain the personal threat contained in the theris' descriptions, but rather represent impersonal forces that may be dangerous to their health. Significantly, the Therīgāthā contains a description of an attempted seduction of a bhikkhu that is far more detailed than any in the Theraqāthā.

The personalization of the Therīgāthā and the abstraction of the Theraqāthā indicate that the authors understand central features of Buddhist doctrine and renunciation differently. The theris contemplate the

doctrine of impermanence by reflecting upon their own life histories, their own experiences of relationships transforming, and their own bodies aging. Thus, they see the delusory perception of permanence and stability as it has been experienced in their own lives. They overcome the delusion by reflecting on their own experiences. The *theras* also know the delusion of permanence to be the main obstacle to their quest for liberation, but they contemplate the impermanence of others. They do not reflect on their own experience, but rather concentrate on the environment around them, abstracting impermanence away from themselves.

Thus we see that although both must overcome a false perception, their methods of doing so differ. The *theris* internalize the obstacles and must combat them in their own psyches. The *theras* externalize the obstacles and conquer them by isolating themselves away from them.

The presence of overt conflict in the Therīgāthā is one of the most prominent features of the text. As we noted above, the text devotes a large percentage of its verses to descriptions of *theris'* conflict with adversaries. In the study of the social setting we discovered some evidence of conflict with family over the *theris'* decision to renounce. Once renounced, they continue to encounter adversaries who attempt to frighten, seduce, or coerce them to give up their religious commit-

ments. In the chapter on the body, we found that the theris' internalization of doctrinal notions of feminine physicality makes the struggle to overcome an attachment to the false perception of self personal and immediate. Finally, we found that the theris' living situation poses continual conflict for them. As they are already socialized to form deep attachments with others, the communal living could only serve to make the required transformation of emotional attachments a constant source of struggle. Furthermore, the forest, as a desirable setting for the attainment of liberation poses the danger of disrespectful libertines threatening seduction or perhaps even rape.

The theras do not concentrate on conflict nearly as much as the theris. The major source of their conflict, their sexual desires for women, is combatted by minimizing contact. They do not concentrate on their memories of the enjoyments or suffering they have experienced prior to renunciation, but instead, concentrate more on the joys of solitude. Their wilderness dwelling thus provides them with the opportunity to escape from the object of their desires. Indeed, the theras are often advised against approaching women at all. When they do encounter women on their daily begging for alms, they project images of post-mortem decay and oozing putrefaction upon the bodies of the women they desire.

Thus, we see that the texts' presentations of the experiences of renunciants differ significantly. The Therīgāthā is far more willing to discuss the negative repercussions of renunciation for the theris: from their struggle to obtain permission to renounce, to their internal conflict with a false conception of self, to their conflicts with various adversaries presenting obstacles to their quest for liberation. Significantly, the Therīgāthā is also willing to devote a whole poem 20 verses long to a woman's attempted seduction of her renounced husband (291-311). The Theragāthā, in contrast, presents very few instances of overt conflict, though this example from the Therīgāthā indicates that the theras may have experienced more conflict than they are willing to portray.

This remarkable difference implies a differing attitude towards renunciation in the texts. While the Therīgāthā presents the experiences of renunciants as fraught with difficulties that must be faced, the Theragāthā underplays the difficulties and advocates escape rather than confrontation. Since both texts agree that the life of renunciation is mandatory to attaining the goal, this difference affects the way liberation itself is presented in the texts. Thus, we see that struggle pervades the religious expressions of the theris while escape pervades that of the theras.

Striking though these differences are, however,

they must be understood as very subtle. An initial reading of the texts gives one the impression of similarity rather than of difference between them. Both use identical terms and phrases to describe the goal of liberation, the liberation experience, and the attributes of those who have attained it. The most common structure of the poems is also identical. Both texts frequently employ the literary device of contrast to enhance the religious component of the poems: secular descriptions of scenery, situation, or ignorance are frequently juxtaposed with religious expressions of bliss, peacefulness, or joyful conquest over desire.

These similarities provide the basis of an argument for the common authorship of the texts. If we are to test the feasibility of this argument, I think we can discount the possibility of a woman, or group of women, as the author common to both texts. Given the generally denigrating portrayal of women's intellectual capacities throughout the canon, it is inconceivable that the tradition would accept women's accounts of male religiosity as authoritative. Yet, as Winternitz has indicated, it is also highly unlikely that men would bother composing the verses of the Therīgāthā and attributing them to women:

First of all, the monks never had so much sympathy with the female members of the community, as to warrant our crediting them with having composed these songs sung from the very hearts of women.... For the same reason it would never have occurred to

the monks to ascribe songs to the women, if an incontestible tradition had not pointed at this direction.³

But, since much of the analysis presented in this thesis depends upon the viability of the Therīgāthā's claim to female authorship, it is necessary for us to examine arguments supporting and opposing this claim.

If we are to seriously doubt the female authorship of the Therīgāthā, we must assume male authorship. To be considered valid, this assumption would have to explain the subtlety and consistency of the differences we have discovered between the texts. By speculating on what a male author might have perceived as female concerns, we can attempt to determine if this possibility is at all feasible. The question then becomes one of determining the differences that could conceivably derive from the male impersonation of the theris, though, as Winternitz has indicated, one would be at a loss to explain why men would want to do this.

Of the differences outlined above, we could explain the theris' emphasis on relationships as a male interpretation of typical female preoccupations with others. As we have seen in the chapter on the social setting, many of these relationships fit into feminine stereotypes of serving wives, loving mothers, and suffering

3. History of Indian Literature, II (op cit), p. 102.

widows. This consideration might explain the dramatic difference in the percentage of authors describing their previous lifestyles and in the degree of detail therein.

Likewise, the texts' portrayals of the female body's impurity and deceptiveness are remarkably similar. As a woman myself, I find it difficult to comprehend that women hold such a negative vision of their own bodily processes. Ambapālī's poem emphasizing the decline in beauty of a beautiful courtesan could be part of a male meditation on the bodily decline of one of their sources of desire. Thus, the portrayals of the body in the Therīgāthā might reflect a male perception.

Differences in setting could also be part of a male conception of female religious experiences. If, as the texts indicate, women were prohibited from dwelling in the wilderness, it would be natural for a male author to present the theris in cultural settings.

But these possibilities are very superficial. They fail to account for the consistent and subtle differences we have discovered in our close reading of the Therīgāthā: the theris' references to bhikkhus' parenthood; the presence of friendships in the bhikkhunī-saṅgha; the theris' failure to predict the deaths of those attracted to their bodies, their neglect of snake imagery, and their use of body imagery to instruct adversaries; the proportion of images of the surroundings used negatively as both setting

and symbol; and, finally, the dramatic presence of conflict in the Therīgāthā.

Thus we see that while a superficial reading of the texts could support the notion of a common (male) author, a deeper reading makes such a conclusion highly unlikely. I find it exceedingly difficult to believe that anyone could consistently maintain the subtlety of the differing perceptions we have discovered in the texts. My difficulty in accepting the feasibility of this is confirmed by studies other scholars have conducted of the differences between men's descriptions of women's religiosity and those written by women.

In a detailed study of differences in the presentation of female and male religious experiences in medieval Europe, Caroline Walker Bynum has found that men tend to project their expectations onto women's biographies. When women write their own stories, a major theme is continuity with their own social, biological, and psychological experiences as women. When men write women's stories (even in situations where autobiographies are extant), the themes are crises and their resolution, liminality, and dramatic symbolic gender reversals.⁴ Likewise, male biographers describe women as weak more than women do, and assume that

4. "Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality" (op cit).

women's religious experiences require verification by their adoption of masculine qualities--an assumption not found in biographies written by women.⁵

In other words, the men of medieval Europe assumed that women's religious experiences and modes of religious expression would be symmetrical with those of men. Walker Bynum's analysis of women's own writings, however, proves that this assumption is false.

In a study closer geographically and thematically to our own, John Stratton Hawley also illustrates the difficulty men have presenting women's religiosity. Studying the sixteenth century devotional poetry attributed to Mirā Bāī, a woman, and Sūr Das, a man, Hawley has uncovered significant gender differences in their adoption of the perspective of the *gopīs* (the female cowherding consorts of Krishna).⁶ Though Mirā Bāī and Sūr Das are close chronologically and geographically, writing in the same genre of poetry, using the same vocabulary and imagery, their poems display consistent differences.

According to Hawley, Sūr Das' poetry exhibits signs of strain in his impersonation of the female *gopīs*' perspective. Most significant for our purposes are Hawley's

5. " '...And Woman His Humanity': Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages" (op cit).

6. "Images of Gender in the Poetry of Krishna", Gender and Religion (eds., C. Walker Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986, pp. 231-256).

discoveries that while Mirā refers frequently to tensions among female family members, Sūr focusses on jealousies among the *gopīs* for Krishna's attentions, a focus Hawley claims to be based on the real life family tensions discussed by Mirā.⁷ Furthermore, Mirā's poetry contains many comparisons of the *gopīs* to women, mythological, or otherwise. In contrast, Sūr more frequently compares the spirituality of the *gopīs* to masculine than to feminine models.⁸

And finally, in a comparison that is strongly reminiscent of our own findings, Hawley contends that Mirā's poetry represents a union between the secular and the sacred while Sūr's poetry keeps the boundary between them clear.⁹

Both Walker Bynum's and Hawley's studies reveal that men are unable to present the subtleties of women's religious experiences even when their intention is to present women's biographies. When their intention is to actually impersonate women, they fare no better. For our purposes, these studies highlight the unlikelihood of male impersonation of the theris.

We must conclude, therefore, that common authorship of the Therīgāthā and Theraḡāthā is very unlikely.

7. Ibid, pp. 237-8.

8. Ibid, p. 240.

9. Ibid, p. 243.

While this does not prove the female authorship of the Therīgāthā, it does provide us with good reasons for following the tradition as our most reliable guide to assessing the sex of the authors. Although the traditional names ascribed to the poems cannot be trusted, we can assume that they were composed and preserved by the bhikkhunī-saṅgha.

Why the Theris Perceive Liberation as Struggle

Now that we have demonstrated the feasibility of accepting the Therīgāthā's claim to female authorship, we can return to the central question of this thesis: Why do the theris perceive liberation as struggle?

As we have seen in each chapter of this thesis, struggle pervades the experiences of the theris. They must struggle to gain permission to renounce, to maintain their vows of celibacy, and to transform their emotional attachments to others. They must also struggle against a perception of self that is much more personal and immediate than the theras' struggle against the false perception of other. Finally, we found that they must struggle to locate themselves in settings conducive to meditation and experiences of liberation.

In confirmation of this theme of struggle, we also found the Therīgāthā more willing to present the negative features of renunciation for both women and men. As we

have noted repeatedly throughout the thesis, the fact that the Therīgāthā differs so dramatically and consistently from the Theragāthā on this point indicates that its authors held a differing perspective of liberation than the authors of the Theragāthā.

I think the reason for this difference in perspective is the Therīgāthā's female authorship. Those women in ancient India that chose to become bhikkhunīs faced difficulties unknown to their male counterparts. Their decision to lead a life of celibacy and contemplation completely inverted the gender-stereotypes of their cultural milieu. Instead of being content with a life of domestic service, brightened by the births of sons, and overshadowed by the possibility of childless widowhood, these women chose to follow the path of religious renunciation. Instead of centering their lives on the needs of others, they concentrated on their own self-fulfilment, though they continued to help each other in the saṅgha.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the society at large should fail to respect the bhikkhunīs. They had renounced all the roles available to women that make them valuable in society. The bhikkhus had also renounced their socially valuable roles, but the established tradition of male asceticism gave their vocation more credibility.

Also, we must consider the possibility that the

Buddha himself contributed to the difficulty faced by the bhikkhunīs. His hesitancy in opening the saṅgha up to women, the subservience he required as a condition for women's ordination, and his stipulation that women dwell communally because of the problem of rape contributed to the obstacles women faced. Furthermore, he does not figure as prominently in the Therīgāthā as in the Theraḡāthā. Perhaps he shared his culture's devaluation of women, even though he was willing to acknowledge their capacity to attain the highest goal.

The combined effect of social disrespect, enforced subordination and neglect by the Buddha is reflected in the theris' conception of liberation as struggle. Thus we see that religious concepts, goals, and modes of expression do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they reflect the complex varieties of human experience. Since gender is one of the most powerful determinants of what we experience and how we perceive and interpret our lives, it naturally plays a role in our religious experiences, perceptions, and expressions.

As a text that illustrates the influence of gender in shaping the deepest religious experiences of its authors, the Therīgāthā has a powerful message for today. The very existence of a text that makes no apologies for its focus on women's religious experience shows us that women's struggle for "liberation" has been going on for a long time. And one group of women, at least, succeeded.

APPENDIX

The following charts present the references and frequency of occurrence of the most common terms and phrases used as synonyms for liberation, categorized according to whether they describe the religious attainments of "authors" or "others". The first chart documents every reference to these terms or phrases in the Therīgāthā (Thig) and the Theraḡāthā (Thag). The second chart presents the total number of references and a rough calculation of the numerical ratio between author and other. The bracketed numbers beneath the ratios refer to the numbers upon which the ratios are based.

The terms I have defined as referring to authors include statements by or about the ascribed author that utilize verbs in the past or present tense and their accompanying gerunds, relative clauses, and adjectival compounds. This "author" category, therefore, includes statements voiced by a narrator about ascribed authors.

The terms I define as referring to others are statements about persons other than the ascribed authors, or statements by or about ascribed authors that incorporate imperatives, future tenses and accompanying gerunds,

clauses and compounds. This "other" category, therefore, includes statements by the author about the religious attainments of other individuals, or about the qualities of any individual who has attained the goal. These statements do not refer to the author's own attainments (except, occasionally, as speculations of future accomplishments).

For example, compare the following two verses from the Therīgāthā: the first fits my criteria as a reference to "other", the second fits into the category "author". These verses are contained in two separate poems ascribed to Nandā. The first has a narrator commanding her to work towards the goal for its benefits and describing the peace she will obtain upon realizing liberation. Thus, this verse is not about Nandā's attainments, but reflects an abstract assumption of the characteristics of any liberated individual, thereby fitting into the category of other:

And develop the signless, cast out the latent tendency to conceit. Then by the full understanding of conceit, you will wander stilled. (20)

This second verse contains her answer to the unnamed narrator specifying her attainment of the goal, thereby conforming to my criteria for author. The difference between this verse and the previous one is that Nandā describes the characteristics of her liberated psyche:

Then I became disgusted with the body, and I was disinterested internally. Vigilant, unfettered, I have become stilled, quenched. (86)

In the following chart the results of a numerical

analysis of fifteen goal-referents categorized according to these criteria are summarized. As translated by K.R. Norman, the terms or phrases are: Quenched (*nibbāna* or *nibbuta*); Desire or craving (*rāga, tanhā, nicchāta, anupādāya*) overcome; Rebirth ended (*amata, macchuhāyin, bhavanetti samūhata*, etc.); Fetters, bonds or sensual pleasures (*yoga, visaṃyutta, kāma, kāmarati*) destroyed; *Āsavas* ("intoxicating ideas") destroyed; Pain (*dukkha, soka*) gone; Darkness torn asunder (*taṃokkhandhaṃ padāliya*); Conquest (*jayati, vihanti, nihanti*) achieved; Fear (*bherava, bhaya, dara*) overcome; Triple knowledge (*tisso vijjā* or *tevijja*) obtained; Freedom (*mutta*) obtained; Buddha's teaching done (*kataṃ buddhassa sasanaṃ*); Peace (*upasanta, santi, anavila*) obtained; Rest obtained or the load is put down (*ohito haruko bhāro* or *yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ*); and, Far shore reached (*pāragavesin*).

	AUTHOR	OTHER
	QUENCHED	
THIG	15, 16, 18, 21, 34, 45 & 6, 53, 66, 76, 86, 101, 105, 132, 222, 450 & 517.	6, 359, 432, 476 & 77 & 521.
	Total: 17	Total: 6
THAG	5, 8, 79, 96, 298, 725, 948, 1047, 1060.	32, 71, 100, 138, 162, 210, 227, 263, 364, 369, 392, 415, 418, 576, 586, 637, 658, 672, 702 & 4, 725, 807 & 9 & 11 & 13 & 15 & 17,

905 & 6 & 19, 928, 990 &
1015 & 17, 1022 & 45 & 46,
1090, 1122, 1158 & 65, 1212
& 18 & 30 & 38 & 63 & 66 &
74.

Total: 9

Total: 48

DESIRE GONE

THIG	1, 15, 16, 18, 24, 34, 36, 38, 41, 53, 56, 90 & 91, 99, 105, 132, 140, 156, 158, 207 & 8, 334, 341, 369 & 85.	14, 165 & 67 & 68, 204 & 5, 275, 337, 458.
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Total: 24

Total: 9

THAG	20, 79, 158, 161, 180, 191 & 92, 298, 327, 338, 344, 378, 416, 466, 517, 843 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 50 & 51 & 52 & 53 & 54 & 55 & 56 & 57 & 58 & 59 & 60 & 61, 890, 1059 & 60 & 61, 1125.	10, 18, 39, 40, 56, 74, 154, 282, 306, 313, 338, 401 & 2, 418, 491, 519 & 26, 596, 600, 641, 665, 673, 699 & 704, 707 & 11, 806 & 8 & 10 & 12 & 14 & 16, 840, 923, 972, 992, 1008 & 12, 1092 & 94 & 1105, 1162 & 63, 1214 & 16 & 24 & 75.
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Total: 39

Total: 47

REBIRTH ENDED

THIG	11, 22, 47, 56, 65, 91, 106, 149, 158 & 60, 221, 334, 363.	7, 10, 14, 26, 64, 168, 320, 457 & 77 & 93 & 511 & 12 & 13.
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Total: 13

Total: 13

THAG	67, 80, 87, 90, 120, 135, 170, 216, 254, 296, 333, 336 & 39, 343 & 44, 440, 486, 493, 516, 546, 604, 656, 687, 718, 792, 881 & 91, 918, 948, 1016, 1050, 1088, 1185.	35, 69, 129, 168, 179, 202, 257, 306, 330, 708 & 11, 748, 908, 980, 1022, 1079, 1110, 1177, 1234 & 36 & 49 & 50 & 71 & 75 & 78.
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Total: 33

Total: 25

FETTERS CUT

THIG	47, 59, 62, 76, 86, 91, 111, 142, 188, 195, 203, 235, 334, 364, 396.	4, 12, 166 & 67, 337, 350 & 51 & 59 & 60, 510.
	Total: 15	Total: 10
THAG	38, 73, 122, 135 & 36, 138, 176, 181 & 82, 196, 254, 290, 298, 380, 458, 605, 657, 793, 865, 892, 1125, 1184 & 86.	14, 15, 142, 162, 195, 282, 306, 400, 413 & 14, 417, 457, 519 & 21, 633 & 40 & 44, 671, 680, 691 & 99, 707, 750, 1014, 1021 & 22, 1105 & 19, 1165, 1177 & 84, 1234 & 42 & 77.
	Total: 23	Total: 34

ĀSAVAS DESTROYED

THIG	66, 71, 76, 99 & 101, 121, 126, 181, 228, 334 & 36, 364, 389.	4, 205 & 9, 329, 337.
	Total: 13	Total: 5
THAG	47, 116, 120, 122, 161, 198, 206, 218, 296, 333, 336 & 37, 365, 439, 458, 546, 629, 791, 890, 896 & 97, 996, 1061, 1179.	92, 100, 129, 162, 178, 205, 289, 364, 369, 437 & 38, 526, 541 & 43, 576, 586, 596, 636, 672, 704, 711, 840, 900, 924 & 28, 1022.
	Total: 24	Total: 26

PAIN GONE

THIG	52 & 53, 131, 138, 144.	162, 167, 193, 206, 214, 281, 315 & 18 & 19, 512.
	Total: 5	Total: 10
THAG	78, 120, 339, 440.	68, 82, 84, 138, 195, 227, 257, 263, 421, 492, 502 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6, 519 & 21 & 25 & 26, 585, 676 & 77 & 78, 682, 707 & 12 & 17 & 21 &

23, 1008, 1115 & 16 & 23,
1221 & 30.

Total: 4

Total: 35

DARKNESS TORN ASUNDER

THIG 28, 44, 59, 62, 120, 142, 173 3.
& 74, 180, 188, 195, 203,
235.

Total: 13

Total: 1

THAG 128, 170, 627.

Total: 3

Total: 0

CONQUEST

THIG 7, 10, 56, 59, 62, 65, 142,
188, 195, 203, 235.

Total: 11

Total: 0

THAG 5, 6, 8, 336.

7, 177, 236, 415, 831 & 33
& 39, 1095 & 96, 1146 & 47
& 48 & 49 & 1166, 1221 &
42.

Total: 4

Total: 16

FEAR OVERCOME

THIG 32. 135, 333, 512.

Total: 1

Total: 3

THAG 5, 20, 21, 189 & 90, 709,
864, 1059. 7, 82, 289, 367, 413, 707
& 8 & 16 & 32, 831 & 40,
912, 1093, 1238.

Total: 8

Total: 14

TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE OBTAINED

THIG 26, 30, 65, 121, 126, 150, 209, 251, 290, 311, 322 &
180 & 81, 187, 194, 202, 23 & 24.

331, 363, 433.

Total: 13

Total: 7

THAG

24, 55, 66, 107, 108, 112,
117, 220 & 21, 224, 270, 274,
286, 296, 302, 314, 319, 336,
349, 410, 465, 479, 515, 562,
639, 886, 903, 1262.

60, 129, 1114, 1177, 1236
& 48 & 49.

Total: 28

Total: 7

FREEDOM OBTAINED

THIG

11, 17, 30, 81, 96, 105, 111,
116, 144, 157, 223, 334, 369
& 399.

2, 320, 350, 506 & 15.

Total: 14

Total: 5

THAG

43, 89, 181 & 82, 253, 270,
274, 302, 319, 365, 410, 465,
477, 493, 516, 658, 996 &
1017.

47, 60, 438, 545, 596, 641
& 42, 680, 691, 711, 906,
961, 1013, 1165 & 76 &
1202, 1250 & 64 & 74.

Total: 18

Total: 19

BUDDHA'S TEACHING DONE

THIG

26, 30, 36, 38, 41, 71,
96, 187, 194, 202, 228 &
33, 331.

13, 209, 311.

Total: 13

Total: 3

THAG

24, 55, 66, 107, 108, 112,
117, 135, 220, 224, 270, 274,
286, 302, 314, 319, 332, 349,

746, 1114.

410, 465, 515, 562, 604, 639,
656, 687, 792, 886 & 91, 903
& 18, 1016, 1050, 1088, 1185,
1260.

Total: 36

Total: 2

PEACE OBTAINED

THIG	18, 86, 91, 182, 189.	14, 20, 168, 196, 212.
	Total: 5	Total: 5
THAG	50, 79, 260, 298, 325 & 26, 416, 427, 434, 791.	11, 32, 68, 239, 364, 369, 405, 422, 521, 642, 672, 690, 747, 905, 988 & 1006 & 7 & 8, 1077, 1099, 1168 & 69, 1218 & 22 & 26.
	Total: 10	Total: 25

REST OBTAINED

THIG	223	6, 8, 9, 211.
	Total: 1	Total: 4
THAG	604, 656, 687, 792, 891, 918, 1016, 1050, 1088, 1185.	32, 69, 227, 263, 415, 990, 1021.
	Total: 10	Total: 7

FAR SHORE REACHED

THIG		291, 320.
	Total: 0	Total: 2
THAG	38, 632.	66, 209, 680, 690, 711, 748 & 63, 771 & 72 & 73, 1022, 1171 & 82, 1249 & 51 & 53 & 54.
	Total: 2	Total: 17

Term or Phrase	<u>Therīgāthā</u>		<u>Theraḡāthā</u>	
	# of occurrences	ratio of author: other	# of occurrences	ratio of author: other
Quenched	23	3:1 (17:6)	57	1:5 (9:48)
Desire Overcome	33	3:1 (24:9)	86	3:4 (39:47)
Rebirth Ended	26	1:1 (13:13)	58	4:3 (33:25)
Fetters Cut	25	5:2 (15:10)	57	2:3 (23:34)
<i>Āsavas</i> Destroyed	18	3:1 (13:5)	50	1:1 (24:26)
Pain Gone	15	1:2 (5:10)	39	1:8 (4:35)
Darkness Torn	14	13:1 (13:1)	3	3:0 (3:0)
Conquest	11	11:0 (11:0)	20	1:4 (4:16)
Fear Overcome	4	1:3 (1:3)	22	1:2 (8:14)
Knowledge Obtained	20	2:1 (13:7)	35	4:1 (28:7)
Freedom Obtained	19	3:1 (14:5)	37	1:1 (18:19)
Teaching Done	16	4:1 (13:3)	38	18:1 (36:2)
Peace Obtained	10	1:1 (5:5)	35	2:5 (10:25)
Rest Obtained	5	1:4 (1:4)	17	3:2 (10:7)
Far shore Reached	2	0:2 (0:2)	19	1:8 (2:17)

These charts reveal many fascinating differences in the texts' usage of these terms and phrases, one of which is the dramatic difference in their emphasis on the attainments of "authors" and of "others". In the Therīgāthā, 57 of the 73, or 78.08% of the poems use these terms and phrases to describe their ascribed authors. In the Theraqāthā, 93 of the 264, or only 35.2% of the poems describe their authors this way.

Moreover, the texts differ in the terms they use most frequently to refer to "author" and to "other". Five of the terms display a ratio-reversal between the two texts: while the Therīgāthā refers to "Quenched" 3 times as often for its authors as for others, the Theraqāthā refers to others 5 times as frequently as to authors; "Desire gone" has a 3:1 ratio of authors to others in the Therīgāthā and a 3:4 ratio in the Theraqāthā; "Fetters cut" has a 5:2 ratio in the Therīgāthā and a 2:3 ratio in the Theraqāthā; "Rest obtained" appears 4 times less frequently in the Therīgāthā for authors and in the Theraqāthā, it appears in a ratio of 3:2 in favour of authors; finally, and most significantly, "Conquest" has an 11:0 ratio in favour of authors in the Therīgāthā and a 1:4 ratio in favour of others in the Theraqāthā.

The terms or phrases preferred in the Therīgāthā are those that reflect an emphasis on the conquest aspect of liberation--most obviously revealed by the Therīgāthā's

marked preference for the term "Conquest" and its relative paucity in the Theraqāthā. But the other terms that are preferred in the Therīqāthā also reflect this emphasis. "Quenching" is a "putting out" of desires, passions, delusions, etc. "Desire or craving" has to be combatted, and "Fetters" have to be "cut" or otherwise eliminated.

In a contrast that confirms this emphasis in the Therīqāthā, the one term that is preferred by the Theraqāthā, "Rest", conceptually reflects an end to struggle. Thus, we see that the Therīqāthā is characterized by an emphasis on the struggle aspect of liberation, a feature of the goal that is de-emphasized in the Theraqāthā.

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