

Indian Buddhist Etiquette and the Emergence of Ascetic Civility

by Christopher Aaron Handy

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a study of the concept of etiquette in the monastic law codes of early Indian Buddhism. This category of texts, called *vinaya*, is considered within and outside of the tradition to be based on Buddhist ethical ideals. However, *vinaya* texts also contain a great deal of material that appears to be inherited from pre-Buddhist cultural habits, and is not uniquely Buddhist. That material is useful to us in reconstructing the world of early Buddhists, as literary examples of the kinds of interaction Buddhists portrayed themselves having with *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyas*, and various political and kinship groups in premodern India. The degree to which this body of literature is representative of actual historical situations is open to debate, but the texts arguably illustrate an ideal of behaviour in social relationships.

Etiquette in general manifests as a kind of public performance involving respect for boundaries and acknowledgment of social roles. The various rituals that are considered to embody etiquette in any particular culture often look arbitrary from the outside, yet there is always an internal logic that helps to determine which behaviours are considered appropriate and which are “impolite.” I argue here that the etiquette rituals of early Indian Buddhist monastics are modeled on a conception of disgust that Buddhists shared with various other Sanskritic cultures of premodern northern India. I employ some of the ideas from *linguistic politeness* and from contemporary theories of disgust to help in my analysis of these premodern law codes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study of Early Indian Buddhist Etiquette

1.1: Introduction

This dissertation is a study of etiquette rituals in the monastic legal texts (*vinaya* texts) of Indian Buddhism. I argue that etiquette rituals in early Indian Buddhist texts were created partly as an effort to increase the mainstream popularity of Buddhism among an urban elite, with a conscious awareness of Brahmanical and pan-Indic aesthetic values. My study presumes that the Buddhist enterprise in early India depended largely on Brahmanical economic support, as well as the support of other social groups, and considers this idea well supported by early Indian texts. Being a “good” Buddhist monk or nun in early India means first being a good Indian man or woman. The rules for proper behaviour found in Buddhist legal texts reflect a type of sensibility suited for an early Indian metropolis, but are not necessarily uniquely Buddhist. These rules are also not uniquely concerned with ethical goodness, despite frequent presentation as such in both academic and traditional Buddhist literature.

As I argue below, demonstrating knowledge of proper etiquette communicates participation in a shared ritual framework of public performance, and an awareness of the needs of others. Sharing that framework of performance is mainly observable in cultural tropes concerned with pollution, which tends to overlap with ethics to some unknown degree. However, the adoption of cultural rituals of etiquette is often not directly connected to the professed system of ethics within a particular doctrinal work. In other words, what early Buddhists considered “rude” is inherited mainly from Indian aesthetic conceptions about rudeness, but what Indian Buddhists considered to be ethically evil as a unique Buddhist position expressed in canonical doctrine is likely to be a later intellectual creation. Etiquette is inherited via culture, and depends largely on culturally-dependent ideas about what is disgusting and/or polluting. To a certain degree, the same might be

said of ethics as well, yet throughout my own study I will refer to a distinction between ethics and etiquette.

The concept of etiquette is difficult to define precisely. While some scholars claim that behind the specific terms *etiquette*, *(im)politeness*, *courtesy*, *civility* and *manners* is a broader notion of appropriate behaviour pervading all human social interaction,¹ there is still a great deal of controversy concerning the relationships between these phenomena in culturally-specific contexts and etiquette as a hypothetical generic category.² Our English word *etiquette* has ambiguous origins, and the various meanings of this term and its relatives are subject to endless change, as with clothing fashions or other cultural trends.³ The application of etiquette and other dynamic and relatively modern Eurocentric terms to the social forms of ancient, non-European cultures is problematic in many ways, but not futile. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, a concept roughly synonymous with contemporary Western ideas about etiquette did exist in early India, albeit with its own context-dependent aspects.

To my knowledge, there are no previous academic studies of early Indian Buddhist monastic etiquette. The only major work that appears even remotely similar to my own project is a 1991 dissertation (and 1993 book) by Lieve Van de Walle,⁴ which examines Sanskrit texts from the perspective of *linguistic politeness*. That study unfortunately avoids engaging very much with the social and cultural world of its subject, relying instead on grammatical forms as indications of politeness phenomena. Since it is

¹ Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987, 1.

² Culpeper and Kádár 2010, 13–16.

³ Heim 2004, 87.

⁴ Van de Walle 1991; Van de Walle 1993.

primarily a Sanskrit language study through the lens of *pragmatics*, Van de Walle’s work is concerned with the linguistic formulae that construct polite discourse in Sanskrit, rather than with the meaning of proper etiquette behaviours in early north Indian social contexts. This special usage of *politeness* as a technical term in linguistics is the primary reason for my use of the word *etiquette* (which I describe below as a broader category) for the object of inquiry in this dissertation.

Van de Walle’s study focuses on four Sanskrit texts: two classical dramas from ca. 4th century India (*Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and *Mṛcchakaṭikā*), the Nala narrative in the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Daśakumāracaritam* (“Adventures of the Ten Princes”) of Daṇḍin (ca. 7th century CE).⁵ While I do agree that the method Van de Walle applies in her study tells us something about the mechanics of politeness in Sanskrit, her choice of texts is not especially helpful in reconstructing the social worlds of these texts’ authors. I also think that the goals of Van de Walle’s study are much different from my own, in that she is interested mostly in the grammatical forms of politeness, whereas I am focusing on the meaning of verbal and somatic social rituals related to social politeness (as distinct from *linguistic politeness*), or what I am calling *etiquette*.

The general framework of *linguistic politeness* is nevertheless a valuable toolkit for describing the phenomenon of etiquette. This subdiscipline within linguistics, which owes much of its existence to the works of Erving Goffman,⁶ Robin Lakoff,⁷ and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson,⁸ emerged from research in the latter half of the

⁵ Van de Walle 1993, 6.

⁶ Goffman 1956; Goffman 1966; Goffman [1967] 1982; Goffman 1971.

⁷ Lakoff 1973.

⁸ Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987.

20th century on the concept of *social face* as a performed aesthetic role. As *linguistic politeness* developed, it later branched off into even more specific research areas. A new subdiscipline called *historical politeness* has emerged recently through the application of these Goffmanian concepts of politeness and *social face* to historical texts.⁹

The goals of my own project are not identical to those of *linguistic politeness*, nor even to those of *historical politeness*, but I have found some aspects of these frameworks to be applicable to the task of reconstructing the social world(s) of the early Indian Buddhist institution(s). Thus, while this project is interdisciplinary in nature, it is first and foremost rooted in religious studies, inheriting from other areas only where it is convenient to advancing my argument.

My dissertation is composed of the following chapters. In chapter 1, this introduction, I provide an overview of the major goals and methods of *linguistic politeness* as a discipline, and then connect this framework to the themes of my own specific focus within the early Indian Buddhist context. In chapter 2, I discuss the historical context of early Indian Buddhism in more detail, and describe parallels between etiquette rituals in the Sanskrit texts of Vedic Brahmanism and similar rituals in Indian Buddhist texts. In chapter 3, I examine Indian Buddhist monastic legal texts, and discuss the difference between rules concerning ethics and rules concerning etiquette. In chapter 4, I narrow my focus to rules for lavatory and bathing rituals described in Buddhist monastic legal texts, as a way of demonstrating the close connection between etiquette and the emotion of disgust. In chapter 5, I extend this concept of disgust to explain the reasons for requiring 100 or so extra rules for female Buddhist monastics. In chapter 6, I

⁹ Kádár 2015; Bax and Kádár 2012; Culpeper and Kádár 2010; Kádár and Pan 2011.

conclude my study with some further observations about the concept of etiquette as a category.

1.2: Etiquette as Ritual

My usage of the term “etiquette rituals” is an intentional blurring of the lines between two ideas that are sometimes assumed to be mutually exclusive. The Buddhologist Robert Sharf has argued that “[t]he commonplace distinction between etiquette and ritual is warranted: behavior at the stuffiest dinner party looks relatively spontaneous in comparison with behavior at a Catholic Mass or a Buddhist ancestral offering.”¹⁰ I disagree with Sharf’s distinction between etiquette and ritual. The assumption of a rigid division between etiquette and ritual presupposes an imagined restriction of order within religious spaces that is not distinct from the types of “everyday” action we tend to associate with secularity, while at the same time ignoring the rigidity of certain common social templates for interaction within these settings. Sociologists, in contrast with the distinct division of ritual and etiquette proposed by Sharf, have been treating activities related to etiquette as a subset of ritual, and specifically as performance ritual, since as early as the 1930s.¹¹ Linguists who specialize in the study of *politeness* as a linguistic phenomenon also use the term “ritual” to describe the social interactions included in their research.¹² In this study, I consider etiquette and politeness behaviours as a subcategory

¹⁰ Sharf 2005, 246–247.

¹¹ Elias [1939] 1978; Elias [1939] 1982; Goffman 1956.

¹² See for example Kádár 2015, p. 278: “Ritual is a recurrent interaction type, which puts constraints on the individual’s ‘freedom’ to construct their (and others’) identities, in a somewhat similar way to institutional interactions, which have been broadly studied in

within a larger set of social rituals. This larger set could be called “culture,” but is not possible to define precisely.

By way of example, I include as “ritual” the singing of the “Happy Birthday” song at a birthday party, saying “bless you” when a person sneezes, and the daily habit of brushing one’s teeth. All of these examples of habitual actions actually satisfy Sharf’s own criteria for ritual, as well as Catherine Bell’s classic six criteria on which Sharf bases his argument.¹³ Bell argues that “table etiquette and most other forms of socially polite behavior are readily considered ritual-like in nature,” noting that the former “bear only indirect links to the utilitarian purpose of getting food into one’s stomach.”¹⁴ However,

the field.”

¹³ Bell 1997. The six criteria are: 1) formalism (pp. 139–144); 2) traditionalism (pp. 145–150); 3) invariance (pp. 150–153); 4) rule-governance (pp. 153–155); 5) sacral symbolism (pp. 155–159); 6) performance (pp. 159–164). Sacral symbolism may seem to be a tricky fit for many of the above rituals, depending on how we interpret this category. In the case of a ritual for brushing one’s teeth, I consider the toothbrush to be symbolic of cleanliness in addition to its function as an actual instrument of cleaning. My reasoning is that humans generally brush their teeth ritualistically at the same times of day regardless of the cleanliness of the teeth, and tend not to brush at other times. The activity of brushing one’s teeth is thus a psychological marker for cleanliness just as much as the toothbrush is a physical tool. Etiquette rituals are generally instilled with meanings symbolic of disgust negation, as I will discuss in later chapters.

¹⁴ Bell emphasizes the social aspect of ritual in contrast to other theories of ritual. Bell 1997, 142–143.

Bell also makes a distinction between monastic hygiene rituals and hygiene rituals not affiliated with religious practices, which I find problematic.¹⁵

If we allow that certain aspects of etiquette share some features with ritual in a more general sense, we can also distinguish etiquette from both ritual in general and from ethics in two major ways. First, etiquette always implies some type of audience for an action, and can be described as a performance that promotes *social face*. Ritual may also be concerned with *social face* and have an audience, but need not have either. Ritual also may or may not serve a practical purpose. We can consider the terms “habit” and “ethics” to be related to etiquette and ritual in some ways, but unique in other aspects. Habits are generally practical repeated practices (e.g., brushing one’s teeth), and may also overlap with both ritual and etiquette — these latter categories, however, have a tendency toward the impractical. Consider, for example, the modern necktie, which may be considered both an object of ritual concern as well as an accessory of urban refinement, yet has no discernible practical function other than its own form being visible in social contexts.

The boundaries between these three aspects of the social atmosphere are not distinct, so that we can speak in terms of the degree to which etiquette behaviours are also habits and rituals, as well as how their formalization and stylized structure contribute to their impracticality. Again by way of example, sweeping the floor can be a habit, but leaving a floor dirty could be considered impolite. There is a relationship between these terms, but the actions of their focus are different. Ethics and etiquette are likewise related, but transgressions of etiquette are not always easily describable as ethical transgressions. My interest is not in quantifying and categorizing the membership of any specific practice

¹⁵ See Bell 1997, 150–151. See also Bell 1997, 140–144, and Bell 1992, 120–121; 219.

along a spectrum of etiquette-habit-ethics, but rather in considering the cultural frameworks that brought about these social rituals.

The terms *etiquette*, *(im)polite*, *rude* and the like have various implied meanings to speakers of contemporary English. These terms often have subtle differences in meaning, but any single individual's understanding of them is bound up with cultural notions of time and space, social class, ideology,¹⁶ and other variables. Linguists have shown that there is no simple correlation between our distinct English terms for social conduct and those of other modern languages.¹⁷ Usage of these terms in English, and their analogues in other European languages, also varies by geographic area.¹⁸ In addition to these problems, contemporary researchers of *linguistic politeness* assign specific technical meanings to mundane terms for politeness; these technical meanings also vary from one researcher to another. In this section, I shall review some of the technical meanings of terms employed in *linguistic politeness* theory, and attempt to define further the nature of the phenomenon of etiquette.

An issue that we will return to repeatedly in this study is the relationship between etiquette and ethics. Erving Goffman, to whom we owe a great debt in the development of politeness research, frequently used the terms “etiquette” and “ethics” in nonstandard ways.¹⁹ It is important to understand Goffman's unique usages of these terms, because his concept of *social face* emerges from the concept of etiquette as a ritual performance, and is highly influential on the ways that politeness research is approached today. Goffman's

¹⁶ See pp. 134, 139 for my working definition of *ideology*.

¹⁷ Terkourafi 2008, 60–62; Culpeper 2008, 32–33.

¹⁸ Bayraktaroglu and Sifianou 2001, 3.

¹⁹ See Goffman 1956; Goffman 1966, 24; Goffman [1967] 1982.

ideas concerning *face* were also inherited (and slightly modified) by Brown and Levinson for use in their 1978 article (republished as a book in 1987) on *politeness*. Despite widespread criticism of the universality of Brown and Levinson's theory (i.e. criticism of the idea that a single phenomenon called "politeness" is present in all cultures),²⁰ the concept of *face* still remains a key element within politeness research. We must therefore bear in mind the ways in which Goffman, and later Brown and Levinson, consider the general relationship between etiquette, ethics and also *face* before moving into the more specific realm of ancient Indian and Buddhist etiquette.

As Laura Bovone explains, Goffman's etiquette is "the formal code which governs encounters," and is not directly concerned with ethics, despite the intersection of morality with the concept of good manners:

It is a code of manners which allows encounters to take place without any problems arising, irrespective of their aim and situation. Respecting the rules of etiquette involves certain virtues linked to morality — such as loyalty, discipline, circumspections and honesty. But when they occur on the level of etiquette, Goffman describes them with the adjective 'dramaturgical' — 'dramaturgical loyalty', 'dramaturgical discipline' and 'dramaturgical circumspection'. He looks upon them not so much as strongholds of moral values, but rather as 'practices employed for saving the show'.²¹

"The show" itself is not something ethically good or bad. Yet maintaining this show is still somehow good, because it prevents discomfort in its participants by providing a standard set of scripts as a framework for social interaction. This framework is in some

²⁰ Watts 2003, 10–11.

²¹ Bovone 1993, 26.

sense moral, but not in the same way that behaviour outside of the etiquette performance is considered moral. Etiquette occupies a strange territory with respect to ethics, then, because there is certainly an overlap with ethical concerns, but the form of etiquette becomes in some sense more important than the content. We could even say that the content of etiquette is its form. This feature of etiquette does not mean that the rituals themselves are random or meaningless. On the contrary, the various ways that etiquette is expressed often hint at older functional forms that seem to have developed as a way of mitigating the spread of biological diseases. For example, the common Western response to a sneeze, “God bless you,” suggests a holdover from an earlier attempt to contain disease through magical incantations. The persistence of this form in contemporary use does not seem to carry any of that meaning, and yet neglecting the ritual response is commonly regarded as impolite. The ritual as a magical incantation against disease has thus lost its function, and yet the ritual itself has become a function, a magic of another kind, providing an effective way of coping with the minor social disruption created by the sneeze. Bovone continues,

By stressing in particular the contrast between ethics and etiquette, Goffman’s terminology becomes particularly enlightening. Behind the concept of etiquette, there are two ideas which are essential if we are to interpret the contemporary sociology of morality correctly. They are form (or aesthetics) and practice.²²

This perception of etiquette forms as aesthetic performances has been inherited by contemporary research on *politeness*, to such a degree that the framework is usually not stated explicitly. The question of where etiquette stands in relation to ethics is therefore generally not considered at all within the realm of *linguistic politeness*, and yet it is

²² Bovone 1993, 26. See also Coleman 2013.

something we must account for if we are to understand the ancient Indian conception of etiquette.²³

The connection of etiquette to aesthetic performance also requires some analysis of aesthetics itself within the social context of the topic at hand. A comprehensive study of Indian/Buddhist aesthetic theory is too great a task to fit within the bounds of this study of Indian Buddhist etiquette, but my general idea about this connection can be stated very simply: etiquette counteracts disgust. In later chapters I shall go into more detail about how exactly this formula works. In brief, I argue that the emotion of disgust appears to have been evolutionarily advantageous in human cultures generally for the avoidance of diseases, and yet in many ways has been a hindrance to civil discourse. Etiquette rituals arose in consonance with urban societies as a way of dealing with disgusting, unavoidable, biological processes that threaten social order in minor ways.

There are numerous, divergent theories about the uniformity of politeness, and how to approach politeness in general,²⁴ but linguists tend to agree that the phenomena alluded to by etiquette terminology can be usefully described through models of *face-threatening acts* (FTA), situations in which the authority or reputation of participants are in some way put at risk.²⁵ Threats to *face* are threats to a person's self-image and

²³ The relationship between etiquette and ethics is, however, an important concern for scholars approaching the issue from within the discipline of philosophical ethics. Stohr 2012 argues that etiquette is inextricably linked to ethics.

²⁴ See, for example, the highly critical evaluations of Watts (2011), who points out that there is no single "politeness theory" (pp. 104–105). See also Eelen 2001, which addresses some issues of the *face* theory of Brown and Levinson.

²⁵ There has also been criticism of the applicability of Brown and Levinson's model of

reputation only, but usually do not have tangible material consequences. *Face-threatening acts* can be broadly divided into attacks on positive and negative *face*. In Brown and Levinson's classic monograph on *linguistic politeness*, the authors describe *positive face* in terms of a person's own self image, the "personality" or "ego" that we construct for ourselves.²⁶ *Negative face* represents our social mobility,²⁷ the degree to which we are independent agents within the performance of social discourse. Politeness as a general category refers to the dynamic interplay of these two kinds of *face* within a community of individual speakers and hearers. *Impoliteness* and *rudeness* in our contemporary understanding produce annoyance and vexation, but are not themselves dangerous, nor morally problematic. In contrast, many ethical situations involve the possibility of bodily harm, financial harm, or in some other way affect people's lives in ways that go beyond simply being irritating. While European manuals on good behaviour have historically alluded to a connection between morality and politeness,²⁸ the emerging scholastic tradition of politeness research tends to avoid discussions of ethics entirely.

Linguist Jonathan Culpeper distinguishes *impoliteness* from *rudeness* by defining the former as an "intentional *face* attack" and the latter as an "unintentional *face* attack."²⁹ Using these criteria, a *rude* individual is a person who does not mean to cause offence. An *impolite* person is consciously trying to cause offence. Neither of these types of attacks is concerned primarily with ethics; politeness theory treats the concept of *face*

the face-threatening act for non-European social interaction. See Pan and Kádár 2011.

²⁶ Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987, 61.

²⁷ Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987. See also Goffman [1967] 1982.

²⁸ Watts 2011, 119.

²⁹ Culpeper 2008, 32.

negotiation as an ordinary part of social engagement. From the perspective of politeness theory, we could even say that meaningful social interaction is not possible without *face*-threatening acts. Marina Terkourafi uses the terms *impolite* and *rude* in a different way from Culpeper; she describes three types of *face*-threatening behaviour called *impoliteness*, *rudeness proper* and *unmarked rudeness*. For Terkourafi, *impoliteness* and *rudeness proper* are “marked” behaviours, meaning they “are noticed because they involve a departure from expected events.”³⁰ The distinction between the terms used by linguists to describe these phenomena, and the importance of these terms, will become more apparent as we analyze specific *sūtravibhaṅga* backstories associated by the Buddhist tradition with the rules preserved in the *prātimokṣas* of Buddhist legal texts.

Linguists have applied general theories of politeness to a wide variety of contemporary cultures around the world. It is only within the last five years or so that a new branch of linguistic politeness dealing specifically with *historical* (im)politeness has emerged, with several books dedicated to problems in adapting theories of *face* and other aspects of politeness research to ancient cultures. In their introduction to *Historical Impoliteness*, Culpeper and Kádár suggest that “studying historical (im)politeness is of bidirectional importance: by examining the past, the usage of politeness language today can be placed in context; by examining the present, politeness language usage of the past can be placed in context.”³¹ Bax and Kádár, in their introduction to *Understanding Historical (Im)Politeness*, emphasize the importance of “thick description” (a notion borrowed from Gilbert Ryle and Clifford Geertz) as a way of getting at the desired object of study.³² The explicit warning repeated throughout studies of historical impoliteness is

³⁰ Terkourafi 2008, 60–61.

³¹ Culpeper and Kádár 2010, 11.

the problem of conflating normative ideological notions of proper behaviour as expressed in texts with social understandings of proper etiquette. For example, Culpeper and Kádár note,

A lesson to be learnt from current synchronic research trends [...] is that (im)polite practices vary across groups and sub-groups in ways that are more complex than the classical politeness theories have assumed. One danger of simplification is that we reconstruct the politeness ideology of select dominant social groups rather than the majority politeness behaviour (which is not necessarily in itself an unfruitful endeavour). This does not mean that no general conclusions about historical (im)politeness in a certain society can be made, but that such conclusions must be carefully elicited from extensive micro-level analysis.³³

We should therefore make an attempt to distinguish normative conduct as prescribed in texts from descriptions of conduct in literature. In the case of ancient Indian texts, the historicity of any literary narrative is questionable. Formal texts on proper conduct as prescriptive rule are a small percentage of the entire corpus of literature, both for Brahmanism and for Buddhism.³⁴ In both traditions, however, there is an implicitly didactic aspect to any story, and we can find many examples of the ways one should act (within each respective tradition) by examining the social interaction of literary characters. Such texts do not often distinguish sharply between history and fiction, or may claim in theory to be recollections of the past, but often rather clumsily. In other words, narratives from the Indian literary traditions frequently are presented as actual historical

³² Bax and Kádár 2012, 4–5.

³³ Culpeper and Kádár 2010, 13–14. See also Bax and Kádár 2012, 16.

³⁴ The vast majority of available literature from ancient India is narrative literature.

events, but serve in practice as source manuals for normative behaviour. We do not really know if any of the events described in Hindu and Buddhist texts on proper behaviour ever took place, but the ways in which these texts have been used within their respective traditions is such that this issue is not a major problem. Even so, since the theoretical frameworks of linguistic politeness that I wish to apply to these texts require some literary and/or historical context to be of use, we must examine specific examples of social interaction in addition to the framework. In order to fit those general theories of politeness to the conditions in which Indian ideas about politeness came about, it is useful to think of the cultures of their authors in a broader social context. In chapter 2, I examine the concept of proper speech or “right speech” in Brahmanism and Buddhism, and attempt to view it as part of a larger cultural framework, not restricted to a distinct religious group. I shall later extend this framework to include social actions outside of spoken language, referring to the aforementioned work on linguistic politeness. In the next section of this chapter, I introduce some specific examples of etiquette rules within the Buddhist monastic code.

1.3: The Scope of Indian Buddhist Etiquette

Vinaya, often termed “Buddhist law,” is the Buddhist monastic equivalent of Hindu *dharmaśāstra*. While this category includes the *pātimokkha* / *prātimokṣas*, the “confessional liturgies” of Buddhist monks and nuns, there are also many other *vinaya* texts that are not directly related to this formal list of rules. *Vinaya* scholars tend to locate Buddhist etiquette at the tail end of the list, in a section called *sekhiya*³⁵ *dhamma* in Pāli or *śaikṣa*³⁶ *dharma* in Sanskrit, the “rules of training.” A number of these rules are

³⁵ Also appears in some texts as *sekhiyā*.

concerned with what we might call “table manners,” and include injunctions against speaking with one’s mouth full of food, eating and drinking too noisily, sticking out one’s tongue and licking one’s lips, in addition to a number of other rules dealing with proper decorum while walking on the daily almstour. There are also a few rules dealing with proper lavatory etiquette.

In the only [nearly] complete English translation of the *Theravāda Vinaya*,³⁷ I. B. Horner divides the *sekhiya* rules into three groups, the scope of which are 1) “etiquette and decent, polite behaviour” practiced by monks and nuns on their almsrounds, 2) “respectful transmission of the dhamma,” and 3) “unsuitable ways of obeying the calls of nature and of spitting.”³⁸ John Holt has argued that the *sekhiya* rules are “more than mere social etiquette,” viewing them as “outward reflections of the inner state of a *bhikkhu*’s mental condition” and “evidence that a disciplined mental culture was expected to be manifested in even the most meticulous fashion.”³⁹ Holt, however, says very little about what he considers etiquette itself to be. I find this lack of definition to be problematic, because Holt first implies that social etiquette by itself is not important, and then attempts to attach a deeper meaning to rituals of social etiquette in order to explain why the *sekhiya* rules are included in the *pātimokkha*.⁴⁰ While I do not disagree that later

³⁶ Also appears in some texts as *śaikṣā*.

³⁷ Horner’s translation of the *Thervāda Vinaya* intentionally omits certain passages that she considered unsuitable for a modern, Western audience. These passages were later translated by Petra Kieffer-Pülz. See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 197; Kieffer-Pülz 2001.

³⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, xxviii.

³⁹ Holt [1981] 1983, 102.

commentators did attach a deeper meaning to these rules, their original inclusion in the *pātimokkha* appears to me more practical and mundane, concerned with external form and the appearance of a well-regulated *saṅgha*. The explanatory backstories for many of the rules support my interpretation more than Holt's, as they largely concern the problems caused by uncivilized monks damaging the public perception of the Buddhist institution.

In a series of articles comparing the Theravāda *sekhiya* rules with the *śaikṣa* rules (the equivalent term in Sanskrit) of other Indian Buddhist lineages,⁴¹ Charles Prebish follows Holt's line of reasoning, revising Horner's threefold classification of these rules to address what he calls their "functionality," as 1) "the robe section," 2) "the section on village visiting," 3) "the section on Dharma instruction," and 4) "the section on eating."⁴²

⁴⁰ Holt's argument is predicated on the idea that all external monastic behaviour is ultimately symbolic of a deeper internal commitment to spiritual advancement. While I do agree that many examples of mundane normative behaviour for monastics can be later imbued with spiritual significance, I consider such dual meanings to be primarily formed as later interpretations of rules created for the economic and material wellbeing of the Buddhist monastic community. See Holt [1981] 1983, 101–103.

⁴¹ To avoid ambiguity, I have intentionally used the word "lineage" and not "school" or "sect" throughout this dissertation to describe the various traditions within the larger Indian Buddhist tradition. In the few places that the word "sect" appears, it refers to non-Buddhist religious orders.

⁴² Prebish's categorization is based mainly on a comparison of the Theravāda *sekhiya* rules with the Sanskrit *śaikṣa* rules of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage. He also mentions some variant *śaikṣa* lists from the *prātimokṣas* of the Kāśyapīya, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka lineages (Chinese translations from Sanskrit), the Mūlasarvāstivāda

In his work on *śaikṣa* rules, Prebish attempts to use them as clues about early sectarian schisms,⁴³ whereas Horner's work on *sekhiya* rules, while extremely valuable, provides only a translation of the text itself. Neither Horner nor Prebish go into any significant detail about the meaning and origin of these rules. While I agree with Prebish's appeal to investigate more deeply into the *contents* of these rules in addition to comparing types of rules among Buddhist lineages, he does not offer much explanation for the *meaning* of those contents,⁴⁴ since his research is mainly concerned with proving the Mahāsāṃghika lineage of Buddhism to be the earliest, and closest to the original Buddhist *saṅgha*. Prebish's argument essentially comes down to the singular fact that the *prātimokṣa* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage has fewer *śaikṣa* rules than other Buddhist lineages. Prebish claims to be interested in comparing the *śaikṣa* lists of each of the aforementioned lineages,⁴⁵ but does not appear to be particularly concerned with examining individual rules outside of a very narrow comparison of Theravāda *sekhiya* rules and Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda *śaikṣa* rules.⁴⁶

lineage (Sanskrit original and Tibetan translation), and the Sarvāstivāda lineage (Sanskrit original and Chinese translation). See Prebish 1996, 269–270.

⁴³ Prebish 2007, 42–43.

⁴⁴ Prebish 1996, 263.

⁴⁵ Prebish 1996, 258.

⁴⁶ A more comprehensive comparison of the *śaikṣa* rules of different Indian Buddhist lineages can be found in Pachow 1955, 9–13; 15–22; 49–59. Pachow also notes that the etiquette rituals in the *śaikṣa* rules appear to have been inherited from a more general Indian notion of etiquette (p. 10).

One mistake common to Horner, Holt, and Prebish is the implication that mundane injunctions by themselves are trivial in meaning. The result is that in some cases seemingly trivial injunctions are glossed over entirely, and in others they are imbued with a deeper meaning beyond the merely practical.⁴⁷ This line of reasoning risks veering away from objective scholarship on Buddhism and into the category of Buddhist apologetics. In other words, there is a rather pregnant assumption in such analyses that all Buddhist texts are collectively involved in advancing a cohesive, consistent, and uniquely Buddhist doctrine on the relationship between ethical behaviour and the nature of being itself. I do not disagree that there is something uniquely Buddhist about certain aspects of the Buddhist tradition, but it does not logically follow from that premise that anything in a Buddhist text is concerned with promoting, for example, ontological theories rejecting Vedic Brahmanism. Sometimes a rule about sweeping the floor is really just a way of keeping the floor clean. Yet, in Holt's analysis, "[a] thoughtful expression is required by every *sekhiya* determination."⁴⁸ Of the *prātimokṣa* rules in general, Holt argues that "*bhikkhu* discipline can be best understood as the self-control of one's inner condition. Self-control of one's inner condition, however, cannot be effected without the essential knowledge of The Four Noble Truths which accurately depict the process of dynamic becoming."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Prebish does reference Holt's argument that the rules in question are "more than mere social etiquette," but, like Holt, never explains why the presumed deeper doctrinal meaning is necessary for social etiquette rituals to be of scholarly interest (Prebish 1996, pp. 263–264).

⁴⁸ Holt [1981] 1983, 103.

⁴⁹ Holt [1981] 1983, 104.

A second problem related to the above is the tendency to equate proper behaviour with ethics only. Holt, for example, emphasizes the symbolism of outward appearance, arguing that it was important for the *saṅgha* to maintain its *bhikkhus* as “objects of veneration for the laity,” and that “[t]o appear in public in a disheveled fashion was insulting not only to the Buddha, but to the laity who considered *bhikkhus* as examples of high Buddhist spirituality and worthy receptors of lay piety.”⁵⁰ Holt also asserts that “[c]asual attention to public habits would reflect a similar disregard for the teaching of the *Dhamma*,”⁵¹ explaining:

By this, we mean to argue that the *sekhiyas* are more fundamentally concerned with expression. The motive which generated their inclusion into the disciplinary code was simply this: perfect control of inward demeanor leads to perfect control and awareness of outward expression, even the most minute public expressions.⁵²

Holt summarizes his interpretation of the *sekhiya* rules by concluding, “One motive governs all declarations: comprehensive discipline untainted in every detail.”⁵³

I do agree with some of Holt’s points regarding the *saṅgha*’s determined efforts to appeal to the public, and many other scholars of Buddhism have similarly noted that material support from the laity was a key concern of the early Buddhists. Richard Gombrich, for example, mentions that “often the reason why the Buddha formulates a *vinaya* rule is to placate public criticism,”⁵⁴ and Peter Harvey has highlighted the

⁵⁰ Holt [1981] 1983, 102.

⁵¹ Holt [1981] 1983, 103.

⁵² Holt [1981] 1983, 102–103.

⁵³ Holt [1981] 1983, 103.

⁵⁴ Gombrich 2009, 52.

importance of social harmony in Buddhist texts, with an emphasis on its relationship to ethics.⁵⁵ Likewise, Bailey and Mabbett's sociological approach to the study of early Buddhism focuses on the economic relationship between the Buddhist *saṅgha* and its Brahmin donors, and on the rhetorical devices used in establishing the Buddha as a spiritual leader worthy of both veneration and monetary contributions.⁵⁶

It is not my intention to replicate the work of these previous studies, but rather to address some aspects of the Buddhist social world that have been neglected in pursuit of evidence of Buddhist ethical values and/or conscious political scheming. It is here that I find Holt's ethical analysis and the sociological approach of Bailey and Mabbett to be lacking, not because they have said anything overtly untrue, but only because their observations of behaviour are limited to a particular type of interaction. Rhetoric for the sake of material gain is of course very interesting in itself, but the "ordinary" and apolitical habits of daily life⁵⁷ also tell us a great deal more about the Buddhist worldview than we often realize. One of things they tell us is that there is a certain "politic"

⁵⁵ Harvey 2000, 109–112; 344.

⁵⁶ Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 74; 124.

⁵⁷ Some might argue that no habits are apolitical, and that ideology is present in the most mundane actions. Certainly I do think that culture and language contribute significantly to the worlds we present to ourselves, yet we can still make a distinction between overt political actions (e.g., bowing to the king) and mundane actions (e.g., cleaning mud from a sandal). These mundane actions are not entirely divorced from the political, as I may for example be concerned with the king's opinion of my sandals, but the distinction is still useful.

behaviour in all interaction, not in the sense of politics proper, but in the rule-governed social interactions of everyday life.

Strangely, while the *sekhiya* rules as a category are often imbued by contemporary scholars with an extra meaning representative of Buddhist goals, translators of Buddhist primary texts also tend to gloss over the wider cultural symbolism of specific etiquette rituals. Horner, referring to didactic narratives in the *Cullavagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya*, points out that the conduct of the group of “six monks”—a set of stock characters used for demonstrating bad behaviour—is “often undesirable because it resembled that of householders,”⁵⁸ but also considers this section of the *Vinaya* “well worth studying for the light it throws on contemporary manners and the things in common usage.”⁵⁹ Horner’s own analysis of manners and politeness, however, is limited to summarizing a few local customs referred to in the text, including the practice of treading on a cloth for good luck, and placing protective charms on doorways.⁶⁰ Likewise, Thanissaro Bhikkhu explains in his translation of the *vatta khandaka* (“protocol”) section of the *Cullavagga*, “Because the protocols are so detailed and require so little explanation, [...] I have simply translated the fourteen protocols, together with a few of the origin stories describing the events that led to their formulation,” providing almost no analysis regarding the meaning of these social rituals.⁶¹ The stories that appear to require “so little explanation” are to me the most

⁵⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, ix.

⁵⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, ix.

⁶⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, ix. Unfortunately I do not know of any comprehensive study of these practices in an Indian Buddhist context. However, see Schopen 2012a, 17–19 for a discussion of the practice of treading on cloth for predictive/causitive reasons relating to the birth of healthy children.

interesting, because they are a window into the most basic cultural forms that ultimately contribute to the larger shape of complex religious doctrines.

The basic problem as I see it is the repeated assumption that mundane habits only gain meaning when they are considered as examples of a deeper Buddhist doctrine, or are otherwise not useful to study at all. Any cultural artifacts that have been retained in Buddhist texts from earlier traditions are treated as a sort of anomalous noise that disrupts the continuity of the Buddhist narrative. This type of thinking about the development of Buddhism as an institution is in many ways backwards, since historically it must be the case that these older cultural forms were modified gradually to form the appearance of a later cohesive Buddhist system. The reasoning behind the construction of these basic forms is not self evident, and assuming that to be the case severely limits our understanding of Buddhist culture to the subjective and constructed self image of Buddhist authors.

It is of course necessary to take into consideration the views of Buddhist scholars about the meaning of their own customs. Traditional Buddhist commentaries on monastic law place a major emphasis on *sīla* (Pāli, equivalent to Sanskrit *śīla*),⁶² often translated as “morality,” which is one of three major divisions of the “Noble Eightfold Path”;⁶³ the

⁶¹ Thanissaro [1994, 2001] 2013, vol. 2, 96. I discuss these protocols further in chapter 4 (see p. 155).

⁶² See, for example Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye’s *Treasury of Knowledge* (Kalu Rinpoché Translation Group [1998] 2003, book 5, 125–129), “Any transgression of the above-mentioned rules is a downfall because by transgressing it, one may be reborn into the lower realms” (p. 129).

⁶³ The Pāli term *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* is often translated as “Noble Eightfold Path,”

other two divisions are Pāli *paññā* / Sanskrit *prajñā* (“wisdom”) and *samādhi* (“concentration”). Three of the eight components of the Eightfold Path—“right speech” (*sammā-vācā* / *samyag-vāc*), “right action” (*sammā-kammanta* / *samyak-karmānta*), and “right livelihood” (*samma-ājīva* / *samyag-ājīva*)—are traditionally associated with *sīla*. I have already mentioned “right speech” and its relationship to Brahmanical notions of proper speech. Good behaviour in general is also associated with *sīla*,⁶⁴ and the entire *pātimokkha* (Sanskrit: *prātimokṣa*) is often considered to be an instructional text describing how to lead a moral life. It would not be incorrect from the perspective of the tradition to categorize Buddhist standards of polite behaviour under this heading of *sīla*, simply as another expression of ethical behaviour. However, there are several good reasons we might not wish to do so, for the sake of distinguishing between different kinds of improper behaviour, which is not synonymous with unethical behaviour.

The Buddhist *vinaya* tradition recognizes certain types of misbehaviour as more significant than others, and so the ethical gravity of a single act is always weighed against a spectrum of inappropriateness contained in the several hundred rules of the *pātimokkha* (Theravāda lineage) and *prātimokṣas* (other Indian Buddhist lineages).⁶⁵ At the beginning

but can also be translated as “Eightfold Path for Nobles.” For a discussion of this term and the related “Four Noble Truths” / “Four Truths for Nobles,” see Williams and Tribe 2000, 41; 52; Norman 1997, 16.

⁶⁴ Levitt 2010, 61–63.

⁶⁵ The extant *prātimokṣas* include texts from the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka, Mahāsāṃghika, Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda, and Kāśyapīya lineages. While these *prātimokṣas* share many of the same rules, the total number of rules and their ordering varies. Typically there are around 250

of the list are more serious offences, including taking a human life, engaging in sexual intercourse, and other breaches of conduct that stand in direct contravention to Buddhist ethical doctrine. Transgressions are less significant the further they are located down the list. Behaviours we often associate with politeness in its contemporary usage are mostly situated at the least consequential end of this spectrum, with correspondingly light (or in some cases nonexistent) punishments. Special vocabulary is used for introducing protocols and standards related to greetings, maintenance of the monastery, and other mundane details of monastic life, offsetting these conventions from ethical breaches in general.

The mundane conventions found mainly in the *sekhiya* / *śaikṣa* section of the *pātimokkha* / *prātimokṣas* are also intermixed with presentations of ethical standards. An investigation into only those sections of texts ostensibly reserved for mundane protocol would not yield all examples of polite behaviour; nor are all of the rules in those sections strictly about etiquette. In other words, the categories used by Buddhist texts can be misleading for our purpose here, and even the texts themselves do not take their own categories to be as rigid as they may appear to be on the surface.

This category problem presumes in some sense that we already know etiquette when we see it. Even if we decide that etiquette itself is ultimately undefinable, it is necessary to be able to say what does not fit into the category, and why. As I will explain in the following sections, my use of the term “etiquette” refers to particular actions (both verbal and physical) that focus around the interrelated notions of disrespect and disgust,

rules for monks and 350 for nuns. For a comparison of the different *prātimokṣas*, see Pachow 1955. I discuss the reasons behind requiring more rules for female monastics in chapter 5. See Clarke 2015 for a survey of *vinaya* literature.

and includes various formal behaviours intended to reduce and control unwelcome social actions. Disrespect can be loosely defined around the concept of *social face*, which I introduced in the previous section. I will say more about the concept of *face* as I examine specific examples of *facework* in the following chapters. Disgust, which I introduce in section 5 of this chapter, is considered by many scholars to be primarily a biological, emotional response to potentially dangerous stimuli. I use this notion of disgust as a starting point for understanding why polite actions are considered socially useful.

The most severe transgressions of the *prātimokṣa* (Pāli *pātimokkha*), I argue, are ethical transgressions only, but are not impolite. For example, the *pārājika* transgression against killing another person is indicative of a moral failing, but is not impolite. Similarly, sexual intercourse (also a *pārājika* offence), at least when it is consensual, is not impolite. These actions are severe transgressions of monastic ethical boundaries, and arguably also cause loss of *social face* for at least one party. A monk who murders or has sex would certainly be looked down upon as a poor example of monasticism by the surrounding monastic and lay communities, while a person murdered or seduced by a monk could potentially be a target of shame or some other loss of reputation. However, because these transgressions are considered so severe, to call them impolite would only serve to inauthenticate that ethical element. In that sense, the distinction between ethics and etiquette is also one of the perceived severity of the action. In the case of sex, we might also question whether or not such an action is even unethical for monastics, or

simply bad form.⁶⁶ The line between ethics and etiquette is often very hazy indeed, depending on the reasons behind the sanctions involved.

As with the *prātimokṣas* of other lineages, many actions are classified multiple times in the Theravāda *pātimokkha*, depending on specific contexts.⁶⁷ Stealing in general is a *pārājika* transgression,⁶⁸ but angrily taking back a robe that was loaned to another monk is a *nissaggiyapācittiya* transgression.⁶⁹ Lying about one's own spiritual achievements is a *pārājika* transgression,⁷⁰ but committing slander against another monk is a *saṅghādisesa* transgression, as is addressing a woman with lewd or obscene language.⁷¹ Covering the food in one's bowl with rice in an attempt to sneak more food,

⁶⁶ The reasoning behind monastic injunctions against sexual relations is generally explained in terms of worldly attachment. Sexuality is considered to be a hindrance to overcoming the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), and is therefore framed as mainly a soteriological/ontological problem, not an ethical problem.

⁶⁷ Pachow 1955 points out that the four *pārājika* rules are also related to “minor precepts that are scattered among the various sections of the [*prātimokṣa*],” and suggests, “It would not be unreasonable to say that the code of discipline of the Saṃgha is but, an enlarged edition of the ‘Pañcaśīla’ which have been adopted by the Buddhists and the Jains from the Brahmanical ascetics” (p. 37).

⁶⁸ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 9; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 64–115; Pachow 1955, 74–75.

⁶⁹ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 42–43; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 139–141; Pachow 1955, 116–117.

⁷⁰ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 10–11; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 151–191; Pachow 1955, 77–78.

another type of deception, is only a *sekhiya* transgression; it carries no formal punishment.⁷² It can be difficult to generalize, then, about how the tradition characterizes a particular action. The above distinctions of punishment by context are not themselves evidence that Buddhists conceived of ethics and etiquette as discrete categories. Yet when we examine carefully the backstories provided in the *suttavibhaṅga* as explanations for each rule's construction, establishing a direct connection to ethics is often not warranted by evidence in the text.

From an outsider's perspective, we can also examine systems of etiquette and manners as emergent systems of social stratification. Norbert Elias, in his classic work on the development of European civility, emphasizes the connection between social stratification and the emergence of class differences as catalysts for the creation of systematic codes of mundane behaviour.⁷³ The mundane cultural traditions codified in Indian Buddhist legal texts are probably artifacts of a similar social stratification process in premodern India, which arose in parallel with the transition from barter economics to

⁷¹ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 12–17; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 271–287; 214–221; Pachow 1955, 83–85; 79–80.

⁷² Pachow 1955, 38.

⁷³ Elias [1939] 1982, *The Civilizing Process*, 49: “The French concept of *civilisation* reflects the specific social fortunes of the French bourgeoisie to exactly the same degree that the concept of *Kultur* reflects the German. The concept of *civilisation* is first, like *Kultur*, an instrument of middle-class circles—above all, the middle-class intelligentsia—in the internal social conflict.” See also Elias [1939] 1982, *Power and Civility*, 267: “It was this very distance from the bourgeoisie, their character as nobles, their membership of the upper class of the country, that gave their lives meaning and direction.”

the more abstract use of metal coins, increasing urbanization, and the establishment of larger and more permanent systems of government.⁷⁴ I will refer again to this process of urbanization in later examples, but first it is necessary to discuss the specific terms related to politeness behaviour in the Buddhist texts at hand. Through examination of these terms we can then come to a better understanding of how the terminology of Buddhist politeness was intertwined with new ideas about proper behaviour within the urban environment.

1.4: Buddhist Politeness and Social *Face*

The canon of the Theravāda Buddhists, translated into a Middle Indic vernacular called Pālibhāsa (Pāli), is particularly useful in reconstructing the early Indian Buddhist world by way of literature, as it is the only complete Indic Buddhist canon still available to us.⁷⁵ By examining the vocabulary of the Theravāda canon, we can come to a better understanding of how early Buddhists conceived of the relationships between proper behaviour, social status, and urbanity. For example, the Pāli word *porin* / *porī* is etymologically related to the English word *polite*,⁷⁶ and the Sanskrit words *pura* (“city”) and *paura* (“urban”). *Porin* / *porī* appears throughout the Theravāda Buddhist canon, most frequently in the phrase *porī vācā* (“polite speech”).⁷⁷ Just as *polite* in contemporary

⁷⁴ Many of these issues are taken up by Bailey and Mabbett 2003, 57; 76.

⁷⁵ Not in its original language, however. See Norman 1997, 95.

⁷⁶ Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.v. *porin*, 475: “belonging to a citizen, i.e. citizenlike, urbane, polite, usually in phrase *porī vācā* polite speech.” See also Watts 2003, 32.

⁷⁷ Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.v. *porin*, 475. The full formula is usually given as *yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemaṇīyā hadayaṅgamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamanāpā,*

English indicates refined and cultivated behaviour, *porin* for Theravāda Buddhists in ancient India signified a familiarity with city life, “polished”⁷⁸ behaviour, control over the senses, and, defined negatively, the suppression of animality. This term frequently appears in canonical discussions of “right speech” (*sammā-vācā*), one of the eight aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path.⁷⁹

Politeness for Theravāda Buddhists is not limited to *porin*, however, and polite behaviour as we understand it today is more readily found scattered throughout Buddhist literature, canonical and otherwise, often not presented in formal injunctions.⁸⁰ The

tathārūpiṃ vācaṃ bhāsitaṃ hoti, “he speaks words that are gentle, pleasing to the ear, lovable, words that go to the heart, courteous words that are desired by many people and agreeable to many people” (Bodhi 2012, 583). The phrase *porī vācā* (with no words in between) does not actually seem to occur in the Theravāda canon.

⁷⁸ The English words *polish* and *police* are also related to *polite* and *polis* (city). See Watts 2003, 32 and 12–13.

⁷⁹ Compare the Sanskrit term *nāgaralapita* = “urbane speech” in Schopen 2010, 109–110.

⁸⁰ There are, in fact, many different Sanskrit and Pāli terms overlapping with various aspects of our own notions of etiquette, including *ācāra*, *abhisamācāra*, *sārāṇīya*, *saṇhā*, *cārittaṭṭhā*, *sadācāra*, and many others. Sanskrit and Pāli texts employ the above terms inconsistently, just as we now use *courtesy*, *civility*, and *politeness* in diverse and ambiguous ways in English. There is no single term in any Indic language that corresponds exactly to the contemporary Western notion of *etiquette*, which is an idea constantly in flux. My usage of *etiquette* is therefore a constructed term used for the sake of convenience, but it nevertheless points toward a particular set, albeit loosely defined,

questions of what politeness actually is, how it can be defined, and whether we as scholars can identify objective instances of this phenomenon, without inserting our own cultural biases into the mix, are major concerns. As I have mentioned already, I have found it useful to draw from the sociolinguistic subdiscipline of *politeness theory*, which takes as its primary focus the concept of *linguistic politeness*. At the same time, the scope of my own study is not limited to the study of linguistic politeness, often termed “second-order politeness” or “politeness₂,” as distinct from “lay politeness,” which is also called “first-order politeness” or “politeness₁.” Even within politeness theory, these two terms, “politeness₁” and “politeness₂,” are the subject of a great deal of controversy. For that reason, I prefer to use the term “etiquette” to describe the cultural norms in question here.⁸¹

of formal and informal behavioural practices recognized by Indian Buddhists in their texts.

⁸¹ The meaning of the term *etiquette* and its origins in English are also ambiguous and therefore problematic. Heim 2004 claims that this word was coined by Lord Chesterfield in the 18th Century in the sense of “little ethics” (p. 87), citing Arditi 1998, 208–211. Arditi 1998 does claim that the English word “etiquette” in the sense of “propriety” is first observed in a letter from Lord Chesterfield to his son in 1750 (p. 1), but also notes that word is observed in French as early as 1477 (p. 2), possibly related to the French word for “ticket.” In any case, the meaning of “little ethics” is probably closer to what Theravāda Buddhists meant by *porin* compared with the present-day technical usage of “politeness” by linguists. My usage of the term “etiquette” also includes rituals of the body and material objects not generally considered under the rubric of linguistic politeness theory.

The basic problem with using “politeness₁” and “politeness₂” is that there is no scholastic consensus on how the terms relate to each other. Richard J. Watts, in his 2003 critique of politeness theory, *Politeness*, argues that “the very fact that (im)politeness is a term that is struggled over ... should be the central focus of a theory of politeness. To put it another way, investigating first-order politeness is the only valid means of developing a social theory of politeness.”⁸² This means that primacy should be given to the investigation of normative politeness within a culture on its own terms, and not by trying to force a second-order generalized theory of politeness onto a culture. Lest I be accused of misreading Indian Buddhist law for that reason, I should point out here that in attempting to demarcate the ideas of ethics and etiquette within *vinaya* texts, I do not mean to undermine what the tradition has to say about itself. The intention of my project is only to open up alternate ways of reading these texts in order to understand the historical development of etiquette performances within a larger context. I think that this idea will become more clear as we attempt to fit some of the broad themes of *linguistic politeness* to specific examples from Buddhist law.

Let us turn back for a moment to the notion of *face* and *face-threatening acts* (FTA).⁸³ *Positive face* refers to a person’s self-esteem, and *negative face* refers to a

⁸² Watts 2003, 9.

⁸³ Face theory and politeness theory overlap, but are not synonymous (Watts 2003, 117). Within the study of linguistic politeness, *face* has been interpreted in a variety of different ways. My usage of the term here inherits from Brown and Levinson’s classic work on politeness (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987), which borrows the term from Erving Goffman while slightly altering its meaning. This difference in meaning is noted in Watts 2003, 204. I examine *face* in more detail in chapter 3.

person's freedom to act. Attacks on positive *face* are actions that suggest disapproval of the addressee's desires, whereas attacks on negative *face* impede the addressee's ability to make choices free of social ramifications. For example, if I say to you, "Do you mind if I open the window?", I am being polite and attacking your negative *face*. While friendly, this formula is characterized as an attack because of the restrictions imposed on the hearer. Your ability to say "no" to my request is limited by the politeness of my request. If you choose to refuse my request, your public image is tarnished because I have used the proper request formula. Even a compliment, such as "I like your shoes," can be considered an attack on the hearer's negative *face*, because it can create unwelcome attention. Such a statement may or may not increase solidarity between the speaker and hearer. If the compliment is appreciated, it still creates a sense of verbal debt, in which the receiver of the compliment is now obligated to give back an appropriate response in order to maintain politeness.

A direct insult, for example, "You are an idiot," is an attack on the hearer's positive *face*, as it threatens the hearer's sense of self worth and potentially damages his or her social standing. My apology, "Sorry for calling you an idiot," is my attack on my own positive *face*. I acknowledge that I have acted inappropriately, thus damaging my public image. Linguistic politeness can thus be described as a process of *facework* in which the positive and negative faces of participants are balanced through the use of rhetorical strategies. Using this framework of politeness theory, we can now examine some examples of proper monastic conduct. Especially in terms of proper speech, the rules for being a good monk often correspond generally to Indian concepts of politeness. However, there is not always a direct correlation between ethical behaviour for monks and the etiquette of the laity, as we shall see.

For Theravāda Buddhists (and members of other Buddhist lineages), maintaining proper social relations between the monastic institution and lay society is necessary for keeping monks and nuns fed and clothed. Buddhism as an institution developed as a conscious rejection of traditional Vedic society, and the reasoning given in Buddhist texts for the purpose of good behaviour is not always the same as that in the *dharmaśāstra* tradition of Vedic Brahmanism. The awareness of this fact by the composers of Buddhist texts is apparent from the formulaic explanations for particular rules in the *Vinaya*, in which the common people often “looked down upon, criticized, spread it about” (*manussā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti*)⁸⁴ when they saw conduct considered unbecoming of monastics.

The *Cullavagga* in the Theravāda canon tells us that the Buddha once sneezed while giving a talk on *dhamma* (Sanskrit *dharma*).⁸⁵ Following local convention, his disciples respond, “Lord, may the Lord live (long), may the wellfarer live (long).” This formulaic response was apparently the ancient Indian equivalent to the Western ritual of saying “[God] bless you” after witnessing a sneeze. Bucking convention, the Buddha responds in this text, “Now, monks, when the phrase ‘Long life’ is spoken to one who has sneezed, can he for this reason live or die?” The monks agree that this phrase has no such effect. The Buddha then formally sanctions monks from using the phrase “Long life” when someone sneezes. From the perspective of linguistic politeness theory, we might categorize the Buddha’s utterance as “bald on record impoliteness,” because he is directly calling out the monks for their own colloquially polite comment.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Horner’s translation in *The Book of the Discipline*, found in Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 83; 92; 100; 111; 115; 131; 178; 238; and elsewhere.

⁸⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 195; *Cullavaga* 5.33.3.

The rule immediately creates a problem when monks sneeze and the laity wish them “Long life.” Monks, remembering the Buddha’s injunction, say nothing in response, which causes the laypeople to become upset. The monks have threatened the positive *face* of the laypeople by neglecting to return the appropriate response. The Buddha then revises his rule, saying, “Monks, householders like lucky signs. I allow you, monks, when the phrase ‘May you live long, honoured sirs’ is being spoken to you by householders to say, ‘Long life’ to them.”⁸⁷ This rule revision allows for the monks to preserve the social *face* of laypeople, by avoiding explicit negative judgment of their traditional sneezing ritual. At the same time, the monks preserve their own positive *face* in a monastic context by keeping the prohibition in a purely monastic situation.

This situation illustrates a common disjunction between the culture of early Buddhist monastics and their lay supporters, living in the same geographic area at the same time, and all within a larger context of Indian culture. It is useful to return here to the question of “politeness₂,” which has come to denote *linguistic politeness* as a general theoretical framework. Politeness₂ is an attempt to create a universal structure for politeness that can predict politeness behaviour in any particular culture. Watts, however, argues that “politeness₂ cannot possibly figure as a model of politeness in a theory of politeness. It is politeness₁.”⁸⁸ This attempt to generalize from culturally-specific data creates something of a recursion problem, by trying to develop a predictive theory of culture in general by using examples from one specific culture. Yet Watts also asserts that it is possible to say some general things about politeness₁, which is part of what

⁸⁶ This category of impoliteness is discussed further in chapter 2 (p. 119).

⁸⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 195.

⁸⁸ Watts 2003, 53.

politeness₂ is for. Referring to his own examples, Watts contends that “[a]t the basis of all these examples of (im)politeness₁ are a consideration for others, often at the expense of one’s own interests, and an almost instinctive feeling that the fabric of social relations relies on the reciprocal maintenance of those forms of behaviour.”⁸⁹

In *dharmasūtra* texts, for example, the authority of the teacher over the student is assumed as a necessary precondition for a functional social system. Buddhist legal texts inherit something from that earlier framework, but are also always concerned with maintaining the support of the laity. Within Buddhist legal texts we also see glimpses of a politeness₁ for the laity themselves, which influences the monastic system but also diverges from it. These various social systems are taken by their practitioners to be a fact of reality itself, meaning that the rules of etiquette are not considered to be imposed on society, but instead reflect a natural order that predates their codification in texts. The authors of the *dharmasūtras* appear especially to see the role of these injunctions as one of reinforcing the natural order; accepting the duties of the student as outlined in those texts is by definition an agreement to put aside selfish desires for the purpose of advancing to a higher social role through traditional training.

The authors of Buddhist law are perhaps more able to step outside of this ideological boundary, simply because they are a minority group within a larger social system. Therefore, when the Buddha says that “householders like lucky signs,” he can acknowledge both the reality of these lucky signs in everyday use (i.e. the rituals are made effective in their usage), and at the same time the arbitrariness of their form (saying “long life” has no direct effect on the length of life). Etiquette in this way becomes a kind

⁸⁹ Watts 2003, 31.

of language of its own in which new meanings are created that supersede the older functions of the rituals. It is these older functions that I would now like to address.

1.5: Etiquette and Disgust

One way of explaining the universality of etiquette rituals is to ground them in the only thing common to all human cultures: human bodies. Here I would like to introduce the emotion of disgust as a way to describe the unwelcome effects of impolite behaviour.

Disgust has both biological and psychological aspects, but it is usually considered to be a byproduct of our natural fear of contamination, an outgrowth of primordial and largely subconscious reactions to the external environment. Aurel Kolnai, one of the first philosophers to take up a serious academic evaluation of disgust, links this emotion with negative feelings and ideas concerning decay, decomposition, and the fear of death.⁹⁰ More recent studies of disgust by social psychologists Paul Rozin, Jonathan Haidt, and Clark McCauley describe the emergence of this emotion as firstly a protection against disease, which later expands to include social and moral threats.⁹¹

Scholarship on disgust tends to use three major approaches for analyzing disgust. First is what I call the “existential-aesthetic” model of Kolnai, Menninghaus⁹² and McGinn,⁹³ who treat disgust as a response to the human condition. Second, there is the “sociobiological-psychological” approach of Haidt, Rosen and McCauley, who rely mainly on empirical data from human test subjects, and consider disgust as an evolved

⁹⁰ Kolnai [1939] 2004; Kolnai [1969/1970] 1998.

⁹¹ Rozin, Haidt and McCauley 2008; Haidt et al. 1997; Rozin 1996.

⁹² Menninghaus 2003.

⁹³ McGinn 2011.

biological response to potentially toxic substances. Third, there is the “socioeconomic-moral” approach of Kelly,⁹⁴ Miller,⁹⁵ and Nussbaum,⁹⁶ who treat disgust reactions as the byproducts of culture, worldview and ideology. Although I find all three of these ways of analyzing disgust to be useful in highlighting different aspects of this phenomenon, the socioeconomic-moral approach is perhaps most beneficial in helping us to understand the historical development of Buddhist etiquette within a larger Brahmanical/Indian framework. As a fledgling community in an established tradition, the members of the earliest *saṅgha* must have been conscious of discrimination based on stereotypes about the lifestyle they represented. While the Indian Buddhist monastic tradition is formally considered to be free from *varṇa* (social class, “caste”) discrimination, the texts of Buddhists necessarily inherit and interact with a larger Sanskrit literary tradition overseen mainly by wealthy Brahmins. It is not surprising, then, that conceptions of the body across that larger tradition share common features.

Bodily actions are portrayed in Buddhist texts as offensive for various reasons. Disgusting actions appear particularly likely to cause offence, and rituals concerned with bodily hygiene are often formulated in these texts as methods for preventing disgust. The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, which I examine in chapter 2 for advice on proper speech, also contains very specific rules for using the monastic lavatory, as well as for bathing. In many cases, these rules correspond closely with the lavatory and hygiene rules in the *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda canon. The latter text additionally contains many examples

⁹⁴ Kelly 2011.

⁹⁵ Miller 1997.

⁹⁶ Nussbaum 2004.

in which the lavatory functions as a liminal space, in which certain monastic regulations are temporarily suspended for the sake of performing ordinary tasks related to hygiene.

Ideas about proper boundaries for bodily action are often called into question in these texts due to the tension created when ordinary use of lavatories and bathing rooms requires transgressing standard protocol for proper attire and the protection of ritual purity. These rooms then become natural loci for the distortion of propriety, even as they reinforce standards of acceptable behaviour. In the *Cullavagga*, for example, a Buddhist monk “who had been born a Brahmin” does not wish to rinse his anus with water after defecating, so that he can avoid touching “this foul evil smell.” In Horner’s translation, “A worm remained in his rectum,” suggesting some kind of intestinal parasite, and the Buddha responds by giving the injunction, “if there is water you should not not rinse,” the double negative being a common literary trope for introducing a positive rule. In other words, monks should always wash themselves after using the lavatory.⁹⁷ This injunction appears to be a subtle jab at the perceived hypocrisy of Brahmins, who are here as elsewhere portrayed by Buddhists to be so obsessive about guarding their ritual purity that they neglect sensibility, paradoxically leaving themselves less clean physically because of their preconceived notions about symbolic cleanliness.

Considerable attention is given in *vinaya* texts to rules for the monastic lavatory, bathing room, and other spaces utilized in rituals of bodily hygiene; these rules figure prominently in the adoption of correct behaviour by Indian Buddhist monastics. The connections between specialized physical structures and the administrative hierarchy of the *saṅgha* become clearer when we understand the relationship between bodily purity and authority in the Buddhist worldview. While Buddhist texts do not always directly

⁹⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 309–310.

correlate bodily purity with authority, and the notion of bodily purity in those texts does not always imply bodily cleanliness,⁹⁸ there are nevertheless significant narratives that draw on these themes. Fantasy stories⁹⁹ in *vinaya* literature often feature ethically impure

⁹⁸ For example, “dirty” forest monastics are in some texts considered to have higher authority than their urban counterparts. See Ray 1994, 120; 298–299. Consider also the claim of Puṇṇikā in the *Therīgāthā* that water is not purifying, in response to Brahmanical notions of cleaning and sanctity. See Norman [1971] 1995, 26; 108 (*Therīgāthā* 12.1). See also Mrozik 2007, 83–111 on the “foulness” of bodies in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*.

⁹⁹ My use of the term “fantasy” is meant in the technical sense used by Tzvetan Todorov to describe narratives outside the familiar world of ordinary human experience (Todorov [1970] 1975, 25). While it is not always clear how the audiences of Buddhist miracle tales of the *Divyāvadāna* and other supernatural narratives (i.e. narratives which include conversations with gods and ghosts, visits to alternate realities, etc.) perceived the relationships between the worlds described in these stories and the mundane world of their daily experiences, I do think it is fair to assume that the events described in such stories were considered atypical and outside the common experience of monks, and that this feature is the main appeal of these stories. In contrast with the *uncanny* and the *marvelous*, which Todorov describes, respectively, as “the supernatural explained” (p. 41) and “the supernatural accepted” (p. 42), the *fantastic* is a special literary mode in which the audience consciously understands the story to be unrealistic, but actively suspends disbelief for the sake of entertainment. See also p. 31: “‘*I nearly reached the point of believing*’: that is the formula that sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its

persons being punished in hell realms by involuntary association with foulness (e.g., consuming bodily waste for sustenance, transmutation into a hideous creature), and thus being made physically impure as a consequence of their behavioural impurity. Disgust tends to be coupled causally with notions about showing proper respect to persons of a higher or lower social class than oneself, frequently drawing on the idea of *karma* to demonstrate that good (desirable) results proceed from good (ethical) actions.

There are also a number of rules in the *pātimokkha* and *prātimokṣas* that appear to have their origins in the proper decorum of Brahmins. We can say, then, that hygiene etiquette rituals are also very class conscious, and in some instances were used as a kind of nonverbal code for expressing intolerance for persons considered to be economically disadvantaged or unfamiliar with urban life. This theme of social class will come up repeatedly in later chapters, and leads naturally into a related distinction between males and females and their corresponding rules within the monastic hierarchy.

1.6: Gender and Politeness

The etiquette rituals of early Indian Buddhist texts frequently present normative standards for sexual behaviour and gender roles. The idea of repugnance at physically disgusting substances is in this way linked with concepts of moral disgust and discrimination against women based on a perceived ritual impurity. In brief, female bodies are portrayed in Buddhist texts as vectors for polluting substances (e.g., menstrual blood) while at the same time being uniquely sexually alluring, and thus a danger to the monastic vow of celibacy. These issues will come up again in chapters 4 and 5, when we focus first on monastic lavatory rituals in general and then on the special *prātimokṣa* rules for female

monastics. As I shall demonstrate, disgust at uniquely female biological processes is one motivating factor behind the creation of specific rules for female Buddhist monastics.

Women in the ancient world were typically not given the same rights as men, and the early Indian Buddhist organization was not at all unusual in this regard. Here again we can see a clear link between a larger set of Indian traditions, specific Brahmanical codes of behaviour in *dharmaśāstra* texts, and similar themes in the *vinaya* texts of Indian Buddhism. In the next chapter, I will highlight many of these relationships by giving a broad overview of the historical context in which the texts were composed. There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the issue of gender in Buddhism, but we must be careful not to allow our modern presumptions about ideal gender standards to bias our explanations for gender disparity in Buddhist law.

1.7: Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to some of the theoretical problems that come up when discussing *etiquette* and *politeness* in general, and a few brief examples to demonstrate how we can use theories from sociology, linguistics and social psychology to help explain the existence of specific rules for proper behaviour within Indian Buddhist monastic legal texts. In the next chapter, I will describe the historical-cultural background of Indian Buddhism, and especially its relationship to Vedic Brahmanism, as a way of indicating the cohesive social concepts of proper behaviour that Buddhists inherited from their environment.

Chapter 2: Vedic Origins of Buddhist Right Speech

2.1: Introduction

This chapter examines the notion of proper speech in Brahmanism and Indian Buddhism, beginning with a brief synopsis of the cultural setting from which Buddhism emerged (section 2), and then investigating early ideas concerning speech and good behaviour in the earliest Brahmanical legal texts, the *dharmaśāstras* (section 3). Comparing these two sets of texts leads to a question concerning the distinction between ethics and etiquette in ancient India (section 4), which I approach using some methods from *linguistic politeness* theory (section 5). Then, I look at examples of right speech and rude speech in Indian Buddhist texts (section 6), specific types of greetings in Theravāda *Nikāya* literature (section 7), rules for properly apologizing in the Theravāda *pātimokkha* (section 8), and advice in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage for speaking with Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (section 9).

Indian Buddhism inherited its basic cultural framework from Vedic Brahmanism, the religious tradition that later developed into an amalgamation of traditions frequently referred to as “Hinduism.” We can see elements of this process of inheritance scattered throughout Indian Buddhist literature, in monastic legal texts, narrative literature and sermons attributed to the Buddha himself. The style and content of these texts often mimic that of older Brahmanical works. Brahmin social mores are likewise part of a larger and more general Indian tradition. It is therefore useful to think of the concept of Indian Buddhist etiquette first in terms of Indian etiquette, especially with regard to a majority Brahmin culture, before we investigate any specifically Buddhist aspects. In this chapter, I examine behavioural standards in Brahmanical legal texts, noting similarities between these texts and their earliest Buddhist counterparts. As we will see, one of the major signifiers of good manners for Brahmins is good speech, with an emphasis on

respect for teachers and elders, a friendly demeanor, and the avoidance of insults. These Brahmanical ideas about good speech form the basis of the later Buddhist idea of “right speech” (Pāli: *sammā-vācā*).

2.2: The Setting

Proper behaviour in ancient India was associated with the concept of the civilized city (*nagara, pura*)¹⁰⁰ as a foil for the barbaric wilderness (*jāṅgala*).¹⁰¹ Urban and economic growth in northern India beginning as early as 600 BCE contributed to the later formation of an increasingly stable middle class,¹⁰² whose newfound leisure led to a proliferation of diverse literary genres¹⁰³ and the dissemination of standardized modes of behaviour via

¹⁰⁰ These Sanskrit terms also have secondary derivatives *nāgara*, *nāgarika* and *paura*, *paurika* that come to signify both “urban” and “polite.” See Monier-Williams 1899, s.vv. *nāgara* (pp. 533–534), *nāgarika* (p. 534), *paura* (p. 651), *paurika* (p. 651).

¹⁰¹ The Sanskrit word *jāṅgala*, a distant relation of the English word “jungle,” signifies a dry area devoid of trees, a wild area, and consequently a frightening place, in contrast to the safety of the agrarian villages that ancient Sanskrit communities called home. This theme is explored in depth in Zimmerman [1982] 1999. See also Dove 1992.

¹⁰² The Gupta period (ca. 300 CE–550 CE) is especially interesting in this regard. Maity 1970a provides a thorough treatment of economic conditions in that time. See also Maity 1970b and Goyal 1995 for a history of coinage in ancient India. For an archaeological approach to Indian cities, see Allchin 1995.

¹⁰³ The Sanskrit epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as Mahāyāna literature, including the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (“Lotus Sutra”) all seem to have developed in parallel with increasing urbanization. Florin Deleanu (2005),

texts.¹⁰⁴ In order to attract new monastics and economic patrons to their communities, Buddhists in ancient India used etiquette, among other methods, to demarcate themselves from competing religious institutions as sophisticated city-dwellers.¹⁰⁵ Educated, wealthy Brahmins were always the most desirable potential converts and benefactors for the Buddhist order, mainly because Brahmins exercised a great deal of control over the Indian political and economic realms.¹⁰⁶ It is no coincidence that the earliest Buddhist literature appears in Sanskrit—the language of the elite—and in Sanskritic vernaculars (e.g., Pāli, Gāndhārī).

discussing the origins of the Mahāyāna, writes, “The social status of lay characters like Ugra, Vimalakīrti, etc. is not without relevance. They are very wealthy and well-educated. To speak in Western terms, they are members of the gentry” (p. 67 note 122).

¹⁰⁴ These standards include the canonization of proper monastic behaviour in the Buddhist *vinaya* texts, composed for a monastic audience, as well as less formal normative ideals expressed in popular literature. The Sanskrit epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, for example, have a great deal of information on proper behaviour, presented not as injunctions but simply as the habits of good characters. Ramashraya Sharma 1971, 255–26; Guruge 1960, 158–169; Sen 2005, 145–146.

¹⁰⁵ Even in the case of the Mahāyāna, which some have argued had its origins in “back to the forest” movements (see for example Harrison 1995, 65 and Boucher 2008, 43), the impetus for a return to ascetic wilderness practices must necessarily have come from a non-ascetic origin. In other words, it is not possible to return to the forest unless urban living has become mainstream.

¹⁰⁶ Neelis 2011, 17–39; see also Gokhale 1965, Gokhale 1982, Verardi 2011, 74–77.

The oldest manuscripts containing Indian Buddhist canonical materials have been dated to around the first century CE.¹⁰⁷ The literary contents of those manuscripts are often much older, but which parts are the oldest can be difficult to determine.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, examining Buddhist literature alongside Brahmanical literature from the first century CE and earlier reveals a great deal about the influence that Brahmin society had on the construction of proper behaviour within the worldview of the Buddhist community. Comparing Buddhist and Brahmanical texts can tell us many things about borrowed social customs, especially with regard to the development of Indian ideals pertaining to urbanity and civilization.¹⁰⁹ Buddhists incorporated traditional social norms of pre-urban Brahmin culture while also modeling their rules of etiquette on the new urbanity, both of which helped to attract members and provide financial stability to the Buddhist order.¹¹⁰ Increasing membership helped fuel the production of literature by and

¹⁰⁷ Salomon 1999, 151; 154.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Gregory Schopen's argument concerning the earliest Buddhist canonical materials in Schopen 1985, 24–25.

¹⁰⁹ What such a comparison actually tells us is open to interpretation. Because the texts in question are most often normative injunctions on how people should behave, and almost never historical narratives of how people did behave, we must consider very carefully the connections between their content and the historical development of social traditions. However, even fictional accounts of behaviour are useful in gauging how ancient Indian authors perceived their own social environments.

¹¹⁰ The Buddhist membership of wealthy and politically influential Brahmins and Kṣatriyas includes King Bimbisāra, King Ajātaśatru, King Prasenajit, the banker Anāthapiṇḍaka, and many others mentioned in the *vinaya* and *nikāya* texts. Additionally,

for Buddhists, thus facilitating the legitimation of Buddhism as a religion for an emerging middle class.¹¹¹

At the time of the historical Buddha's birth, ca. 480 BCE,¹¹² the north Indian literary tradition was predominantly made up of Brahmin-authored works composed in Sanskrit. Brahmins of that time considered the four Vedas to be a reflection of one absolute truth, received and recorded by meditating sages called *ṛṣis*.¹¹³ The *varṇa* system (often called the “caste system”) of four social classes¹¹⁴ was justified by Brahmins on the

many of the first Buddhist monks were from royal and/or wealthy families (e.g., Nanda, Ānanda, Mahākāśyapa). See Hazra 1984, 3; 7; 22–23. See also Gokhale 1965, 395.

¹¹¹The connection to the middle class is often evident in Buddhist literature from the specialized vocabulary borrowed from educated professions. The *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka* (“Lotus Sūtra”), for example, includes numerous technical terms from and allusions to the Ayurvedic medical tradition (e.g., comparisons to Buddhism as medicine and references to medicinal herbs, the metaphor of the doctor curing his sons of poison, the Medicine King character).

¹¹²The dates of the historical Buddha's birth and death are still a subject of contention among scholars. In 1988, a symposium was held in Göttingen, Germany, to come to a consensus on this issue. There remains no consensus on this issue, but many scholars now use a death date within 20 years on either side of 400 BCE. It is generally accepted that the Buddha lived for 80 years. See Bechert 1991; 1992; 1997. Also see Verardi 2010.

¹¹³Mitchiner 1982, 171–172.

¹¹⁴The four *varṇas* are *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*. The term *varṇa* has long been translated as “caste.” However, this Sanskrit term is more appropriately rendered as “class” in English, with “caste” as a translation for the Sanskrit *jāti* (professional guild).

understanding that the natural political order is for Brahmins to be in authority over all other peoples.¹¹⁵ In Vedic rituals, efficacious worldly results were considered by propagators of the Vedic tradition to be natural consequences of correctly pronounced, sacred Sanskrit syllables. This curious relationship in the Vedas between normative speech and natural phenomena distinguishes Vedic conduct from contemporary theories of etiquette. Our contemporary Western understanding of etiquette rests on the notion that improper behaviour is not metaphysically dangerous, and that we perform etiquette rituals¹¹⁶ as a way of showing respect for others.¹¹⁷ The idea that healthy social relationships are maintained through mutual respect may seem like common sense in our own time,¹¹⁸ but in the earliest Vedic texts there are many other reasons for behaving in accordance with accepted standards. Vedic ideas concerning proper behaviour overlap significantly with cultural attitudes regarding ethics and ontology.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ While the *kṣatriya* class comprised kings and soldiers, social control ultimately rested in the hands of those in control of the Vedic religious tradition and its corresponding texts.

¹¹⁶ See introduction, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Stohr 2012; Stohr argues that conventions of etiquette are “vehicles for communicating moral aims like respect and consideration” (p. 147).

¹¹⁸ The idea of manners as mutual respect is in many ways a product of democracy and a decline in the acceptance of social class in the postmodern world. This concept can be traced back to the nineteenth century division of politics and society in Europe (Bryson 1998, 44) which itself is a mutation of the Eighteenth Century / Enlightenment distinction between manners, laws and ethics (p. 43).

¹¹⁹ This direct connection between ontology and ethics is particularly salient in the

Good conduct as a theme in Sanskrit literature first emerges from the desire to perform Vedic rituals successfully. Generally, these rituals were pragmatic attempts at increasing crop production or otherwise influencing the environment, and have end goals that appear to be entirely different from what would be considered etiquette by today's standards, even within India. The Vedas themselves contain mostly praise poetry and magical charms for invoking the protection of deities (*devas*) and placating disease-causing demons.¹²⁰ The oldest portions of the Vedas date back to around 1350 BCE.¹²¹ Vedic commentaries—called *saṃhitās* (ca. 1000 BCE), *brāhmaṇas* (ca. 900–700 BCE), *āraṇyakas* (ca. 300–100 BCE), and *upaniṣads* (ca. 700 BCE–300 BCE)¹²²—do contain instructions on how to behave properly,¹²³ but mainly for the purposes of religious ritual. It is only with the creation of *dharmaśāstra* legal texts, starting around the sixth century BCE, that we begin to see formal discussion on appropriate conduct in a more mundane context, outside of specific ritual performances.¹²⁴

practice of *dharmaśāstra* “ordeals,” in which the truth value of legal statements is tested by requiring defendants to walk through fire, eat poison, or perform other dangerous actions. The basic idea behind these practices is that truth itself will prevent the defendant from coming to any harm. See Pendse 1985, 26–32.

¹²⁰ Jamison and Brereton 2014, vol. 1, 5–9.

¹²¹ Witzel 2001, 49. See also Parpola 2012, 221.

¹²² Dating of all these texts is extremely problematic. The dates given here are only approximations.

¹²³ For examples of etiquette in the *upaniṣads*, see Black 2007, 45; 50; 115; 130.

¹²⁴ While many examples of appropriate etiquette can be described as ritualistic, etiquette also tends to encompass a spontaneity that distinguishes it from ritual proper.

2.3: Etiquette in the *dharmasūtras*

The earliest extant legal texts of the *dharmaśāstra* tradition, what is often called “Hindu law,” are the *dharmasūtras*,¹²⁵ composed slightly before or in parallel with the advent of Buddhism around 450 BCE. In his English translation of the four extant *dharmasūtras*, Patrick Olivelle explains that these texts appear to have been created as training manuals for adolescent Brahmin boys.¹²⁶ Their content is focused primarily on mundane issues relating to the verbal greeting of one’s teacher, ritual washing of the teacher’s feet, proper dress, and other ordinary daily obligations. The *dharmasūtras* place special emphasis on proper speech, in many cases providing detailed guidelines about correct grammatical constructions. For example, the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*’s section on greetings advises students to lengthen the final vowel of a name to signify respect, giving as an example the common Brahmin greeting *bho*, lengthened to *bhau*.¹²⁷ Similar advice on vowel and tone distortions as indications of politeness can be found in Pāṇini’s famous treatise on Sanskrit grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.¹²⁸

The boundary between daily rituals and routine good conduct is often tenuous in *dharmaśāstra* texts.

¹²⁵ However, according to Derrett 1973, the earliest surviving texts containing legal rules appear to be the *brāhmaṇas* and *upaniṣads* (pp. 7, 9).

¹²⁶ Olivelle 2004, xix.

¹²⁷ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 403.

¹²⁸ *Sūtra* numbers 8.2.82, 8.2.83, 8.2.84, 8.2.85, 8.2.86. See R.N. Sharma [1987–2003] 2002–2003, vol. 6, pp. 581–586. These and similar *sūtras* from the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

The four extant *dharmasūtra* texts are those of Gautama (ca. 600–400 BCE), Āpastambha (ca. 450–350 BCE), Baudhāyana (ca. 500–200 BCE), and Vasiṣṭha (ca. 300–100 BCE).¹²⁹ These texts share a similar structure and theme, being mainly concerned with the proper conduct of Brahmins from studenthood to old age. While we do not know exactly how many *dharmasūtra* texts were composed, it is clear from the content of the four surviving texts that they existed in conversation with an extensive literary tradition, as they frequently refer to other works which are now lost.¹³⁰ It is important to remember that the *dharmasūtras* did not appear in a vacuum, but were rather one part of a large body of literature comprising works on grammar, medicine, philosophy, statecraft, and a variety of other topics. We can therefore look to these other genres as well for different perspectives on how to behave properly. The scope of the *dharmasūtras* goes well beyond our contemporary understanding of etiquette, making little or no formal distinction between what is ethically improper and what is simply rude.¹³¹ Even so, a distinct concept of rudeness can be inferred from the lack of serious punishments for certain minor offenses, whereas extreme violations of the law are met with matching penalties. While later *dharmasāstra* texts (e.g., the *Manusmṛti*) suggest legal punishments

¹²⁹ The dates of authorship for these texts are a point of contention among scholars. Patrick Olivelle makes a strong case for Gautama and Āpastambha coming before Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha, based on comparison of the *dharmasūtra* texts with other Indian texts, including Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and the rock edicts of Aśoka, which have certain passages in common. See Olivelle [2000] 2003, 9.

¹³⁰ Olivelle 2004, xviii.

¹³¹ It is of course necessary to establish what we mean by the contemporary usage of “rude,” a problem I have mentioned in chapter 1 (pp. 5, 29).

for such breaches of conduct as verbal abuse, especially in cases where the offended party is a Brahmin,¹³² the *dharmasūtras* seem to be much more lenient in this regard; proper ethical conduct and polite conduct are intertwined throughout. The specific concept of (im)politeness is not explicitly spelled out anywhere in the *dharmasūtras*, but can be extrapolated from their overall thematic structure. A few examples will serve to illustrate this point.

According to Āpastambha, the initiated student “should submit to his teacher in all things except those that entail a sin causing loss of caste.”¹³³ The student is to “occupy a lower seat and bed” from that of his teacher,¹³⁴ and avoid eating ritual food, sleeping during the day, wearing perfume, and engaging in sexual intercourse.¹³⁵ His food, which he acquires by begging, should be placed before the teacher, only to be eaten after the student is granted permission.¹³⁶ All of this food should be eaten, or if this is not possible, “he should bury the leftovers in the ground, throw them in water, or place them before an Ārya or before a Śūdra who is a family servant.”¹³⁷ A student should wake up before his teacher and go to sleep after his teacher, and always show respect to elders by means of polite speech:

Rising each day during the last watch of the night, he should stand before the teacher and extend to him the morning greeting: “I am so-and-so, sir!”, and,

¹³² Olivelle 2004, 143.

¹³³ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 27.

¹³⁴ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 27.

¹³⁵ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 29.

¹³⁶ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 29.

¹³⁷ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 31.

before the morning meal, to other very elderly persons living in the same village.

He should also greet them when he meets them after he returns from a journey or if he desires heaven and long life.¹³⁸

The student's guidelines for how to behave are comprehensive, covering nearly every potential situation that may arise, and any person with whom the student may interact. Greetings in the *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra* and other *dharmasūtra* texts are part of a complete system of normative conduct that reinforces social boundaries between the young and old, male and female, and the four *varṇa* categories of social class. These distinctions are highly specific, and involve both verbal and physical aspects. Consider, for example, the following section on ways to greet one's teacher:

With joined hands, let a Brahmin greet by stretching his right hand level with his ears, a Kṣatriya level with his chest, a Vaiśya level with his waist, and a Śūdra very low. When returning the greetings of a person belonging to one of the higher classes, the last syllable of his name should be lengthened to three morae. When he meets the teacher after sunrise, however, he should clasp his feet; at all other times he should exchange greetings, although, according to some, he should embrace the teacher's feet even at other times. After he has pressed his teacher's right foot from the bottom to the top with his right hand, he should clasp it at the ankle. Some say that he should massage both feet with both hands and clasp them both.¹³⁹

The emphasis on care for the feet is typical of ancient Indian texts generally, and we will see the same theme repeated in Indian Buddhist texts.¹⁴⁰ Such instructions are largely

¹³⁸ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 33.

¹³⁹ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 33.

symbolic, but also have many practical components. Āpastambha's specifications are for the student to wash his teacher's feet as well as revere them.¹⁴¹ Considering the time and place in which these texts were composed, it is easy to understand that feet would easily become dirty from walking. Symbolically, care of the teacher's feet also reinforces the status of the student as lower than his teacher.¹⁴² In addition, the student is perceived as having nothing of value to offer the teacher other than these physical services, while the primary contribution of the teacher to the student is intellectual. A similar exchange of physical goods and services for educational instruction is repeated in the typical Buddhist relationship between the monastic community and the laity, where monks provide to their lay patrons teachings on the *dharma* in return for food, robes, and financial support.¹⁴³

The *dharmasūtras* focus a good deal of attention on respectful and disrespectful positions of the body. Āpastambha warns that the student should avoid stretching his legs toward the teacher and speaking while lying down,¹⁴⁴ that he “should not come near the teacher wearing shoes, covering the head, or carrying anything in his hands,”¹⁴⁵ and that he should “approach the teacher as he would a god, without idle talk or distracting

¹⁴⁰ Bollée 2008 provides a lengthy analysis of the social aspects of the foot in India.

¹⁴¹ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 33.

¹⁴² Bollée 2008, 85; see also pp. 69–72.

¹⁴³ The Buddhist *dharma* economy, or what is often called a *dāna* (gift) economy (which hides the true nature of the exchange) is taken up in Findly 2003 (focusing on Theravāda *dāna*) and Heim 2004 (which compares Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain conceptions of *dāna*).

¹⁴⁴ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 33.

¹⁴⁵ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 33.

thoughts and attentive to his words.”¹⁴⁶ It is important to sit at the correct position and distance from the teacher, not cross-legged, “neither too close nor too far,” and facing the teacher.¹⁴⁷ If there is only one student, he “should sit on his teacher’s right, while a group may sit as space permits.”¹⁴⁸

As we will see in the next chapter, the Buddhist *śaikṣa* rules and *vatta khandhakas* preserve many of these injunctions, and their reasoning appears to be largely the same as that of the *dharmasūtras*. Junior monks are instructed in Buddhist texts to assist their preceptors with menial tasks, including the preparation of breakfast, and to help with bathing and dressing. Once again, we see a type of education economy in which expert ritual instruction is paid for in menial tasks. Mastering such tasks is also explained in Buddhist texts as a didactic process unto itself, in the sense that doing physical labor promotes mindfulness.¹⁴⁹

Just as it is necessary to show proper respect to the right people, it is also important to avoid showing too much respect to the wrong people. Āpastambha warns that when the teacher is present, the student “should not clasp the feet of a person of lesser dignity than the teacher, greet such a person using the name of his lineage, rise to meet him, or get up after him, even if that person happens to be his teacher’s elder.”¹⁵⁰ On

¹⁴⁶ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 35.

¹⁴⁷ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 35.

¹⁴⁸ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 35.

¹⁴⁹ See Bass 2013, 142–157 for a discussion of *smṛtyupasthāna* as a depiction of two different senses of “mindfulness,” one relating to meditation and the other relating to good manners.

¹⁵⁰ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 35.

asking his leave from the teacher, the student should first walk around the teacher in a clockwise direction.¹⁵¹

Gautama provides similar directives for requesting instruction. While we do not know if the *Gautama Dharmasūtra* was composed earlier or later than the *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra*, greeting of the teacher for Gautama is even more ritualized, and includes the use of *darbha* grass, breath holding, and more specific physical actions:

Clasping the teacher's left hand—excluding the thumb—with his right, the pupil should address the teacher: "Teach, sir!" Focusing his eyes and mind on the teacher, the pupil should touch his vital organs with Darbha grass, control his breath three times for fifteen morae each, and sit on a bed of grass with the tips of their blades pointing east. The five Calls should begin with OM and end with "Truth".¹⁵²

Here again we see an emphasis on particular hand gestures, holding of the breath, and the use of sacred utensils. Specific directions are repeatedly emphasized in this text, especially north (the direction of the deity Soma)¹⁵³ and east (which is often associated with the deity Agni, fire, sunrises and by analogy the transmission of knowledge).¹⁵⁴

The pupil shall clasp the teacher's feet each morning and also when he begins and ends his vedic recitation. When he is given permission, he should sit at the teacher's right facing the east or the north. And he should repeat after the teacher

¹⁵¹ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 35.

¹⁵² Olivelle [2000] 2003, 123.

¹⁵³ Wessels-Mevissen 2001, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Wessels-Mevissen 2001, 6.

the Sāvitrī verse when he first begins to receive instruction in the Veda, while the syllable OM should be recited at other times.¹⁵⁵

As with the *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra*, the *Gautama Dharmasūtra* has the student waiting on every need of his teacher, and indicating respect by affirming the authority of his teacher, expressed in speech and in the placement of his own body as always subordinate to that of the teacher:

He should utter the personal and lineage names of his teacher with respect and behave in the same manner towards revered people and his superiors. He should answer his teacher after getting up from his bed or seat and go to him when he calls, even if he is out of sight. If he sees his teacher standing or sitting on a lower place or answering the call of nature, he should get up. If the teacher is walking, he should walk behind him, apprising him of the things to be done and reporting to him what has been done. Let him recite the Veda only when he is called upon to do so and apply himself to doing what is pleasing and beneficial to his teacher.¹⁵⁶

We see again in Gautama that the process of learning manners is part of the general education of the Brahmin male, a way of reinforcing social hierarchy.

Likewise for Baudhāyana,¹⁵⁷ there are various physical postures and speech acts necessary for greeting a teacher properly. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (ca. 500–200 BCE) appears to be chronologically later than the *Āpastambha* (ca. 450–350 BCE) and

¹⁵⁵ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 123.

¹⁵⁶ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 125, 127.

¹⁵⁷ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 203.

Gautama Dharmasūtras (ca. 600–400 BCE), and places even more emphasis on ritual purity:

He should clasp the teacher's right leg with his right hand and the teacher's left leg with his left hand. If he desires long life and heaven, he may, if he so wishes, act in the same manner towards other virtuous people with his teacher's permission. After saying "I am so-and-so, sir!" while he touches his ears so as to concentrate his mind, let him clasp the legs below the knees and above the feet. He should not do so while he or the person greeted is seated, lying down, or impure. If he is able, he should not remain impure even for a moment. He should not greet anyone while he is carrying firewood, holding a water pot, flowers, or food in his hand, or engaged in other similar activities. When he meets someone, he should not greet him in an exaggerated way. If he has reached the age of puberty, he shall not greet his brother's wives and the young wives of his teacher, but it is not an offense to sit with them in a boat, on a rock, plank, elephant, terrace, or mat, or in a carriage.¹⁵⁸

Superstition and etiquette appear to be more intertwined in Baudhāyana's instructions compared with the earlier *dharmasūtras*. It is not immediately clear, for example, what practical purpose could serve from avoiding a greeting while holding flowers.¹⁵⁹ The next instruction, however, against greeting "in an exaggerated way," sounds thoroughly modern, perhaps hinting at the impropriety of sarcasm or intentional mockery of the rituals.¹⁶⁰ Yet much of what we consider polite behaviour in our own time was not

¹⁵⁸ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 203.

¹⁵⁹ One possibility is that the hands are not free to perform the proper ritual gestures.

¹⁶⁰ Of course, it is difficult to gauge the exact reasoning behind any particular ritual of

especially distinct from other types of propriety for ancient Brahmins; many injunctions in the *dharmasūtras* are so culturally specific as to seem rather strange and arbitrary from outside the tradition. Some of the following suggestions, from Baudhāyana's rules for householders, are perhaps more inclined toward what we would call superstition instead of etiquette:

He should carry a bamboo staff; wear a pair of gold earrings; and refrain from washing the feet by rubbing one foot with the other and from placing one foot on the other. He should not wear a necklace outdoors or look at the sun at sunrise or sunset. He should not point out a rainbow to someone by saying, "Look, the Indra's bow!"; if he does so, let him say "Look, a jewelled bow!" He should not pass between the cross-beam and bolt of a city gate or the posts to which a swing is tied; step over a rope to which a calf is tied; or step on ashes, bones, hair, grain husks, potsherds, or bath water.¹⁶¹

These concerns are intermingled with injunctions that appear to guard against what we might call obscene language:

He should not tell anyone when a cow is suckling her calf. When he speaks of a cow that does not yield milk, he should not say, "She is not a milch-cow"; if he speaks of her, he should simply say, "She is going to be a milch-cow." He should not use harsh, cruel, or rude words.¹⁶²

So, once more we see a tendency to associate proper conduct with proper speech. Yet the reason for the proper speech is not entirely clear. Is it improper to speak about the milk

protocol, even if it sounds similar to our own.

¹⁶¹ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 263.

¹⁶² Olivelle [2000] 2003, 265: *śuktā ruṣṣāḥ paruṣā vāco na bhyāt*.

production of cows because of a sense of decency, or because the words themselves have a power to induce a permanent change in the state of the cow? Probably it is a mixture of many different ideas about speech, with a predisposition toward the perception of speech as ontologically dangerous and capable of inducing effects on reality beyond the simple transmission of meaning.¹⁶³

The last of the four extant *dharmasūtras*, the *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, also has advice on greeting a teacher, shorter than those of the other three extant *dharmasūtras*. Vasiṣṭha's version, however, has more detailed information on how to pronounce the name of the person being greeted:

He should rise up and greet an officiating priest, a father-in-law, or a paternal or maternal uncle who is not younger than himself; the wives of those whose feet he is obliged to clasp and of his teacher; and his parents.

To a person who knows how to greet, he should say, "I am so-and-so, sir!" as also to a person who does not know. When returning a greeting, he should lengthen the last vowel of the name of the person he is greeting to three morae. If it is a

¹⁶³ The power of speech, especially the words of Brahmins, to induce changes in reality, is a common feature in Sanskrit literature. For example, there are numerous instances in the *Mahābhārata* in which curses or ambiguous language influence reality in dangerous or unexpected ways. See for example van Buitenen 1973, 98 (the *tapasvin* Śṛṅgin curses Parikṣit to be burned by Takṣaka, Chief of Snakes); 247 (a sage in the form of a deer curses Pāṇḍu to die when he next ejaculates); 357 (the mother of the Pāṇḍavas accidentally causes the marriage of one woman to five brothers by telling them to "share what they have found").

diphthong “e” or “o” subject to euphonic combination, it is pronounced “āi” and “āu”; thus “bho” becomes “bhau”.¹⁶⁴

The above rules on vowel lengthening are extremely similar to rules regarding vowel lengthening and respect found in Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.¹⁶⁵

All of the above examples from the four extant *dharmasūtras* portray a type of conduct used for signifying respect for one’s teachers and other important figures. Ritualized actions of the body, including culturally-appropriate hygiene, self-control over sensory impulses, and submission to figures of authority, are all expressed here using ordinary and non-technical terminology. The language is simple, not overtly philosophical, and primarily takes the form of injunctions for the student.¹⁶⁶

Now, consider the following passage from the *Sangīti Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the Buddhist Theravāda canon. The geographical setting is roughly the same as that for the *dharmasūtras*. This particular story takes place in “the Malla country” (near present-

¹⁶⁴ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 403.

¹⁶⁵ See in particular *sūtras* 8.2.82, 8.2.83, 8.2.84, 8.2.85, 8.2.86.

¹⁶⁶ The language used in the *dharmasūtras* is plain and unambiguous, in stark contrast to poetic and philosophical texts. Poetry in the *Ṛgveda*, which is performed as part of the *soma* ritual, is filled with multiple entendres and curious wordplay, and these features are also typical of classical Sanskrit epic poetry (e.g., the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) and other narrative literature, as well as the *upaniṣads*.

day Gorakhpur),¹⁶⁷ where members of a *kṣatriya* tribe called the Mallas are described showing proper respect to the Buddha before, during and after a sermon:

Noting his assent, the Mallas rose, saluted him, passed out to his right and went to the meeting hall. They spread mats all round, arranged seats, put out a water-pot and an oil-lamp, and then, returning to the Lord, saluted him, sat down to one side and reported what they had done, saying: ‘Whenever the Blessed Lord is ready.’ Then the Lord dressed, took his robe and bowl, and went to the meeting-hall with his monks. There he washed his feet, entered the hall and sat down against the central pillar, facing east. The monks, having washed their feet, entered the hall and sat down along the western wall facing east, with the Lord in front of them. The Pāvā Mallas washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat down along the eastern wall facing west, with the Lord in front of them. Then the Lord spoke to the Mallas on Dhamma till far into the night, instructing, inspiring, firing and delighting them. Then he dismissed them, saying: ‘Vāsetṭhas, the night has passed away. Now do as you think fit.’ ‘Very good, Lord’, replied the Mallas. And they got up, saluted the Lord, and went out, passing him on the right.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ The capital of the Malla city-state was Kuśināgara, approximately 52 kilometers from present-day Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh and 120 kilometers from the border of present-day Nepal. The Malla Mahājanapada was one of 16 *mahājanapadas* (“great kingdoms”) of ancient India. A later Malla Dynasty ruled Nepal from the 12th to 18th century. See Law [1932] 1979, 14–16.

¹⁶⁸ Walshe [1987] 1995, 479–480 (*DN* 33). Walshe notes that “[t]his is undoubtedly a late Sutta” (p. 615 n. 1012).

The teacher and his primary students (the Buddhist monks) are facing east, just as in the earlier *dharmasūtra* passage from Gautama. In both texts, care of the feet and proper greetings play an important role in proper etiquette. We can infer that certain actions of the body were meant to denote respect: “saluting,”¹⁶⁹ sitting to one side of the teacher during his sermon, and exiting to the right side of the teacher (*padakkhiṇaṃ katvā*) after the sermon is complete. Many of these actions would likely have been considered so obvious to the composers of Indian Buddhist literature as to need no explanation in commentaries or formalized injunctions. Their appearance here, while it can still serve a didactic purpose, was likely intended by the authors primarily to invoke a literary setting—in other words, simply to make the story believable and interesting.¹⁷⁰ Yet we can capitalize on such literary flourishes to gather valuable information about what ordinary daily life would have looked like for ancient Indian Buddhists, or perhaps more accurately, how they imagined that ordinary daily life should look.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ This is the word *abhivādetvā* in Pāli (*abhi* + \sqrt{vand}), “to salute respectfully,” which probably indicates a bowing gesture done with the head and body, and/or the *añjali* hand gesture, in which the palms are pressed together in front of the chest.

¹⁷⁰ See Nattier 2003 on the correspondence between literary flourish and historical events in Buddhist literature. Especially interesting to our study of etiquette is Nattier’s claim that “[w]hen an author reveals [...] something that is quite unflattering to the group or the position that he or she represents, there is a high degree of probability that the statement has a basis in fact” (65–66). Nattier also notes that “irrelevant” information in a narrative can be useful for establishing factual information about the mundane world in which the text was composed. For example, the mention of “slaves” in passing is an indication that slavery was not considered unusual (66–67).

2.4: Etiquette and Ethics

Dharmaśāstra texts focus on Brahmanical ideals concerning proper behaviour, and have many injunctions to explain which actions are good and which are not good. These texts generally offer no explanation as to why a particular action is good or not. Maria Heim, in her study of South Asian gifting rituals, makes the argument that *dharmaśāstra* texts do not make a distinction between etiquette and ethics, noting that “etiquette is a code for membership in moral and ideological communities.”¹⁷² I have already indicated several instances in the *dharmaśāstras* in which superstition and proper behaviour overlap, and I agree with Heim that ethical concerns also appear to be inseparable from the ideals of these works. The question still remains as to whether or not authors of *dharmaśāstra* texts made a mental distinction between ethics and etiquette. That is to say, it is one thing to avoid the creation of specific literary categories for these ideas, and quite another to avoid perceiving a difference between etiquette and ethics at all. Heim is critical of scholarship suggesting a division between ethics and etiquette in Brahmanical texts, and especially of Richard Gombrich’s suggestion that the Buddhist rejection of Brahmanical ritual allows Buddhism to be a more ethical system than Brahmanism.¹⁷³ Heim calls this a

¹⁷¹ Fernando Poyatos’s idea of the “cultureme,” a qualitative expression of emotion preserved in literature, is worth mentioning here. As with Nattier’s argument that irrelevant information can inform our understanding of historical context, Poyatos argues that literary expressions of bodily expressions (e.g., winking, smiling) can give us a sense of the emotional context of a text’s authorship. See Poyatos 1988, 13.

¹⁷² Heim 2004, 83. For a similar study on Buddhist gifting, see Findly 2003.

¹⁷³ Heim 2004, 86. Heim 2014 examines the role of *cetanā* (“intention”) in Buddhist ethics through the lens of Buddhaghosa’s traditional commentaries.

“distinctively modern” view, and says, “It is a modern projection on the past to want to see a sharp division between external forms and internal dispositions.”¹⁷⁴

To be fair to Gombrich, I think that he does have a point regarding the Buddhist innovation of internalizing ethics to focus on intention rather than action, though his claim that Buddhist doctrine “turned the brahmin ideology upside down and ethicised the universe”¹⁷⁵ is probably something of an overstatement. “I do not see how one could exaggerate the importance of the Buddha’s ethicisation of the world, which I regard as a turning point in the history of civilisation,”¹⁷⁶ Gombrich continues, and proceeds to explain the breakthrough of Buddhist *karma* theory as a reformulation of Vedic *karma*. While the Buddhist notion of *karma* certainly is different from that of Vedic Brahmanism, I have reservations about Gombrich’s more basic assumption that Buddhism wholly rejected Brahmanical ritual. While it is true that the Theravāda *Nikāyas* often state the futility of external rituals for achieving liberation from rebirth,¹⁷⁷ we can also find numerous examples of Buddhist rituals that are clearly inherited from Brahmins.¹⁷⁸ In the pragmatic, everyday sense, these rules are considered to be important, even if they are without value in the ontological or soteriological sense. If we accept that Buddhist ethical doctrine is somehow fundamentally different from Brahmanical

¹⁷⁴ Heim 2004, 86.

¹⁷⁵ Gombrich 1996, 51.

¹⁷⁶ Gombrich 1996, 51.

¹⁷⁷ See for example *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.175 (*Candala Sutta*), 10.176 (*Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta*).

¹⁷⁸ Some of these rituals will be examined in chapter 3.

doctrine, but we also observe shared ideas concerning external ritual, then the relationship between ethics and etiquette is muddled once again.

The question of if and how etiquette connects to ethics is certainly not isolated to issues surrounding the ancient world. Karen Stohr, for example, in her 2012 book *On Manners*—a more general analysis of etiquette based primarily on Kant, Aristotle, and other Western philosophers—makes the argument that etiquette always reflects a deeper moral sensibility, and that “behaving politely is a way of behaving morally.”¹⁷⁹ For Stohr, there is such a thing as a universal and culturally-independent way to behave properly. However, she also makes a distinction between etiquette as culturally-formulated conventions, and manners, which she argues are universal moral principles.¹⁸⁰ This issue will become increasingly important as we examine the specific rules of behaviour in the Buddhist *prātimokṣas*, which are presented in Buddhist texts as moral imperatives by their categorization as examples of *śīla* (Pāli: *sīla*), but often have a strong connection to cultural standards and a tenuous connection to any specific moral or ethical doctrine.¹⁸¹ The primary reason that we would want to resist accepting the tradition’s own category, or at least suggest alternative readings, is that Buddhist and Brahmanical standards for proper behaviour appear in many cases to have been created prior to Buddhism and Brahmanism. We can still accept that these practices of etiquette have an ethical

¹⁷⁹ Stohr 2012, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Stohr 2012, 23.

¹⁸¹ One example of a problematic rule, which I will discuss in more detail in chapters 3 and 4, is the Buddhist injunction for monks to avoid urinating while standing. This rule is clearly inherited from Brahmin legal texts as a cultural norm, but has little or no association with a specific moral or ethical ideal. See p. 135.

component in a pan-Indian context, but their appearance outside of formal injunctions often suggests other readings even within the Brahmanical tradition.

Outside of the *dharmaśāstra* tradition, other Sanskrit literary genres do discuss etiquette without so much emphasis on moral standards. For example, the Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa* tradition, the formal study of grammar and language, is much more concerned with the phonemic characteristics of utterances than with their speakers' character. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the earliest extant text on Sanskrit grammar, makes numerous references to protocols for polite speech. This text, codified sometime around 500 BCE,¹⁸² is part of a scholastic tradition whose guiding principles are proper grammatical form and pronunciation, not ethical behaviour as such. Its treatment of proper utterances is thus much more in line with the contemporary linguistic notion of language performance than with any ethical injunctions.

In the *vyākaraṇa* tradition, Pāṇini's treatise is considered to be descriptive rather than prescriptive;¹⁸³ it tells us how Sanskrit was used, not how it should be used. Examples of proper speech in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* are therefore not to be taken as injunctions on how one should speak, but instead codify ways in which people have spoken. A few examples will serve to demonstrate how polite speech is distinguished primarily as a grammatical form in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*:

¹⁸² Cardona 1976, 260–262.

¹⁸³ Cardona 1988, 644.

Rule 8.2.83:¹⁸⁴

The *ṭi*-vowel of an utterance which is used in response to a salutation as benediction, in the context of a non-*śūdra*, is replaced with a *pluta* vowel marked with *udātta*.¹⁸⁵

What this rule is basically saying is that when answering the greeting of one's elders, a person should raise the pitch of a particular vowel to the high (*udātta*) pitch, where in other contexts this vowel would not be high. Rama Nath Sharma, utilizing the traditional commentaries (*Mahābhāṣya*, etc.), explains this *sūtra* as follows:

The word *pratyabhivāda* is explained as a benedictive response, made to a person by his elders (teacher, etc.) in response to a salutation. This rule makes an injunction against using the *pluta*¹⁸⁶ in response made to a *śūdra* 'person of a lower caste'. Thus, the *pluta*-replacement is limited to a benedictive response made for a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya*. It is noted that a *brāhmaṇa* should be addressed in response to his salutation with, *āyusmān bhava saumya* 'be long-living, O, good man!'.¹⁸⁷

The application of this rule enforces social class boundaries by discriminating between *śūdras* (who are low-class and do not receive the pitch distinction), *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, and *brāhmaṇas*, who receive their own special greeting. This particular rule is also blocked (prohibition of the *pluta* replacement) in certain cases involving insults:

¹⁸⁴ *pratyabhivāde' śūdre → pratyabhivādo nāma yad abhivādyamāno gurur āśiṣaṃ prayunkte, tatrāśūdraviṣaye yad vākyaṃ vartate tasya ṭeḥ pluta udātto bhavati.*

¹⁸⁵ Sharma [1987–2003] 2002–2003, vol. 6, 582.

¹⁸⁶ A *pluta* is an overlong vowel.

¹⁸⁷ Sharma [1987–2003] 2002–2003, vol. 6, 582–583.

Some also desire this prohibition in the context of *asūyā* ‘fault-finding, impudence; that which may irritate the teacher, etc.’, expressed in the salutation. Thus, *abhivādaye sthāly aham bhoḥ* ‘I, Sthālī (carrying a cooking pot) salute you, sir!’ The response: *asūyakas tvam jālma, na tvam pratyabhivādanam arhasi, bhidyasva vṛṣala sthālin* ‘you are impudent, you wretched one, you do not deserve a benedictive response; may you burst (like a pot while cooking) O, lowly untouchable, Sthālin (carrier of a cooking pot)’. Note that the person who salutes here does not use his real name. He, instead, uses the name Sthālin (perhaps to annoy the teacher). Why this name? Because he must have been carrying a cooking pot at that time. It is stated that this *vārttika* proposal is unnecessary. For, a salutation will deserve response only till the time *asūyā* does not become known. Once *asūyā* is known, the question of a benedictive response does not arise. However, a response denoting anger cannot be ruled out.¹⁸⁸

Here we see that injunctions pertaining to the use of specific insults are explained in entirely technical terms,¹⁸⁹ a completely different approach from the *dharmaśāstras*’

¹⁸⁸ Sharma [1987–2003] 2002–2003, vol. 6, 582–583.

¹⁸⁹ From the same section, rules 8.2.84, 8.2.85, and 8.2.86 deal with proper forms for greeting in a friendly manner, and rules 8.2.95 and 8.2.96 discuss special grammatical forms used for threats. In book 5, rule 5.4.75 deals with special forms involving *sāman*, “conciliation” in combination with the prefixes *prati*, *anu* and *ava*. Sharma translates these as *pratisāman* ‘non-conciliatory, rudely’, *anusāman* ‘conciliatory, nicely’, and *avasāman* ‘not very nicely’. As with rule 8.2.84, the examples used for the above rules indicate a grammatical concern with the outward forms of etiquette, which is usually portrayed in terms of respect and avoiding annoyance.

instructions on proper behaviour. The focus in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is only on correct grammatical form, and so rudeness is simply described by means of its structure, with no concern for ethical goodness. We also notice that impolite speech is not demarcated as unethical speech, which does not have a grammatical category.¹⁹⁰ My reason for pointing out this difference is simply to demonstrate that ancient Indians had a sense of politeness that did not overlap entirely with ethical goodness. We see in the above examples that it is perfectly ordinary for the teacher to insult his impudent student, an action not marked in the text as unethical. Despite the ostensibly descriptive (not prescriptive) nature of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, there is still an implied normative judgment about which greetings and insults are appropriate for particular situations and people, but the *vyākaraṇa* tradition as a whole is not directly concerned with ethics. Polite speech, in contrast, has numerous

¹⁹⁰ A possible counterargument is that the above claim only holds true if ethical speech and impolite speech are in fact discrete categories. However, I do not think it is necessary to separate ethical speech from impolite speech entirely in order to observe that etiquette was considered to be its own phenomenon by grammarians. My reasoning here is that all of the examples that I take to be impolite speech concern insults and other slights of face, whereas I know of no examples in traditional grammars of statements that are immoral to utter. The traditional grammars always follow a descriptive pattern of statements that are observed in social contexts, but do not place judgment on these utterances. That is not the same as claiming that insulting speech had no ethical considerations for anyone, simply that a category on par with what we moderns call etiquette did exist for early Indian grammarians.

tone markers that set it off from other types of speech. Consider rule 3.4.59,¹⁹¹ which deals with unexpected or undesired announcements:

The word *ayathābhipretākhyāna* is explained as *na yad yad abhipretam iṣṭam tasya ākhyānam* ‘statement of things (in a manner) which is not desired’. Thus, announcing the birth of a son in a low voice is highly undesired; announcing the pregnancy of a daughter in a loud voice is equally undesired.¹⁹²

Again, we see that control of the voice is a factor in the perceived politeness of an utterance. In all of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*’s rules concerning etiquette, polite behaviour is centred on appropriate speech. This is not surprising, considering that it is a text focused on grammar. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that the ideals expressed in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* are routinely expressed in texts that do not deal directly with grammar, and the grammar tradition is referenced in various texts on proper behaviour.

From the above examples it is clear that the focus of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and the *vyākaraṇa* tradition is on proper grammatical forms, not on ethics. They are also not texts that prescribe proper etiquette, and any related matters that come up in the explanations for these rules are merely descriptions of their context, not injunctions for how one should behave. The reason, then, that this attention to form without judgment is of relevance in an examination of etiquette is the rules’ similarity to Goffman’s concept of *social face* as an aesthetic performance. For Pāṇini and other scholars in the *vyākaraṇa* tradition, speakers in a conversation act as agents performing grammatical utterances. Even the utterances themselves are not considered to be proper or improper; the grammarian’s job is to describe the system and not to judge the actors themselves.

¹⁹¹ *avyaye’ yathābhipretākhyāne kṛñāḥ ktvāṇamulau.*

¹⁹² Sharma [1987–2003] 2002–2003, vol. 3, 630.

Many other aspects of Brahmanical rule systems would be better categorized as ideological or simply cultural rather than as ethical standards, because they often have very little to do with ethics proper. They are ways of viewing or even constructing the world through language, but not necessarily ways of passing moral judgment on the world. Even when such rule systems coexist or overlap with formal systems of ethics, there are often many clues in the text that tell us these cultural standards were not treated in the same way as ethical ideals. The same can be said for the rules of Buddhist texts, which tend to be more concerned with successful community interaction than strictly ethical behaviour. As we shall see in our later analysis of Buddhist *prātimokṣa* rules, it is often not a question of what monastics do that is a problem, so much as it is what monastics are observed doing by their lay patrons. As with Goffman's characterization of politeness as an aesthetic performance, such rules focus not on the purity of the actor, but on creating a suitable show for an audience of benefactors.

With that distinction in mind, let us turn back again to the *dharmasūtra* texts. One of Vasiṣṭha's rules of conduct, immediately following injunctions against rude table manners, is that a proper Brahmin "should not become a cheat or a hypocrite, or learn the language of barbarians."¹⁹³ In contrast, the Buddhist *Theravāda Vinaya* has an injunction against using Sanskrit to promote Buddhist teachings, and encourages the use of local vernacular dialects.¹⁹⁴ The Vedic connection between language and ultimate reality is important to consider when we look at the historical political discrimination by Brahmins against groups with "rough pronunciation." Speakers of *bhāṣā*—Prakrits, which are Sanskrit vernacular dialects¹⁹⁵—were given the label *mleccha* by Sanskrit commentators

¹⁹³ Olivelle [2000] 2003, 381.

¹⁹⁴ Crosby 2014, 89–91. Mair 1994, 722–725. Norman 1997. Bechert 1980.

in the *brāhmaṇas* and *āraṇyakas*,¹⁹⁶ indicating that proper use of language was one key component of Brahmins' construction of their identity as culturally superior to non-Brahmins. Yet the Buddhists seem to have turned this idea around, and promoted the use of vernacular language in order to avoid appearing too haughty. At the same time, it is important to strike a proper balance between pleasing the laity and avoiding the corruptions of worldly activities. These issues will become more apparent as we examine the different types of improper speech described in Buddhist texts.

2.5: Rough Speech and Right Speech in Buddhist Literature

As I mentioned in chapter 1, another way to approach the question of what it means to be polite is to look at examples of impoliteness. Watts has suggested that formulating a theory of politeness may be done more easily by locating impoliteness.¹⁹⁷ In some cases it is difficult to tell if a particular action taken out of context is perceived culturally to be impolite, but it is often apparent from the reactions of characters in texts that an action is perceived as inappropriate. We can therefore attempt to formulate a set of rules for Buddhist monastic politeness by establishing which behaviours are not considered suitable by characters in Buddhist literature.

“Right speech” (*sammā-vācā*) in the Theravāda canon is defined negatively as abstaining from false speech, slanderous speech, harsh speech, and idle chatter.¹⁹⁸ Harsh

¹⁹⁵ The five major Prakrits were Māhārāṣṭrī, Śaurasenī, Māgadhī, Prācyā and Avanti; see Parasher 1991, 80.

¹⁹⁶ Parasher 1991, 80.

¹⁹⁷ Watts 2003, 17–18.

¹⁹⁸ Bodhi 2000, 1528.

speech (*pharusa vāca*) is probably the closest category the Theravāda Buddhists have for what we would call “impolite speech,” the Pāli equivalent for the term used in the above Sanskrit *dharmasūtra* rule about rough language (*paruṣā vāco*) in the example concerning milch-cow etiquette. This phrase, *paruṣā vāco*, appears repeatedly throughout the Theravāda canon, but generally is accompanied only by advice on not to do it, without much further explanation.¹⁹⁹ The *Vinaya Piṭaka* does have explicit directives on particular kinds of prohibited speech, including insulting speech, which is a *suddhapācittiyā* offense,²⁰⁰ as are slander²⁰¹ and general disrespectfulness²⁰² toward fellow monks. For the sake of comparison, consider the fines and punishments for verbal assault in the *Manusmṛti* (a *dharmasāstra* text from about 100 CE),²⁰³ which states, “A Brahmin is called the creator, the chastiser, the teacher, and the benefactor; one should never say anything unpleasant to him or use harsh words against him.”²⁰⁴ Here, the punishment for

¹⁹⁹ However, see the *Subhāsita-vācā Sutta* (AN 5.198) in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (Bodhi 2012, 816), and the *Subhāsita Sutta* (Sn 3.3) in the *Sutta Nipāta* section of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Norman 2001, 51–52) for examples of positive descriptions of proper speech. Caillat 1984 examines speech prohibition in the Theravāda tradition, with special emphasis on the Pāli term *subhāsita* and its relationship to truthful speech.

²⁰⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 171–185. Buddhist formal injunctions against insulting speech will be examined in more detail in chapter 3 (p. 99). See also Heim 2014, 71 and Nance 2012, 36–43.

²⁰¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 186–189.

²⁰² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 190–193.

²⁰³ Olivelle 2004, 143.

²⁰⁴ Olivelle 2004, 192.

verbal assault is dependent on the *varṇa* (social class) of the abuser, ranging from a monetary fine to having one's tongue cut off.²⁰⁵ The *Manusmṛti* also formally prohibits saying anything to make a Brahmin cry, for which the punishment is “exclusion from caste.”²⁰⁶

In Theravāda Buddhist texts, it is also possible to be *pharusa* in a physical rather than verbal sense, as in the case of the Licchavi youth,²⁰⁷ who are described in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* as “violent, rough, and brash” (*caṇḍā pharusā apajahāti*):

They are always plundering any sweets that are left as gifts among families, whether sugar cane, jujube fruits, cakes, pies, or sugarballs, and then they devour them. They give women and girls of respectable families blows on their backs.²⁰⁸

This description, however, is only present in the text to demonstrate the profound effect of the Buddha on others' manners, as the next line explains, “Now they are standing silently in attendance upon the Blessed One with their hands joined in reverential salutation.”²⁰⁹ That the Buddha has magical powers capable of quelling barbaric and violent behaviour is a recurring theme in the Theravāda canon. In another episode of the

²⁰⁵ Olivelle 2004, 143. The *Manusmṛti* and Buddhist *vinaya* texts both state that the student should be able to bear insults with equanimity.

²⁰⁶ Olivelle 2004, 195. Other transgressions listed in the same section, and receiving the same punishment, include “smelling liquor or substances that should not be smelt, cheating, and sexual intercourse with a man” (p. 195).

²⁰⁷ The Licchavis were a *kṣatriya* clan headquartered in the Indian city of Vaiśālī (in what is now the Indian state of Bihar). See Law [1922] 1993, 1–138.

²⁰⁸ Bodhi 2012, 690 (AN 5:58).

²⁰⁹ Bodhi 2012, 690. See also Law [1922] 1993, 63–75.

Theravāda Vinaya, the Buddha uses his *tapas* (supernormal heat power generated from ascetic practices) to defeat a vicious fire-breathing *nāga*.²¹⁰ When, in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the famous doctor Jīvaka Komārabhacca takes King Ajātasattu to visit the Buddha deep in a forest, the king is so incredulous at the silence of the forest monks that he suspects he is being led into a trap:

And when King Ajātasattu came near the mango-grove he felt fear and terror, and his hair stood on end. And feeling this fear and the rising of the hairs, the King said to Jīvaka: “Friend Jīvaka, you are not deceiving me? You are not tricking me? You are not delivering me up to an enemy? How is it that from this great number of twelve hundred and fifty monks not a sneeze, a cough or a shout is to be heard?”²¹¹

The common theme among all of these stories is that the Buddha’s own control over his senses influences others to behave in a like manner. Narendra Wagle has noted that even nonhuman beings do no harm to humans when the Buddha is present.²¹²

The commentary of the *Dhammapada* (*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*) contains an interesting reference to a holiday called *bālanakkhatta*, which Burlingame translates as “Simpletons’ Holiday.”²¹³ During this holiday, “unintelligent folk used to smear their bodies with ashes and cow-dung and for a period of seven days go about uttering all manner of coarse talk.”²¹⁴ The ritual sounds very similar to some of the practices of the

²¹⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 33–35.

²¹¹ Walshe [1995] 2005, 92 (*DN 2*).

²¹² Wagle 1966, 14.

²¹³ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 310.

²¹⁴ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 310.

Śaiva Pāśupatas and Kālāmukhas,²¹⁵ but unfortunately I have only been able to find this one very small reference to it. In any case, the reactions of lay characters in this story, who request the Buddha and his monks to stay in the monastery during the festivities, tell us some interesting things about the serious nature of rude speech.²¹⁶

It is readily apparent from this story that coarseness and animality are not considered to be appropriate for Buddhist monks, but are alleged to be common practices among certain non-Buddhists. The Buddhist identity is very much constructed around the idea that Buddhists have more control over their physical and mental habits than do non-Buddhists. To what extent this idea corresponds with the reality of Indian society at the time of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*'s authorship is impossible to say from the text alone. There is no question that Buddhist authors exaggerated the barbarousness of outsiders and amplified their own civility within Buddhist texts. However, Buddhist texts also feature Buddhist characters behaving without decorum, and even the Buddha employs speech habits in texts that could potentially cause offence to other characters.

While the Buddha frequently warns his monks and nuns to keep their speech gentle and free from harshness, he uses rather colourful language on a number of occasions, often addressing a person he wishes to correct as *moghapurisa* ("fool" or more literally "confused man").²¹⁷ In the *Cullavagga* (*Theravāda Vinaya*), the Buddha refers to

²¹⁵ Lorenzen 1972, 187.

²¹⁶ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 310–311.

²¹⁷ The Buddha's use of *moghapurisa* ("fool") occurs quite often in the Theravāda *Nikāya* and *Vinaya* texts. The *Vinaya* texts adopt a formulaic usage for many episodes in which improper monastic conduct initiates the creation of a new rule. Examples: "How can you, foolish men, not knowing moderation, ask for many robes?" (Horner [1938–

his cousin Devadatta as “a wretched one to be vomited like spittle” (*kheḷāsaka*, “phlegm”) when Devadatta asks to lead the *saṅgha* as the Buddha’s successor. This comparison is clearly insulting to Devadatta, as the text tells us.²¹⁸ Likewise, when, in the *Nandavagga* section of the *Udāna* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, monks complain to the Buddha that their fellow monk Pilindavacca is addressing them “with contempt” (apparently calling them *vasalavāda* = “outcaste”), it is clear that this word is considered impolite, and the Buddha requests that the monks not become *ujjhāyittha* (“offended” or “annoyed”).²¹⁹

The above examples concern internal episodes between members of the Buddhist monastic community. Generally speaking, the Buddha’s interactions with Brahmins and others outside the Buddhist institution represent the Buddha as upright and courteous, and his debate partners as coarse and inconsiderate. The best example of this dichotomy occurs in the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, in which the young Brahmin Ambaṭṭha is called out by the Buddha for merely going through the motions of courtesy, speaking “some vague words of politeness” (*kañci kañci katham sārāṇīyaṃ vītisāreti*)²²⁰ on meeting the Buddha, but then remaining standing while the Buddha is seated.

1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 51); “How can you, foolish man, convey sheep’s wool for more than three *yojanas*?” (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 91); “How can you, foolish man, eat with your friends, having asked and asked at many households?” (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 306).

²¹⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 264.

²¹⁹ Ānandajoti 2008, 89.

²²⁰ Walshe 2003, 113.

Brian Black has made the argument that the character of Ambaṭṭha in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the character of Śvetaketu in the *upaniṣads*, “convey two versions of the same story, with the literary characters Śvetaketu and Ambaṭṭha sharing some striking similarities,” and notes that “both stories assume that proper etiquette is part of the training of a student.”²²¹ Patrick Olivelle has also written about the Śvetaketu story, referring to this character as the “vedic equivalent of a spoiled little brat.”²²² Black and Olivelle each mention the term “etiquette” several times, but do not attempt to define what is meant by etiquette, or how we can recognize this phenomenon as distinct from “good conduct.”²²³

Black has also argued that “the wealthy Brahmin in the *Nikāyas* emerges as a complexly ambivalent figure who is depicted, simultaneously, as a competitor for royal patronage and as a potential benefactor.”²²⁴ He points out that many Buddhist *suttas*

²²¹ Black 2011, 137.

²²² Olivelle 1999, 46.

²²³ Black is primarily interested in literary parallels between the *upaniṣads* and the Theravāda *nikāya* narratives, whereas Olivelle’s goal is “is to examine the divergent ways in which the authors of [the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*-, *Chāndogya*-, and *Kauṣītaki*-*Upaniṣads*] develop the character of Śvetaketu and to explore the possible theological and literary reasons for those divergences” (Olivelle 1999, p. 46). Because of these different goals, it is to be expected that Black and Olivelle would not dwell in depth on the nature of etiquette itself. My intention is not to criticize these two previous references to Indian etiquette, but rather to use them as a launching point for my own specific examination of Indian Buddhist etiquette.

²²⁴ Black 2009, 26.

“suggest that Brahmanism played a vital role in validating the claims of the Buddhist tradition.”²²⁵ In the stories of these *suttas*, young Brahmins often challenge the Buddha’s authority, but not in a way that is entirely cordial or inconsiderate on either side. As Black observes, “While these scenes often portray Brahmins prostrating themselves in front of the Buddha, they also tend to include compromise and concession as integral aspects of the Buddha’s dealings with Brahmins.”²²⁶ Black also suggests that the use of young Brahmin characters, who are then defeated by the Buddha in debate, “is a literary strategy employed to criticize Brahmanism, without making senior Brahmins ... face humiliation by sparring with the Buddha directly.”²²⁷

I agree with Black’s assessment of these literary strategies, but I would like to push a bit further into the inner workings of this type of politeness, including the particular goals of these politeness activities, and the reasons these strategies accomplish those goals. At the surface level, we can say that politeness rituals are really concerned with establishing harmonious relationships between social participants, and a primary reason for establishing harmony in those relationships is to portray Buddhist social norms as erudite and efficacious beyond the status quo of non-Buddhist groups.

Good conduct in Buddhist texts is frequently accompanied by proper speech. However, what constitutes proper speech is not necessarily what people want to hear. In the *Kukkuravatika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (Theravāda canon), the Buddha tells a “dog-duty ascetic” and an “ox-duty ascetic” some unpleasant news about their future rebirths. As depicted in the text, these human ascetics who purposefully imitate the

²²⁵ Black 2009, 32.

²²⁶ Black 2009, 37.

²²⁷ Black 2009, 37.

behaviour of animals are nevertheless very polite when speaking with the Buddha, although they do not abandon the iconic forms of their animalistic tendencies in his presence. Seṇiya adopts the mannerisms of a dog, while Puṇṇa wears prosthetic horns and a tail, and eats grass alongside real oxen. These two ascetics approach the Buddha with questions concerning their future births:²²⁸

Puṇṇa, the ox-duty ascetic, went to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, while Seṇiya, the naked dog-duty ascetic, exchanged greetings with the Blessed One, and when this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he too sat down at one side curled up like a dog. Puṇṇa, the ox-duty ascetic, said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, this Seṇiya is a naked dog-duty ascetic who does what it is hard to do: he eats his food when it is thrown to the ground. He has long taken up and practiced that dog-duty. What will be his destination? What will be his future course?”²²⁹

The Buddha at this point demurs, knowing that the truth as he sees it will be difficult for the ascetics to bear, but after much pleading, eventually gives in. He explains that the dog-duty ascetic, if his practice succeeds, will be reborn as a dog, and the ox-duty ascetic, as an ox.²³⁰ If they fail at their ascetic practices, they will go to hell. Both ascetics burst into tears upon hearing this,²³¹ but soon decide to convert to Buddhism. Puṇṇa becomes a

²²⁸ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 1257, note 600.

²²⁹ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 493.

²³⁰ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 493.

²³¹ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 494. The ascetics burst into tears because they realize that their efforts will not lead to the cessation of rebirth.

lay follower of the Buddha,²³² and Seṇiya is ordained as a monk. Seṇiya eventually achieves enlightenment, and is recognized as an *arahant*.²³³

The *Pāṭika Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (DN 24) mentions another dog-duty ascetic, Korakkhattiya the dog-man. He is a naked ascetic, “going round on all fours, sprawling on the ground, and chewing and eating his food with his mouth alone.”²³⁴ This ascetic serves as a foil to the Buddha, and a convenient way to demonstrate the Buddha’s ability to forecast the future. The Buddha in this story recounts a prophecy he made about Korakkhattiya, that when he dies, he shall be reborn among the *Kālakaṇṇja asuras*, “the very lowest grade of *asuras*.” When the Buddha’s doubting disciple Sunakkhatta later interrogates this corpse, it sits up and confirms the truth of the prophecy.²³⁵

The name Sunakkhatta actually comes from a word for “dog” in Pāli.²³⁶ Oliver Freiburger has written on the use of dogs as representative of Brahmins in Buddhist literature, noting that dogs were considered by Brahmins to be impure.²³⁷ Animals in general are considered in Sanskrit texts to be less pure than human beings, and Indian Buddhist texts often portray animal birth as the undesired outcome of improper conduct

²³² Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 496.

²³³ Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, 497.

²³⁴ Walshe 1995, 373.

²³⁵ Walshe 1995, 374.

²³⁶ The Pāli *sunakkha* appears to be a variant spelling of Pāli *sunakha*. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921: s.vv. *sunakha* (p. 719), *suna*, (p. 719), *soṇa* (p. 724), *suvāṇa* (p. 720), *supāṇa* (p. 719).

²³⁷ Freiburger 2009, 64.

in a previous human birth.²³⁸ It would therefore be especially insulting to Brahmins to be compared to dogs in this way.

Only humans can become ordained as Buddhist monks and nuns. The *Mahāvagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya* relates an episode in which a *nāga* (a mythological being with qualities of both serpents and humans) takes human form and is ordained as a monk. When it falls asleep, it reverts to its serpent form, frightening the other monks. This prompts the Buddha to create an injunction against ordaining non-humans.²³⁹ As noted previously, non-human sentient beings (including animals, tree spirits, ghosts, *devas*, and other supernatural entities) are in general very respectful in the presence of the Buddha. In a story told in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, an elephant and monkey serve the Buddha after he decides to sleep in the forest, following a quarrel between monks at Kosambī. This same text has many other examples of tree spirits and other creatures behaving politely toward the Buddha.²⁴⁰

We see in the above narratives that the lay community portrayed in Buddhist texts is a rich tapestry of many different kinds of cultures. Historically, the significance of the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas seems to have been a major influence on the rhetorical styles advocated in Buddhist monastic law. Respect for authority figures, especially elders and community leaders, is a key feature of these texts. In addition to these communities, the texts also demonstrate respectful speech toward various ascetic traditions, animals, and what are now considered to be mythological entities. Buddhist law formally prohibits the

²³⁸ Waldau 2000, 97.

²³⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 110–111.

²⁴⁰ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 179–183. The quarrel at Kosambī is also mentioned in the *Theravāda Vinaya*, in the *Mahāvagga*. I discuss this story further in chapter 4 (p. 183).

use of injurious language by monastics, yet we also see the Buddha at times employing a brusque tone, while still being careful to preserve the feelings of others. The Buddha of these texts does not mince words, and when there is a conflict between *social face* and honesty, he often adopts a strategy that linguists refer to as “bald on record” impoliteness.²⁴¹

In the next section, I examine two aspects of Buddhist politeness that are presented in a more formulaic manner: greetings and apologies. The Buddhist treatment of these two kinds of polite behaviour shares a number of features with Brahmanism, and serves to inform our understanding of Buddhist-Brahmin relations in addition to the internal hierarchy of the Buddhist monastic institution.

2.6: Greetings in *Nikāya* Literature

The most comprehensive analysis of Buddhist greetings to date is Narendra Wagle’s 1966 study of Theravāda Buddhist social customs in the Pāli canon. Wagle notes that Brahmins depicted in Pāli *sutta* texts most frequently greet the Buddha using the word *bho*,²⁴² which in Pāli (and Sanskrit) is something like the English *sir*, and implies both formality and equal status between the speaker and hearer. This word can, however, be used by a superior to an inferior as well.²⁴³ *Bho* is the standard greeting used when Brahmins are

²⁴¹ This type of impoliteness refers to direct statements that are made without any regard for saving *face*.

²⁴² Wagle 1966, 45–46. See also Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, xxxvii–lv. For formulaic *sutta* phrases, see Manné 1990, 36–39.

²⁴³ See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.v. *bho* (p. 509), a shortened form of the vocative *bhagoḥ* of the Vedic *bhagavant*.

talking with other Brahmins, and so its appearance in dialogues between the Buddha and Brahmins leads one to believe that the Buddha was considered an equal of Brahmins, at least as far as Buddhist texts represent these situations. When expressing anger toward the Buddha, Brahmins tend to use a different term, *samaṇa* (“ascetic”), perhaps implying that the hearer is of a lower status. A Brahmin addresses the Buddha as *bhante* (“venerable sir”)—indicating higher status of the addressee—only once in the Theravāda canon.²⁴⁴

Buddhist monks consistently address the Buddha as *bhagavā* (“lord”),²⁴⁵ a traditional title for Indian religious teachers and deities. According to the Wagle, the monks in Pāli sources address each other as *āvuso* (“friend”) while the Buddha is alive, but introduce special terms to differentiate junior and senior monks after his death. Thus we see in some texts the use of *bhante* or *āyasmā* (both meaning “venerable sir”) when a junior monk addresses a senior monk, or in some cases the use of the *gotta* (Sanskrit *gotra*) name, which would preserve information about one’s social class prior to ordination.²⁴⁶ The Buddha also addresses Brahmins by their *gotta* name. Wagle says that “*gotta* affiliation appears to be so important that whenever available it is used by the Buddha in preference to any other forms of address.”²⁴⁷ This fact may seem rather curious when we consider the longstanding notion that Buddhist monastics renounce all familial ties upon ordination, and that caste or class distinctions are erased at that time.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Wagle 1966, 46.

²⁴⁵ Also *bhante*, which is a more general term of respect. *Bhagavā* is used exclusively for the Buddha. Wagle 1966, 51.

²⁴⁶ Wagle 1966, 57. See also Scharfe 2002, 133, note 7.

²⁴⁷ Wagle 1966, 70.

²⁴⁸ Of course, this idea of complete renunciation is now known to have been merely an

Wagle’s study is a careful and detailed examination of greetings in Theravāda *Nikāya* literature, but unfortunately does not include any material from the *Theravāda Vinaya* or from other Indian Buddhist lineages. It is an excellent starting point from which to explore the concept of etiquette, but is far from being a complete study of Buddhist etiquette. One of the most useful items in the book is a chart listing over 300 verbal exchanges between monks, the Buddha, and various community members.²⁴⁹ Wagle categorizes these data according to group affiliation (Buddha, monk, *gahapati*, *brāhmaṇa*, king, etc.) and terms of address, noting which terms tend to be used by specific speakers addressing specific groups. The third chapter of Wagle’s book is an analysis of these data,²⁵⁰ where he observes a “threefold system of ranking” of social, religious and political divisions in *Nikāya* social interactions, and claims that “the brāhmaṇas recognise no superior in any system of ranking, but at the most only equals.”²⁵¹ This conclusion is very interesting, but also very brief, and Wagle’s study as a whole is largely descriptive. It includes many useful social categories and references to these categories in the *Nikāyas*, but his analysis is often rather thin.

It is not surprising that Wagle avoids discussing the more formal aspects of Theravāda etiquette, as these are mainly contained in *vinaya* texts (the Buddhist monastic legal code, roughly analogous to the Vedic *dharmaśāstra* texts). I will introduce a few examples of speech etiquette from the *Theravāda Vinaya* in the next section, and discuss some other aspects of *vinaya* etiquette (e.g., etiquette rituals of the body) in chapter 3.

ideal that often did not equate with the actual monastic situation. See Clarke 2014.

²⁴⁹ Wagle 1966, 192–301.

²⁵⁰ Wagle 1966, 44–77.

²⁵¹ Wagle, 1966, 77.

2.7: Apologizing in the *Theravāda Vinaya*

The *Mahāvagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya* contains some special rules for cases in which etiquette practices are not carried out properly. Of particular interest to our examination of proper speech is a section on dismissing (*paṇāmito*) monks who misbehave, on the proper way that these monks can make apologies (*khamāpeti*) to their offended preceptors, and the proper way that these preceptors can forgive (*khamati*) the junior monks. First, the Buddha allows for dismissal (*panāmemi*), and then allows the practice of making apologies. At this point, the apology is not mandatory, and the monks are observed not apologizing, after which the act of not making apologies becomes an offense unto itself. Note again the employment of a double negative (“not not”) to indicate a positive requirement:

Now at that time those who shared a cell and were dismissed did not apologise.

They told this matter to the Lord. He said: “I allow (them), monks, to apologise.”

Even so, they did not apologise. They told this matter to the Lord. He said:

“Monks, one who is dismissed is not not to apologise. Whoever should not apologise, there is an offense of wrong-doing.”²⁵²

The pattern is repeated for forgiveness of the apology:

Now at that time preceptors, on being apologised to, did not forgive. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: “I allow you, monks, to forgive.” Even so, they did not forgive. And those who shared a cell departed and they left the Order and they went over to (other) sects. They told this matter to the Lord. He said:

“Monks, when you are being apologised to you should not not forgive. Whoever should not forgive, there is an offense of wrong-doing.”²⁵³

²⁵² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 69–70.

While the historicity of this narrative is not verifiable, the passage hints at the very mundane emotional phenomena of disrespect and hurt feelings that were surely common in situations of constructed authority. Certainly these issues were not unique to Buddhist institutions, but they are nevertheless interesting to consider in the context of an emerging *saṅgha* intent on retaining members. Impoliteness is portrayed here as a potential threat to the harmony of the Buddhist community, and offended monks could potentially leave the Buddhist community for other religious groups.

The same section of the Mahāvagga lists five qualities desirable in a junior monk. These qualities include 1) **affection** (*pema*) for the preceptor, 2) **faith** (*pasāda*)²⁵⁴ in the preceptor, 3) a sense of **shame** (*hiri*)²⁵⁵ toward the preceptor, 4) **respect** (*garava*) for the preceptor, and 5) **development** (*bhāvanā*) under the preceptor. Lacking these qualities is grounds for dismissal by the preceptor.²⁵⁶ Many other similar lists of good qualities follow in other sections of the same text.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 70.

²⁵⁴ See Ludowyk-Gyomroi 1943, 82 and Gethin 1992, 112. This term is equivalent to Sanskrit *prasāda*. For a detailed analysis of the practice of *prasāda* in the *Divyāvadāna*, see Rotman 2009, 66–112.

²⁵⁵ This term is equivalent to *hri* in Sanskrit, and is often translated as a sense of “self-respect” or “conscientiousness.” See Guenther and Kawamura 1975.

²⁵⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 70–71. The five qualities are phrased negatively, i.e. “having no affection,” “having no faith,” etc. are grounds for dismissal. What dismissal actually means in this context is not entirely clear, but my interpretation is that a poor match between a preceptor and junior monk could result in reassignment of that junior monk to a different preceptor.

Formal lists in the *Mahāvagga* are usually interspersed with stories about how they came to be required, with the narrative touching on various unanticipated problems encountered by monks. In another story from this text, a candidate for monkhood, on being instructed in the aforementioned *nissayas* (“resources” in Horner’s translation), declares, “the resources are disgusting and loathsome to me,”²⁵⁸ which leads to a rule about not dwelling on asceticism too much prior to ordination. The reasoning is very clear: promoting the Buddhist monastic lifestyle as too disgusting is likely to reduce membership.²⁵⁹

The *Mahāvagga* provides for another type of authority figure in addition to the preceptor: the *ācariya*, or “teacher.”²⁶⁰ As with the preceptor, there are formally-outlined ways of interacting with this person appropriately, and the text again provides several examples of improper conduct. I will not examine these kinds of conduct in detail here, except to mention briefly that the theme of being “not respectful, not deferential, not courteous”²⁶¹ is a common refrain in the text, and that Indian Buddhist courtesy is in many ways inherited from Brahmanical courtesy.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Other virtuous traits common to these lists include “generosity” (*cāga*) and “friendliness” (*mettā*).

²⁵⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 76.

²⁵⁹ I examine the relationship between etiquette and disgust in chapter 3 (see p. 134).

²⁶⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 79.

²⁶¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 106.

²⁶² The name pronunciation problem at Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 119 and the method for properly requesting ordination at Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 122 in particular exhibit many qualities of Brahmanical modes of proper speech.

There are a few more miscellaneous points I would like to make about the formality of etiquette. As Édith Nolot has pointed out in a series of articles on Buddhist technical terms, the *Kamma-kkhandhaka* (“section on procedures”) of the *Cullavagga* lists seven formal acts for enacting specific disciplinary procedures against misbehaving monks and nuns. Of those seven procedures, the fourth, *paṭisāra / paṭisāraṇīya-kamma*, is of particular interest in our study on etiquette.²⁶³ This procedure involves “reconciliation” after rude behaviour that has caused offence to a lay donor, and requires the offending monk or nun to issue a formal apology to the offended person. As something of a corollary to this procedure, the *patta-nikkujjanā kamma* or “turning over the bowls” procedure enables monks offended by laypersons to express this feeling formally. By literally turning over their almsbowls, the offended monks inhibit the usual exchange of food and merit, thus interrupting social economy.²⁶⁴

We will revisit the reconciliation procedure in the next chapter, when we examine the formal rules of etiquette contained in the *pātimokkha* (Sanskrit *prātimokṣa*). In the next section, I will examine some rules for dealing respectfully with the various lay groups outside of the Buddhist institution. These groups would have been important for monetary support of monasteries, increasing social tolerance for Buddhists, and as a source for new monks and nuns.

²⁶³ See Nolot 1999, 2–3.

²⁶⁴ See Nolot 1999, 80. The procedure of “turning over the bowls” as an act of political defiance in recent times has been discussed in McCarthy 2008. See also *Jātaka* 9.428, in which laypeople get angry about a squabble between monks at Kosambi, and decide not to pay any proper respect to them (Cowell 1895–1907, vol. 3, pp. 289–291).

2.8: *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, Talking With Brahmins and Kṣatriyas

The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* is a Buddhist *vinaya* text from the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage. Originally composed in Sanskrit, it was later translated into Chinese. This text is, in many ways, the closest thing we have to a handbook of proper etiquette for Indian Buddhist monks. While a great deal of the material is similar or identical to what is found in the *Cullavagga* and *Mahāvagga* (of the *Theravāda Vinaya*) and in the *sūtravibhaṅga* explanations of *prātimokṣa* rules (of various lineages),²⁶⁵ the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* has more detailed information on such topics as serving a master, eating food, being a proper host and guest, using a lavatory, and even the proper method for releasing flatulence when in the meditation hall. These topics are presented as injunctions, along with a few backstories to introduce certain themes. The categories are divided as follows:

- 1) Rules about preceptors, teachers, and colleagues
- 2) Rules about bedding, seatcushions, furniture, toilets, urinals
- 3) Rules about *kaṭhina* mats, door curtains, the almstour, standing and sitting
- 4) Rules for hosting guests, being a guest, dealing with Kṣatriyas, Brahmins and householders
- 5) Rules on village customs, drinking water, washing, table etiquette, clothing
- 6) Rules about clothing

²⁶⁵ For a comparative study of parallels between the Chinese text of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* and equivalent Pāli materials, see Prasad 1984. Karashima 2012 is a complete transliteration and German translation of the extant Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, and includes many notes on the similarities between this text and other Buddhist sources.

7) Rules about miscellaneous objects (lamps, sticks, balls, mats, sandals) and bodily functions (coughing, sneezing, scratching, yawning, flatulence)

These seven chapters are further subdivided into 62 total sections, each with an average of 10–30 subsections.

The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* also gives separate instructions on how to be a good host, how to be a good guest, and how to treat Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and householders when visiting their homes and political assemblies. A monk should leave his sandals and umbrella at the door, take whatever seat is offered without complaint, and avoid unnecessary greetings. When dealing with Kṣatriyas, he should neither praise nor blame the art of war, and when dealing with Brahmins, he should refrain from mocking their arrogance, or claiming that they will be reborn as cocks, pigs, dogs, jackals, and camels.

The repeated theme in all of these rules, whether they concern appropriate lavatory rituals, social greetings, or other standards of conduct, is that acting in a way that fits the public image of a monk is a practical way of bringing outsiders to a positive view of the Buddhist order. These rules tell us a great deal about the relationship between Buddhist monks and the non-Buddhist community. Rather than existing in isolation, it is clear that the Indian Buddhist monastic community had frequent social interactions with non-Buddhists, and that Buddhist monks were keenly aware of the possibility of causing offence. As a new religion in a culture dictated primarily by the ideology of Brahmanism, Buddhists consciously imported those standards of decorum into their own texts.

Several sections of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* deal with specific social relationships between host and guest monks, forest and village monks, monks and their local Kṣatriya and Brahmin legal assemblies, and between monks and householders more generally. We can see from these divisions in the text that early Buddhist communities

had many diverse social relationships, and that the Buddhist lawmakers were well aware of the importance in maintaining an atmosphere of respect for the continued success of the saṅgha. The advice given in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* is often very explicit, revealing colloquial ideas on good behaviour. Consider, for example, an injunction directed at monks visiting other monasteries:

Under no circumstances should [the visiting monks] insult residents, saying, “Hu, ha, hey, you still dwell here! You are (already) wormeaten, you are the serpent kings, Nanda and Upanandana, you’re just born here (and) you shall die here! The jackals are (already) born that will eat your flesh.”²⁶⁶

Monks must also avoid irritating their hosts with presumptuous questions:

²⁶⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 247 (31.16). This seems to be something like a schoolyard taunt. The Sanskrit is a bit more poetic than my English translation: “hū ha he adyāpi taṃ tad ev(‘) ettha vasatha, ghuṇavidhā tave, NandOpanandanā yūyaṃ nāgarājano, ihaiva yūyaṃ jātā ihaiva mariṣyatha. jātā te śṛgālā ye tumbhāṇaṃ māṃsāni khādiṣyanti.” Karashima’s German translation of the Sanskrit reads: “‘Hu, ha, he, ihr wohnt heute noch //nach wie vor // hier!’; Ihr(?) seid (schon) von Würmern zerfressen!’ ‘Ihr seid die Schlangenkönige, Nanda und Upanandana!’; ‘Ihr seid eben hier geboren (und) ihr werdet eben hier sterben!’; ‘Die Schakale sind (schon) geboren, die euer Fleisch fressen werden’” (p. 247). The entire Sanskrit verse comes to exactly 64 *akṣaras*. A similar injunction against the monastic hosts follows this at 31.28. See also Karashima’s more recent paper on the same text, which provides his own English translations of the above taunt: Karashima 2014, p. 81.

The guest monk must not say, “Who is there? How old are you (in terms of ordination age)? Get up!” One must also not say, “What is the order of the meals?

For whom is there a meal tomorrow, a snack or a breakfast?”²⁶⁷

Some of these phrases are obviously taunts, an example of what we refer to as “bald on record” impoliteness in chapter 3.²⁶⁸ Others appear simply to be probing questions that would probably not be considered impolite (by our previous definition), but simply rude (meaning that the speaker causes offence unintentionally).

In the same chapter, there are various pieces of advice on proper greetings to be used with members of the Buddhist laity and also senior monks. Monks are advised to avoid addressing lay patrons using casual terms (“little brother,” “mother”),²⁶⁹ and should greet a teacher in a respectful and submissive manner (e.g., “Teacher, what do you command?”) rather than a colloquial manner (e.g., “Ha, what do you say?”).²⁷⁰

When speaking with Kṣatriya assemblies, one must get prior permission from the elders to attend their assembly. It is considered inappropriate to carry one’s umbrella and wear sandals into the assembly hall. These should be left to the side before entering. The monk should take whatever seat is offered, and avoid unnecessary greetings. He must not complain about the seat. He should refer to the Kṣatriya class as the first class. He should speak about whatever business he came to discuss and then leave promptly.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 248 (31.17).

²⁶⁸ See p. 119.

²⁶⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 265 (33.1).

²⁷⁰ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 267 (33.6, 33.7).

²⁷¹ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 271–274 (section 34).

When speaking with Brahmin assemblies, the rules are very much the same. As with Kṣatriya communities, the monk must not arrive unannounced or uninvited, and is to leave his umbrella/parasol and sandals at the entrance of the assembly hall.²⁷² He should not mock Brahmins, saying that they are arrogant and reborn as cocks, pigs, dogs, jackals and camels. He should say that good people are reborn either as Kṣatriyas or Brahmins.²⁷³

Likewise, when speaking at assemblies of householders,²⁷⁴ members of other religious sects,²⁷⁵ or nobles,²⁷⁶ visiting monks should neither praise nor blame the views of their hosts, and leave promptly. Ridicule is also a major concern in situations between forest monks and village monks. Forest monks are advised not to accuse village monks of leading comfortable lives,²⁷⁷ and village monks should not accuse forest monks of doing ascetic practices to gain fame.²⁷⁸

The content of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* is an important piece of evidence in understanding the intentions of Buddhist monastic lawmakers toward their lay patrons. A frequent theme in these texts is the recognition of different kinds of communities and the importance of maintaining respectful discourse with these communities. This text also contains various rules on etiquette procedures within the monastic institution, which we will examine in chapter 3.

²⁷² See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 275–278 (section 35).

²⁷³ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 277 (35.6).

²⁷⁴ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 279–282 (section 36).

²⁷⁵ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 283–285 (section 37).

²⁷⁶ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 286–292 (section 38).

²⁷⁷ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 302 (39.17).

²⁷⁸ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 306 (39.29).

2.9: Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused mainly on proper speech as found in Vedic and Theravāda Buddhist *Nikāya* literature, with additional examples of proper speech injunctions in the *Theravāda Vinaya* and in a *vinaya* text from the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage, *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*. Speech is one aspect of behaviour in which we can see relatively easily the parallels between Indian Buddhist social mores and those of Brahmins. The phenomenon that I refer to as “etiquette” extends far beyond proper speech, however, and includes bodily hygiene, rules for using the lavatory, manner of dress, and other social aspects of daily life in which disagreements may arise. I cover many of these behavioural norms in the next chapter, where I present the more formal side of etiquette as it appears in Theravāda *vinaya* texts, drawing mainly from the *pātimokkha* and its explanatory narratives in the *suttavibhaṅga*. While the *vinayas* describe proper conduct for monks and nuns, their subject matter only overlaps with “etiquette,” but does not contain it. As we will see, it is therefore possible to follow the *vinayas* and still be rude, and it is also possible to be polite while failing to observe the rules. This distinction will be made more clear as I present these formal rules and their corresponding narratives.

Chapter 3: Formal Etiquette and Buddhist Law

3.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on the theme of proper speech throughout Indian Buddhist literature as an ideal inherited from earlier *dharmaśāstra* texts of Vedic Brahmanism. In this chapter I examine formal aspects of Buddhist etiquette found in *vinaya* texts, which serve as the basis for Buddhist monastic law. Beginning with a review of scholarship on *vinaya* etiquette literature, and then analyzing several passages from this literature in depth, I will demonstrate how etiquette appears as a specific kind of proper conduct throughout the *Theravāda Vinaya*, interacting with but also distinct from ethical conduct.

The main point I want to make in this chapter is that we cannot simply accept at face value the Buddhist tradition's own account of itself, presented in formal injunctions and doctrinal literature in general. The categories of proper behaviour found in these texts serve a specific purpose within the Buddhist community, and the texts that utilize these categories have no internal need to critique themselves. Nor can we accept the typical academic approach to etiquette in Buddhist texts, which tends to equate etiquette with only one very small section of the *pātimokkha* (the monastic liturgy). The phenomenon I am calling “etiquette” is scattered throughout Buddhist texts, and not always highlighted with a unique technical term. Concepts of polite speech and decorum did exist for ancient Indian Buddhists, as we have observed in chapter 2, but the boundaries of these ideas and their interaction with other kinds of behaviour are uniquely suited to the time and place in which Buddhism originated. It is therefore necessary to examine Indian Buddhist etiquette within the larger context of ancient Indian society.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ Etiquette is a cultural construction, with often arbitrary rituals formulated as a way

In section 2, I review in more detail the rules against insulting speech found in the *suddhapācittiyā* section of the Theravāda *pātimokkha*. These examples are intended to illustrate a problem raised in section 1, concerning the textual location of etiquette by previous scholarship. I show here that many aspects of behaviour considered to be proper etiquette in contemporary Western culture are categorized differently in Buddhist law. I also point out a few key differences between the Buddhist treatment of insulting speech and the same concept in *dharmaśāstra* texts.

In section 3, I discuss the concept of intentionality in Theravāda *vinaya* rules, and consider the differences between *rude* and *impolite* behaviours as described by linguistic theories of *(im)politeness*.

In section 4, I clarify a distinction between lay and monastic etiquette made by *vinaya* texts. I explain how it is possible for Buddhist monastics to follow the *vinaya* regulations correctly but still be perceived as rude by lay Buddhists.

In section 5, I describe the *sekhiya* rules concerning impolite dining habits.

In section 6, I introduce the emotion of disgust as a potential origin for some etiquette rituals. I then discuss contemporary theories about disgust. I present a single rule found in the *sekhiya* section of the Theravāda *pātimokkha*, as another example of the often tenuous connection between ethics and etiquette, and the strong connection between etiquette and cultural habits. This rule, *sekhiya* 73, advises monks not to stand while urinating, and has an equivalent Brahmanical rule in Sanskrit *dharmaśāstra* texts.

of dealing with culturally-specific needs. The way that behaviour is categorized depends on various factors. Later in this chapter, I explore the idea that etiquette rituals come into being as a way of mediating shared notions of disgust (see p. 134).

Each of these sections is meant to highlight a different aspect of a single theme. I aim to show the numerous, diverse ways that etiquette was (and is) treated in Buddhist law, by the authors of the texts and by scholars interpreting these texts. I also want to draw attention to the problems inherent in reducing etiquette to specific categories and sections of texts. I have intentionally danced around the issue of defining etiquette in a strict sense, in part because I do not think that it is ultimately possible or even useful to attempt a comprehensive definition of this term. However, it is also important to establish the boundaries of the topic in question, especially because my use of “etiquette” is a construction of convenience. With those issues in mind, I have found that the only reasonable solution is to address potential aspects of etiquette as they occur in the source texts and analyze them from the perspective of both the Buddhist tradition and contemporary theories.

3.2: Buddhist Insults and Proper Speech

In chapter 2, I mentioned briefly the Buddhist injunction against a particular kind of improper speech, insulting speech.²⁸⁰ We also saw in the *dharmaśāstra* tradition that insulting speech can have extremely severe legal repercussions. The specific negative consequences of insults in *dharmaśāstra* texts, which often include physical punishment, do seem to indicate that improper speech was considered by Brahmins to be immoral in addition to being impolite. However, insulting speech also does not appear to be unethical in the strict sense of virtue ethics, but instead is a disruption to the normal social order. It is in that sense a type of role ethics, in which individuals are considered to be playing a certain part in a larger social system. The consideration of rights in ancient India was

²⁸⁰ See chapter 2, p. 74.

heavily rooted in social class, sex and gender, and occupation. One of the most noticeable social divisions in the Sanskrit literature of Brahmins is the *varṇa* system, in which Brahmins are given the highest status over *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*; there are also numerous other class divisions based around perceived occupation purity,²⁸¹ spiritual achievement, and economic wealth. Buddhist texts in many ways maintain this sense of role ethics over virtue ethics, but the role that is being played is that of a Buddhist monastic, not a Brahmin, and so the ideals of behaviour in Buddhist texts are often different from those of the *dharmaśāstra* tradition.

J. Duncan M. Derrett, in an article about the concept of “privileged lies” in Buddhist texts, notes that abusive language was actually welcomed among Hindus in certain instances, because it indicated that “the victim’s merit grew at the expense of the abuser.”²⁸² Although legal restrictions against abusive speech (particularly against Brahmins) do exist in *dharmaśāstra* texts, it is highly unlikely that the most severe punishments were put into practice in response to every instance of verbal assault. Derrett’s main point in the article is that while certain types of lies are considered to be ethically and aesthetically acceptable within Judaism, Christianity and especially Hinduism, when the lie is only a convenience to protect a person’s feelings, or prevent a minor annoyance, the privileged lie is noticeably absent in Buddhist materials. Derrett provides as examples of this phenomenon the common practices of “[telling] a terminally ill patient that there is hope for his recovery” and pretending not to be home when visitors are undesired.²⁸³ In Buddhism, white lies do not appear to be acceptable. We already saw

²⁸¹ Menial jobs and those requiring contact with refuse or bodily fluids were often considered ritually defiling, for example.

²⁸² Derrett 2006, 5.

in chapter 2 an example of the Buddha's blunt commitment to truth in the *Kukkuravatika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, when a dog-duty and ox-duty ascetic request information about their future rebirths.²⁸⁴ In that story, the Buddha first attempts to refrain from discussing the matter in order to avoid upsetting these ascetics, but when pressed, tells the complete truth without any distortion. This commitment to truth is also the standard model for monks to follow, but at the same time, Buddhist texts stress that it is inappropriate to hurt another person's feelings intentionally. Derrett points out that "verbal assault can well be reprehensible even if true," for both Brahmins and Buddhists.²⁸⁵

In Buddhist legal texts, all manner of insulting speech appears to be prohibited. The Theravāda *pātimokkha* includes various rules dealing with inappropriate speech, with equivalents in the *prātimokṣas* of all other Indian Buddhist lineages. There are two major types of verbal assault in the *pātimokkha*,²⁸⁶ which are listed as *suddhapācittiyā* offences, and include "insulting speech" (*omasavāda*)²⁸⁷ and "slander" (*pesuñña*).²⁸⁸ The

²⁸³ Derrett 2006, 2.

²⁸⁴ See chapter 2, p. 80.

²⁸⁵ Derrett 2006, 3.

²⁸⁶ In later sections we will return to the concept of inappropriateness in the context of other inappropriate actions, including being a "corrupter of families" (*saṅghādisesa* 13) and making sexually inappropriate comments toward women (*saṅghādisesa* 3).

²⁸⁷ *Suddhapācittiyā* 2; Norman and Pruitt 2001, 46–47; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 171–185; Pachow 1955, 122. See also Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.vv. *omasati* (p.169), *omasanā* (p. 169), literally "to touch" (related to Sanskrit *mṛṣ*) but meaning here "to insult."

explanation of *suddhapācittiya* rule 2 (against insulting speech) in the Theravāda *suttavibhaṅga* is very helpful in understanding what falls under these two major categories. Horner's translation reads:

Insulting speech means: he insults in ten ways: about birth and name and clan and work and craft and disease and distinguishing mark and passion and attainment and mode of address.²⁸⁹

Each type of *omasavāda* is also further described, with a number of colourful examples. It is considered “low mode of address” (*ukkaṭṭha akkosa*) to call a person a camel (*oṭṭha*), ram (*meṇeḍa*), ox (*goṇa*), ass (*gadrabha*), or any kind of animal.²⁹⁰ We also find in this section that adding the suffix *ya* or *ba* to the end of a person's name, a Pāli/Sanskrit diminutive marker, is considered insulting.²⁹¹ It is likewise offensive to shame (*maṅkum kattukāmo*) a member of a socially despised class, including a low class person (*caṇḍāla*), a “bamboo-plaiter” (*veṇa*), hunter (*nesāda*), cartwright (*rathakāra*), or refuse-scavenger (*pukkusa*).²⁹²

²⁸⁸ *Suddhapācittiya* 3; Norman and Pruitt 2001, 46–47; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 186–189; Pachow 1955, 122. See also Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.vv. *pesuṇa* (p. 473), *pesuṇiya* (p. 473), *pesuṇṇa* (p.473), *sūcaka* (p. 721).

²⁸⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 173.

²⁹⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 178.

²⁹¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 178. See also *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.144, 2.147, 2.148.

²⁹² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 178. All of the words listed here are specific *jāti* (clan) names associated with particular occupations and social classes. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.vv. *jāti* (p. 281), *caṇḍāla* (p. 260), *veṇa* (p. 647), *nesāda*

“Slander” (*pesuñña*) is the second major category of verbal assault for Buddhists, and is prohibited in *suddhapācittiyā* rule 3. This category includes speech that is not true but still demeaning, in contrast to *omasavāda* which is demeaning and also true. The explanation for *suddhapācittiyā* rule 3 mentions the same ten categories regarding the mocking of others,²⁹³ but rule 3 concerns falsely claiming that others have done the mocking. Rule 3 is thus the false claim that another monk has committed the transgression described in rule 2. The *suttavibhaṅga* further explains that slander can occur in two ways: *piyakanyassa*²⁹⁴ or “making dear,” and *bhedādhippāyassa*, “desiring dissension.”²⁹⁵ In other words, it is equally transgressive to distort the truth for purposes of flattery and for breaking up the *saṅgha*.

We see evidence here that the early *saṅgha* included membership from many different Indian social classes, and that it was considered necessary to include formal prohibitions against class discrimination. However, the Theravāda canon also makes it clear that monks should be able to bear insults without becoming upset. The Buddha himself is insulted on various occasions in the *Nikāya* texts, and is frequently praised by Brahmins for maintaining his composure. The *Akkosa Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*,²⁹⁶ for example, tells us that the Buddha was once insulted by a Bhāradvāja Brahmin²⁹⁷ named

(p. 378), *ratha* (p. 565), *pukkusa* (p. 463).

²⁹³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 187.

²⁹⁴ Or *piyakamyassa*.

²⁹⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 187.

²⁹⁶ Bodhi 2003, 255–257 (*SN* 1.7.2).

²⁹⁷ The Bhāradvāja Brahmins were a particular group of Brahmins tracing their lineage back to the ṛṣi Bharadvāja, one of the seven great ṛṣis. See Mitchiner 1982, 11; 13; 15;

Akkosaka,²⁹⁸ who “abused and reviled the Buddha with rude, harsh words.”²⁹⁹ The Buddha’s response is calm and calculated, and treats anger as an object unto itself, likening it to a gift that can be given and received:

“What do you think, brahmin? Do your friends and colleagues, kinsmen and relatives, as well as guests come to visit you?”

“Sometimes they come to visit, Master Gotama.”

“Do you then offer them some food or a meal or a snack?”

“Sometimes I do, Master Gotama.”

“But if they do not accept it from you, then to whom does the food belong?”

“If they do not accept it from me, then the food still belongs to us.”

“So too, brahmin, we—who do not abuse anyone, who do not scold anyone, who do not rail against anyone—refuse to accept from you the abuse and scolding and tirade you let loose at us. It still belongs to you, brahmin! It still belongs to you, brahmin! Brahmin, one who abuses his own abuser, who scolds the one who scolds him, who rails against the one who rails at him—he is said to partake of the meal, to enter upon an exchange. But we do not partake of your meal; we do not enter upon an exchange. It still belongs to you, brahmin! It still belongs to you, brahmin!”³⁰⁰

17.

²⁹⁸ The name Akkosaka means “abuser,” from *akkosa*, from *ā* + *kruś* (= *kruñc*), to abuse. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.v. *akkosa* (p. 2).

²⁹⁹ *upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantam asabbhāhi pharusāhi vācāhi akkosati paribhāsati*. See PTS edition of *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Feer 1884), p. 163.

³⁰⁰ Bodhi 2003, 256.

Akkosaka objects to the Buddha's response, complaining, "The king and his retinue understand the ascetic Gotama to be an *arahant*, yet Master Gotama still gets angry." The Buddha then responds in verse:

"How can anger arise in one who is angerless,
In the tamed one of righteous living,
In one liberated by perfect knowledge,
In the Stable One who abides in peace?

"One who repays an angry man with anger
Thereby makes things worse for himself.
Not repaying an angry man with anger,
One wins a battle hard to win.

"He practises for the welfare of both—
His own and the other's—
When, knowing that his foe is angry,
He mindfully maintains his peace.

"When he achieves the cure of both—
His own and the other's—
The people who consider him a fool
Are unskilled in the Dhamma."³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Bodhi 2000, 255–257.

The utility of verbal politeness is here emphasized as both a technique for achieving equanimity and an indicator of one's progress along the spiritual path.³⁰² Other *Nikāya* texts similarly affirm this spiritual function of politeness. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, for example, the Buddha instructs his monks,

“Should anyone speak in disparagement of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not be angry, resentful or upset on that account. If you were to be angry or displeased at such disparagement, that would only be a hindrance to you. For if others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, and you are angry or displeased, can you recognise whether what they say is right or not?” “No, Lord.” “If others disparage me, the Dhamma or the Sangha, then you must explain what is incorrect as being incorrect, saying, ‘That is incorrect, that is false, that is not our way, that is not found among us.’”³⁰³

This section is followed by instructions on abstaining from false speech and avoiding worldly activities.³⁰⁴ Here, the notion of impolite speech is equated with a lack of moral

³⁰² The result of uttering the poem in this instance also convinces Akkosaka to join the monastic order. This section of the *AN* also features many other Bhāradvāja Brahmins being converted according to the formula in this first story—first they are rude to the Buddha, and then after seeing his calm response, reconsider the value of the Buddhist way of thinking. Bodhi 2000, 257–268.

³⁰³ Walshe [1987] 1995, 68 (*DN* 1.1). The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* also warns that “when a bhikkhu ... insults and disparages his fellow monks, ... it is impossible and inconceivable that he will not incur at least one of these eleven disasters,” which include not achieving enlightenment, leaving the monastic order, going insane, and falling into a hell realm after death. See Bodhi 2012, 1557 (*AN* 5.7).

control. It is important to keep in mind that the Buddhist tradition categorizes proper speech as a feature of morality. This feature is also biconditional: an ethically good person will necessarily speak according to the Buddhist definition of good speech, and it is possible to determine the ethical quality of a person through the quality of the speech. However, as we will see in the following sections, the ways that speech and behaviour are categorized as good are not always self evident, and the surrounding lay community in some instances has notions of politeness that are at odds with Buddhist doctrine.

3.3: Offensive Actions

In addition to modes of speech, actions can also be perceived as impolite. The backstory for *nissaggiyapācittiya* 25 appears to contain an example of both *impolite* and *rude* types of face attacks in the way that Culpeper uses these terms. Intentionality is clearly a factor in determining whether or not an infraction has been committed.³⁰⁵ The corresponding rule in the *pātimokkha* makes it an offence to take back a robe after giving it away. In the backstory for this rule, Upananda, a monk of the notorious group of six, invites his brother's cellmate to tour the country with him. The other monk is reluctant to accept, noting that his own robe is wearing thin. Upananda then offers to give his fellow monk a robe. It is implied in the story that they have both agreed to set out together on the tour. Later, the unnamed monk hears that the Buddha is preparing to set out on his own tour of the country, which results in a conflict with this earlier plan:

³⁰⁴ Walshe [1987] 1995, 68–69.

³⁰⁵ On the concept of intentionality in Buddhist ethics, see Heim 2014.

Then it occurred to that monk: “I will not set out on a tour of the country with the venerable Upananda, the son of the Sakyans; I will set out on a tour of the country with the lord.”³⁰⁶

The unnamed monk informs Upananda of his change of plans, which leads to Upananda becoming upset. He angrily takes back his robe from the other monk:

Then the venerable Upananda, the son of the Sakyans, said to that monk: “Come now, your reverence, we will set out on a tour of the country.”

“I will not set out on a tour of the country with you, honoured sir, I will set out on a tour of the country with the lord.”

“But that robe, your reverence, which I gave you, that will set out on a tour of the country with me,” he said, and angry and displeased, he tore it away.

Note here, again, that the unnamed monk uses the term “honoured sir” in addressing Upananda, a translation of the Pāli word *bhante*. The action of jilting Upananda is arguably boorish; the language used in doing so is polite. The unnamed monk as he is portrayed in the story, appears to be oblivious to his own discourtesy. Conversely, Upananda is depicted as “angry and displeased” (*kupito anamattamano*).³⁰⁷ Using the criteria proposed by Culpeper, the unnamed monk is merely rude, whereas Upananda is impolite. The distinction here is one of intentionality. By Culpeper’s criteria, the unnamed monk in this story appears to be something of a country bumpkin, who simply does not realize the effect his actions will have on Upananda’s emotions. Therefore, he is rude. Upananda, however, is impolite, because he intentionally disrespects the unnamed monk by lashing out in anger at him. When the Buddha confronts Upananda about taking

³⁰⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 139.

³⁰⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 139 n. 3.

away the robe, Upananda receives all the blame; the unnamed monk, while perhaps boorish in his action, has not committed any transgression according to monastic law.

It is difficult to determine, of course, the significance of the term *bhante* in this short exchange. We cannot be sure if the unnamed monk is using this term as a polite form of address, or if this is just a stock phrase used by monks in *vinaya* narratives. As with other narratives, it is not possible to assume this story to be a description of an actual historical event, but only a literary exercise in illustrating a rule. In any case, the unnamed monk seems to be portrayed as a relatively innocuous character who simply prefers the opportunity for traveling with the Buddha himself, instead of with Upananda, and whose status as a monk is much lower than that of the Buddha. The unnamed monk does not appear intent on offending Upananda, but succeeds in doing so only because of his obliviousness. Upananda, feeling slighted, intentionally does something unkind when he takes back his robe. This rule appears, then, to take into account the distinction between intentional and unintentional face attacks.

This focus on intentionality is repeated in many of the *suddhapācittiya* injunctions as well. These rules, which follow immediately after the *nissaggiyapācittiya* injunctions, describe offences requiring confession;³⁰⁸ transgressions of these rules are considered less severe than transgressions of the *nissaggiyapācittiya* rules.³⁰⁹ It is certainly worth pointing

³⁰⁸ See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, xxv.

³⁰⁹ The word *nissaggiya* is translated by Horner as “forfeiture,” and these rules generally involve forfeiting an object wrongfully acquired (see Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, vii). The *suddhapācittiya* rules (*suddha* normally means “clean” or “pure,” but in this compound means “simple,” as opposed to the *nissaggiyapācittiya* rules involving forfeit) tend to involve disruptions to the harmony of the monastic community.

out that intentionality is also a major focus of Buddhist ethics (*śīla* or *sīla*), and the relationship between these concepts in the commentary scholarship of Buddhaghosa has been thoroughly examined by Maria Heim, whose other work on *dharmaśāstra* I mentioned in chapter 2.³¹⁰

According to Heim, our modern concept of intentional agency is best represented in the Pāli/Sanskrit term *cetanā*. While not a direct parallel of “intention,” this term represents a conscious will to act in pursuit of the fulfillment of a goal.³¹¹ Heim’s analysis of this term by means of Pāli *abhidhamma* commentaries is necessarily bound up in the tradition’s own account of itself, and therefore with the tradition’s understanding of morality and ethics in relation to all actions. These treatments of the relationship between consciousness, thought and action in the traditional commentaries are a part of what we can call “Buddhist psychology,” and often become extremely technical. It is important to be aware that early Buddhist *abhidhamma* scholars considered carefully the many complex problems relating to ethics and intention; yet for the sake of reducing my project’s scope I will generally avoid going far into these very technical explanations concerning the inner workings of the mind. Suffice it to say that Buddhist scholars considered the problem quite thoroughly. However, as my own focus is primarily on *vinaya* materials, I do not wish to venture too far into this other category of texts.

Two injunctions that are specifically concerned with conscious impoliteness are *suddhapācittiya* 16³¹² and 17.³¹³ In the backstory for *suddhapācittiya* 16, monks of the

³¹⁰ See p. 64.

³¹¹ Heim 2014, 17–21.

³¹² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 247–249.

³¹³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 250–253.

group of six “took possession of the best of sleeping-places”³¹⁴ during the rainy season, and were subsequently turned away by more senior monks (implied by the story to have been using the sleeping area prior to the arrival of the group of six). The monks of the group then hatch a plan to get the sleeping-place all to themselves:

“What now if we, by some stratagem, should spend the rainy season in this very place?” The group of six monks, encroaching upon (the space intended for monks who were elders), lay down in the sleeping-places, saying:

“He for whom it becomes too crowded may depart.”³¹⁵

The other monks complain about the bad behaviour of the group of six, and soon the Buddha formulates a new rule: “Whatever monk should lie down in a sleeping-place in a dwelling belonging to the Order, knowing that he is encroaching upon (the space intended for) a monk arrived first, saying, ‘He for whom it becomes too crowded may depart,’ doing it for just this object, not for another, there is an offence of expiation.”³¹⁶ As portrayed in the story, the monks of the group of six are being intentionally obnoxious in order to acquire the sleeping place for themselves. However, their use of language in forcing out the other monks is very clever, and partially couched in polite terms. They do not tell the other monks that they must leave, but instead make the situation extremely uncomfortable and then provide a perfunctory illusion of choice between staying and leaving. It is a complex kind of face attack, because formally the first monks appear to have the freedom to do as they please. We might consider this action as a threat to

³¹⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 247.

³¹⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 247.

³¹⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 248.

positive face, however, because the value of these first monks as individuals is called into question by the intentionally offensive action of the group of six.

In the following injunction, *suddhapācittiya* 17, we see a similar situation. Once again, the monks of the group of six are looking for a place to spend the rainy season. Seeing another group of monks called “the group of seventeen monks” repairing a monastic residence, the monks of the group of six decide to wait until the repairs are complete, and then claim the building for themselves. An argument ensues, which eventually leads to the group of six taking the dwelling by force. In this case, however, the action is not only intentionally offensive, but also undisguised in its impoliteness. We can consider this another example of “bald on record” impoliteness, as the monks of the group of six do not even make an effort to conceal their intentions, boldly demanding that the first monks leave, and even resorting to physical violence.

“Go away, your reverences, the dwelling-place belongs to us,” and angry, displeased, taking them by the throat they threw them out. These being thrown out, wept.³¹⁷

As with the previous story, in the *suddhapācittiya* 17 narrative the Buddha eventually learns of the monks’ bad behaviour, and pronounces it an offence of expiation (*suddhapācittiya*) to “throw out a monk or cause him to be thrown out from a dwelling-place belonging to the Order.”³¹⁸

The actions described in the backstories for *suddhapācittiya* rules 16 and 17 involve intentionally provoking others by invading their personal space, for the sake of acquiring a limited resource (in these two cases, a place to sleep). There are also a

³¹⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 251.

³¹⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 251.

number of other rules in the *suddhapācittiya* section of the *pātimokkha* concerning obnoxious behaviours seemingly performed for no reason other than to annoy or frustrate a fellow monk. For example, in the backstory for *suddhapācittiya* 52,³¹⁹ the monks of the group of six tickle a monk of the group of seventeen, unintentionally leading to his death. This episode leads to a rule against tickling.³²⁰ In the backstory for *suddhapācittiya* injunction 54, the Buddha’s former chariot driver, Channa, is said to have “indulged in bad habits ... out of disrespect” (*anādariya*).³²¹ The backstory for the next injunction, *suddhapācittiya* 55, has the group of six monks intentionally frightening (*bhimsāpentī*) the group of seventeen monks.³²² These stories are not especially detailed, but they clearly

³¹⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 387–389.

³²⁰ Horner notes that this episode is also described in the *pārājika* section of the *vibhaṅga* (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 387 note 1; Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 145–146). The punishment seems rather mild considering that the actions of the monks led to the death of a fellow monk. However, the exoneration of blame is consistent with other episodes involving unintentional death. Horner suggests that because the *pārājika* version of the story does not mention the type of offence committed, that rule may have come earlier than *suddhapācittiya* 52.

³²¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 393. Complete backstory: pp. 393–395. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, s.v. *anādariya* (p. 32). The *vibhaṅga* further adds that “there are two kinds of disrespect: disrespect for a man and disrespect for the *dhamma* (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 393). Horner mentions several other places in the *Theravāda Vinaya* where this word occurs in the context of offending other monks and offending the *dhamma* (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 393 notes 2 and 3).

³²² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 396. Complete backstory: pp. 396–397.

share a common idea that being aware of others' feelings and avoiding intentional disrespect is important for the success of the monastic institution.

Unintentional offence, especially concerning the laity, is also a common theme in the *pātimokkha*. The narrative for *suddhapācittiya* 51 (which prohibits monks from consuming intoxicants) explains that at one time a monk became so inebriated from drinking liquor that he fell asleep with his feet pointing toward the Buddha.³²³ This pointing of feet is no doubt unintentional, as the monk in the story is not even conscious at the time of the event. Regardless, the Buddha considers it to be disrespectful, and so deems the consumption of alcohol improper on the grounds that it leads to the possibility of disrespectful actions.³²⁴

A similar episode involving foot etiquette appears in the *Mahāvagga*, in which the monk Soṇa Kolivisa, who has downy hair growing on the soles of his feet, is summoned by an intrigued King Seniya Bimbisāra. Soṇa's parents advise him not to stretch out his feet toward the king, but to sit cross-legged, so that as he is sitting down the king can see his feet.³²⁵ Foot etiquette appears again a bit later in the *Mahāvagga*, at 5.4.2, when the monks of the group of six wear sandals while the Buddha is barefoot. This action, seemingly an unintentional offence, is nevertheless considered disrespectful. Monks are

³²³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 384.

³²⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 384–385.

³²⁵ See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 236. This character appears as Śroṇa Koṭṭivimśa in the *Carmavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. According to Frauwallner 1956, the appearance of down on his feet is due to being “from a very rich family and ... spoilt at home” (89).

subsequently reminded to be “courteous” (*agāravā*), “deferential” (*appatissā*), and “polite” (*asabhāgavuttikā*) to each other.³²⁶

The above three terms are used together as a literary trope several times in the *Theravāda Vinaya*, most notably in the *Cullavagga* story of the partridge, monkey and elephant (which also appears as *Jātaka* tale #37).³²⁷ Horner mentions that the story is “told here to encourage monks to be courteous and polite to each other”³²⁸ after the monks are unable to agree on sleeping arrangements.³²⁹ The Buddha, after recounting this story to his monks, proceeds to make a formal announcement regarding various matters of etiquette:

“I allow, monks, greeting, rising up for, joining the palms in salutation, proper homage, the best seat, the best water (for washing), the best alms according to seniority. But, monks, what belongs to an Order should not be reserved according to seniority. Whoever should so reserve it, there is an offence of wrong-doing.”³³⁰

We can see here a faint echo of the Vedic etiquette rules, but reworked to appeal to monastic seniority rather than age.³³¹

³²⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 248–249.

³²⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 226; 227.

³²⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, x.

³²⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 225.

³³⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 227.

³³¹ Seniority is determined by time since ordination. However, monks are always considered senior to nuns. The issue of seniority and gender inequality will be taken up in chapter 5.

Terkourafi points out that the recognition by the hearer of the speaker's intention to be perceived as polite is a major part of what creates politeness. In other words, if I am trying to be polite, and you pick up on that intention, then it is possible that I have succeeded in being polite, even if I fail to observe standard protocol. When we consider Goffman's concept of politeness as a type of aesthetic performance, it may at first seem contradictory that the form could be incorrect and yet the politeness intact. We could, however, consider the broadcasting of intention to be a performance unto itself, in which case the formal rituals of etiquette may simply be a kind of medium for transmitting intention, themselves empty of meaning. Terkourafi adds that "[i]t is perfectly imaginable that the hearer may recognise the speaker's polite intention, but not be convinced that the speaker is polite as a result."³³² The interplay between conventional form, intention and perceived politeness is in this way full of potential obstacles. In Buddhist texts, lay and monastic concepts of proper behaviour for each of these groups introduce further complications.³³³ What is considered acceptable among the laity may be a direct violation of Buddhist law, and vice versa.

There are numerous examples in the *Theravāda Vinaya* of intentional politeness coming into conflict with Buddhist monastic law. In one episode in the *Mahāvagga*, for example, monks spending the rainy season together decide that the best way of keeping harmonious relations is to avoid speaking altogether, and simply take care of the material requirements for living as their needs arise. They agree to the following ad hoc rules:

“[...] Whoever should see a vessel for drinking water or a vessel for washing water or a vessel (for water) for rinsing after evacuation, void and empty, should set out

³³² Terkourafi 2008, 56.

³³³ See also Maria Heim's work on Buddhaghosa and intention in Heim 2014.

(water); if it is impossible for him (to do this) he should set out (water) by signaling with his hand, having invited a companion (to help him) by a movement of his hand; but he should not for such a reason break into speech. Thus may we, all together, on friendly terms and harmonious, spend a comfortable rainy season and not go short of almsfood.”³³⁴

The Buddha hears about this practice among the monks, and expressly forbids the observation of silence.³³⁵ In another episode in the *Mahāvagga*, a follower of a monk kills a calf and offers the animal’s hide to the monk.³³⁶ No doubt the layman’s intentions were wholesome, but the Buddha forbids this practice on ethical grounds,³³⁷ because of the more general ethical injunction against bringing harm to sentient beings. This example illustrates once again the problematic relationship between ethics and etiquette. To describe ethics and etiquette as a single phenomenon at different points on a spectrum would be an oversimplification here, because we see that there are in fact a number of competing rules of conduct between monastics and their lay supporters. While the monastics in Buddhist texts are often portrayed as having authority over ethical doctrine, the texts also give priority to the idea that lay patrons must not be offended.

In the backstory for *suddhapācittiya* 33, a “poor workman” invites some monks to a meal, but they have already eaten. When they eat only a little of the food he offers, the workman becomes upset, thinking it to be a critique of his capacity to provide for the monks. This story illustrates another example of monks being unintentionally rude, as the

³³⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 208–209.

³³⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 211.

³³⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 258.

³³⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 259.

monks do not appear to be acting out of any kind of maliciousness.³³⁸ The text presents the verbal exchange between these monks and their lay donor with both sides using very formal and polite language.³³⁹ The monks speak first, pleading for small portions:

“Sir, give a little, give a little, sir.”

He said: “Do not you, honoured sirs, accept so very little saying, ‘This is a poor workman.’ Much solid food and soft food was prepared for me. Honoured sirs, accept as much as you please.”

“Sir, it is not for this reason that we accept so very little, but we ate, having walked for alms this morning; that is why we are accepting so very little.”³⁴⁰

Then that poor workman looked down upon, criticised, spread it about, saying:

“How can the revered sirs, invited by me, eat elsewhere? Yet am I not competent to give as much as they please?”³⁴¹

We can see here that it was a grave insult to avoid eating food offerings from the laity, and a monastic duty to accept offerings whenever possible. Even though the monks give a reasonable explanation for their lack of participation in the meal, the ritual of accepting and eating the food appears to be more important to the lay patron than the question of whether or not the monks actually need to be fed. Horner says of this rule,

³³⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 315.

³³⁹ Once again, it is not clear whether these polite modes of address are meant to indicate the politeness of their characters, or are simply a literary standard for *vinaya* narratives.

³⁴⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 316.

³⁴¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 317.

it is obvious that the assigning to another monk of a meal that is expected later is a device for overcoming the rudeness, otherwise involved, of refusing food that is actually being offered. Nor, so it emerges, is it polite to refuse an invitation given to a meal by a wanderer, a *paribbājaka-samāpanna*. A naked ascetic, *ājīvika*, had, as is stated, on Bimbisāra's advice, asked the monks to a meal with him, but they refused (Pac. XXXIII.8).³⁴²

These are, again, examples of *rudeness* and not *impoliteness*, using Culpeper's criteria.³⁴³ The offence of the monks in these cases appears to be unintentional, and one might even argue that the laity are themselves being rude in putting their own concerns for ritual performance above the physical needs of the monks.

A more explicit example of monastic *impoliteness* (that is, where offence is intentional) occurs in *suddhapācittiya* rule number 42, when the monk Upananda first invites and then abruptly sends away a fellow monk:

“Come, your reverence, we will enter the village for alms-food.” Without having had (alms-food) given to him, he dismissed him, saying: “Go away, your reverence. Neither talking or sitting down with you comes to be a comfort for me; either talking or sitting down alone comes to be a comfort for me.”³⁴⁴

It is not clear from the narrative what Upananda's intentions are in saying this, though Upananda seems to be unnecessarily forward in his dismissal. This type of impoliteness is another example of “bald on record” *impoliteness*—the speaker makes no attempt to hide his internal feelings, thus creating an attack on the positive face of his colleague.³⁴⁵ In any

³⁴² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, xxvii–xxviii.

³⁴³ Terkourafi's terminology, as I have noted earlier, is slightly different.

³⁴⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 351.

case, the monk who is sent away ends up missing out on the communal monastic meal and thus becomes extremely hungry. The Buddha, as a result of this episode, forbids monks from sending away a fellow monk.³⁴⁶

The backstory for the following *suddhapācittiyā* rule, number 43, is a curious case of rudeness by proxy. The basic rule in the *pātimokkha* simply makes it an offence for a monk to sit down with a family and interrupt their meal. The more lurid backstory, however, describes an incident in which the monk Upananda goes to his lay friend's house and proceeds to sit in a "sleeping room" with the friend's wife. The husband directs his wife to give food to Upananda, which she does.³⁴⁷ The husband then requests that Upananda leave. However, his wife objects, noting to herself that Upananda is "obsessed" (*rāgapariyuṭṭhito methunādippayo*). Horner glosses this term as "obsessed (or possessed) by passion, desiring intercourse."³⁴⁸ This episode illustrates a classic double bind, in that Upananda could be perceived as *rude* (or *impolite*) for leaving the situation, because the lay woman is asking him to stay, but must leave because the man of the house specifically requests it. Of course, sleeping with a layman's wife is also considered an infraction for a Buddhist monk, but no infraction is actually committed here as presented in the text. While the laywoman appears to think that Upananda desires sex with her, that desire in itself is not an infraction. She seems to desire Upananda as well, and yet as a layperson she is outside the jurisdiction of monastic law. The general solution to such situations,

³⁴⁵ Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987, 69.

³⁴⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 351–353.

³⁴⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 354–355.

³⁴⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 354, note 3. If I understand the narrative correctly, it appears to me that the wife is eager to have sex with Upananda.

here and elsewhere in the *vinaya*, is to avoid any possibility of offending the laity by making it impossible for such conditions to arise in the first place. Thus, the prohibition here is not against intercourse with a laywoman (already forbidden by the *pārājika* rules), but against the conditions that may lead to that transgression. This rule seems to be a general-purpose way of preventing unwelcome misunderstandings as well as ethical transgressions, but couched in the more palatable language of good manners.

3.4: Proper Monastic Behaviour as Impolite

Many *vinaya* rules employ the literary trope of grumbling townspeople as an explanation for the establishment of a particular set of rules. These injunctions often involve surface protocol and a concern with monks behaving as the lay community expects monks to behave, rather than with strictly ethical considerations. Even when monks are following the *vinaya* injunctions properly, laypeople can still perceive their behaviour to be impolite. The lay community's expectation for monastic behaviour is thus sometimes at odds with monastic regulations.

The backstory for rule 13 of the *saṅghādisesa* section of the *pātimokkha* is a good example of this distinction between lay politeness and proper Buddhist monastic conduct. The main character of the story is a “supercilious” (*bhākuṭibhākuṭiko*) monk who seems to be obeying all of the *vinaya* rules, the archetype of the perfect monk:

At one time a certain monk, rising up from the rains among the people of Kāsī, and going to Sāvattihī for the sake of seeing the lord, arrived at Kiṭāgiri. Then this monk getting up early and taking his bowl and robe entered Kiṭāgiri for alms-food. He was pleasing whether he was approaching or departing, whether he was

looking before or looking behind, whether he was drawing in or stretching out (his arm), his eyes were cast down, he was possessed of pleasant behaviour.³⁴⁹

The unnamed monk in this story appears to be doing everything right, carefully regulating his actions. The problem with his behaviour is that the Kiṭāgiri laity have very different ideas about how a monk should act. Unbeknownst to the monk, a group of “unscrupulous, depraved monks” (*alajjino pāpabhikkhū*) had already taken up residence in Kiṭāgiri before he arrived. These monks, who were followers of Assaji and Punabbasu (two monks of the “group of six”), practiced numerous “bad habits” (*anācāraṃ*), which the story lists at considerable length,³⁵⁰ and the laity had gotten used to dealing with their particular brand of monastic behaviour. The narrative then tells us that the laity in Kiṭāgiri were extremely offended by the newcomer’s actions, which they perceived as arrogant:

People seeing this monk, spoke thus:

“Who can this be like an idiot of idiots, like a fool of fools, like a very supercilious person?”³⁵¹ Who will go up to him and give him alms? Our masters, the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu are polite, genial, pleasant of speech, beaming with smiles, saying: ‘Come, you are welcome.’ They are not supercilious, they are easily accessible, they are the first to speak. Therefore alms should be given to these.”³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 318.

³⁵⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 314–318.

³⁵¹ This term, *bhākuṭibhākuṭiko*, also appears in *Niddesa* I and II, and in the *Visuddhimagga* (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli [1975] 1991, 21).

³⁵² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 318.

The meaning here is that even though the newcomer to Kiṭāgiri was a good monk, the deplorable actions of his fellow monks corrupted the townspeople, such that they did not know how monks should act. The laity preferred the “fun” monks and found the proper monk to be too aloof, and therefore rude and haughty.

The word that Horner translates here as “polite,” *saṇhā*, appears throughout the Theravāda canon, but usually means something like “gentle.”³⁵³ Its usage in this story as a descriptor for the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu is then somewhat ironic, as those monks are unambiguously characterized as the complete opposite of gentle. Later in this narrative, the problem of the Kiṭāgiri monks is brought to the attention of the Buddha, who commands Sāriputta and Moggallāna to put forward a formal act of banishment (*pabbājanīyakamma*) against them, to have the monks removed from Kiṭāgiri.³⁵⁴ When Sāriputta and Moggallāna complain that an act of banishment would be difficult, because the Kiṭāgiri monks are so “violent and rough” (*caṇḍā, pharusā*),³⁵⁵ the Buddha recommends that these two go with the assistance of a large group of monks. The act of banishment is carried out, but not without further impoliteness from the Kiṭāgiri monks:

The act of banishment being made by the Order, these did not conduct themselves properly, nor did they become subdued, nor did they mend their ways, they did not ask the monks for forgiveness, they cursed them, they reviled them, they offended by following a wrong course through hatred, by following a wrong

³⁵³ Also see the related word *nipuṇa*, which often means “skillful” or “accomplished.”

³⁵⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 321. Also see Nolot 1999, 2–3; 16; 19.

³⁵⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 321. These two words are also used to describe harsh speech in the *dharmasūtras* and in Buddhist *Nikāya* literature, as noted in chapter 1 (p. 74).

course through stupidity, by following a wrong course through fear; and they went away, and they left the Order.³⁵⁶

Horner's comments on this section are insightful but brief:

The last and thirteenth Saṅghādisesa rule is against bringing families into disrepute. This again, would make the Order unpopular among the lay followers. It must be remembered that it was considered highly important to propitiate these, to court their admiration, to keep their allegiance, to do nothing to annoy them.³⁵⁷
[...]

Historically, the success of the Early Buddhist experiment in monasticism must be in great part attributed to the wisdom of constantly considering the susceptibilities and criticisms of the laity.³⁵⁸

I find it somewhat strange that Horner would make this observation but say nothing about the obvious disagreement between normative monastic conduct and the monastic conduct expected by the laity in this story. What is most interesting in the narrative for this rule is that many lay families actually seem to appreciate the “improper” monks more than the well-mannered monks. The rule corresponding to this story (*saṅghādisesa* 13) is that a monk must not bring a family into disrepute (*kuladūsa* *koṭi*) through conduct inappropriate for a monk. The monk's conduct expressed in the *pātimokkha* is never a systematic model of ethical standards to be followed by the laity, which is to say, there are many things allowable to the laity that are considered inappropriate for monks. What actually triggers the *saṅghādisesa* offence according to this rule's backstory, however, is not the initial

³⁵⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 322–323.

³⁵⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, xxix.

³⁵⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, xxix.

inappropriate conduct (corrupting the families), but rather criticizing the fairness of being banished by fellow monks.³⁵⁹ The explanation for the rule actually gives a fair amount of leeway to the monk before registering his behaviour as a formal offence. The text states, “If this monk, when spoken to thus by the monks, should persist as before, that monk should be admonished up to three times by the monks for giving up his course. If after being admonished up to three times, he gives up that course, it is good. If he does not give it up, it is an offence entailing a formal meeting of the Order.”³⁶⁰

Horner is quite right to point out that the opinions of the laity were highly influential on the development of the monastic code. What she does not say here is that the laity are often portrayed as rather ignorant of what is best for them. In the above narrative, the laity complain because of the sharp distinction between monastic behaviour and lay behaviour. Yet, according to the monastic code, this distinction is necessary in order to maintain the functional roles of monastics and laity.

This distinction is apparent when we examine the list of actions that this story highlights as objectionable and unbecoming of *bhikkhus*. Most of the actions are perfectly ethical from the standpoint of the laity, so we cannot say that they are ethically wrong for Buddhists in general. These actions only go against the monastic code, meaning that it is inappropriate for the actions to be performed by monks and nuns, but not the laity. We therefore see again a disconnection between a general sense of Buddhist ethics, which is often a type of virtue ethics, and the etiquette that is considered appropriate for monastics, which tends to be a kind of role ethics. In the narrative explaining *saṅghādisesa* rule 13, the Kiṭāgiri monks are said to have planted, watered, and plucked the flowers from small

³⁵⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 325.

³⁶⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 325.

flowering trees, tied them into various kinds of garlands, and given these garlands as gifts to the wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and slave women of the Kiṭāgiri laity. The monks also ate from the same dish as these women, and shared drinking vessels, seats, couches, mats, and blankets with them. In addition, they consumed intoxicating substances, ate at the wrong time, danced and played musical instruments, “sported,” and played various dice and board games.³⁶¹

The basic implication in the text is that the monks’ behaviour is a threat to the safety and well-being of the community. Considering the social status of north Indian women at the time this narrative presumably takes place (ca. 5th century BCE),³⁶² it would have been especially problematic to find a monk (or any man outside the family) talking so openly with one’s wife, not to mention sharing a plate, bed, and so forth. The more general concern, however, is that the monks are not proper representatives of their supposed postworldly desirelessness. Monks are not meant to engage with the pleasures of the world. By participating in otherwise harmless worldly activities (the list of problematic actions even includes turning somersaults and pulling toy carts),³⁶³ they damage the categorical boundary between monastics in general, who are imagined in some sense to be posthuman, and the laity, who are considered to be unenlightened and worldly by default. From this perspective, mundane pursuits are even more of a threat to the Buddhist worldview, as they shatter the illusion that the monks have overcome ordinary life and its unremarkable activities.

³⁶¹ See Rhys Davids 1899, 7–13 for descriptions of these games.

³⁶² See Altekar [1938] 1973.

³⁶³ “somersaults” = *samparivattaka*, “toy cart” = *rathaka*. Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 316–317.

In the narrative for *saṅghādisesa* rule 13, the laity do not react negatively to the inappropriate monks. On the contrary, they praise the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu as “polite, genial, and pleasant of speech” (*saṇhā, sakhilā, sukhasambhāsa*).³⁶⁴ These same villagers consider the “rude” monk, who behaves properly according to the *Vinaya*, to be “an idiot of idiots” (*abalabalo*), “a fool of fools” (*mandamando*), and a “supercilious person” (*bhākuṭibhākuṭiko*).³⁶⁵ It is his very lack of worldliness that the laity find off-putting, as if the monk considers himself above their simple amusements. Yet from the perspective of the monastic institution, this *bhikkhu* is doing everything as he should, a theme that is reinforced later in the narrative when he is described following the appropriate protocol for greeting lay donors and fellow monastics.³⁶⁶

Now consider the *saṅghādisesa* rule just before this one, number 12. In the narrative for this rule, we are told that the monk Channa “indulged in bad habits.”³⁶⁷ The story does not go into details about what these bad habits were, but instead dwells on the

³⁶⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 318.

³⁶⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 318.

³⁶⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 319. Both in his speech and the movements of his body, the “good” monk follows the typical rituals for friendly greetings. When he meets the Buddha, the monk greets him and sits at one side, showing deference to the Buddha’s authority.

³⁶⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 309. We have already mentioned this monk’s “disrespect” in *suddhapācittiya* 54, which occurs much later than *saṅghādisesa* 12. My understanding is that *saṅghādisesa* 12 is about Channa’s refusal to be corrected by his fellow monks, whereas *suddhapācittiya* 54 addresses the bad habits themselves. Neither backstory mentions exactly what his bad habits actually were.

manner in which Channa responds to being chastised by his fellow monks. Attempting to pull rank, he notes that he was the Buddha's charioteer prior to the Buddha's enlightenment, and therefore considers himself immune to any criticism from the *saṅgha*. Channa's insolence makes the other monks angry, and he is dubbed by the text a *dubbacajātika*, "one who refuses to listen."³⁶⁸ Once again, the infraction is not the monk's "bad habits," which are not even considered necessary to list, but the arrogant way that he responds to criticism. The actual rule in *saṅghādisesa* 12 is only against being "difficult to speak to" (*appadakkhiṇaggāhī anusāsaniṃ*), which Horner explains as literally a "left-handed ... taker of the teaching," meaning a "clumsy" or "disrespectful" student.³⁶⁹

Horner speculates on the possibility that *saṅghādisesa* 12 "represents some specially ancient fragment of the *Pātimokkha*, and whether, while the rules were being shaped, refusal to take the training with deference and respect appeared amongst the earliest offences that a monk could commit."³⁷⁰ Once again we see that it is not always *what* monks do, so much as *how* they do it, that is cause for concern. Many of the other *saṅghādisesa* rules are similarly worded to prevent social discord. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, *saṅghādisesa* rules 8 and 9 prohibit speech intended to get a fellow monk disrobed via false accusations, and rules 10 and 11 concern support for monastic schisms.

³⁶⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 310.

³⁶⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 311. Horner also notes that the term "left-handed" may refer to the failure to keep one's right side toward the teacher, a standard expression of respect.

³⁷⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, xxix. It would seem that at one time the *pātimokkha* was much more dynamic, with new rules being added all the time, as there seem to be different notions of disrespect scattered throughout the entire list.

A number of rules (e.g., 2, 3, 4) also prohibit monks from making inappropriate sexual gestures toward women. Not all of these injunctions fall under my proposed category of “etiquette,” but they all involve social harmony. It is still necessary, then, to attempt to define etiquette in order to determine what does and does not fit the category.

Up to this point I have not said anything about the *sekhiya* (Sanskrit *śaikṣa*) rules, other than simply to point out that they have often been treated by other scholars as the only Buddhist injunctions concerned with etiquette. I have shown in the preceding discussion of non-*sekhiya* rules that issues relating to disrespect, annoyance and other aspects of etiquette are found throughout the *pātimokkha*. Now I will examine the content of the *sekhiya* rules themselves, which occur almost at the very end of the *pātimokkha*, and attempt to understand why these rules have often been considered synonymous with etiquette. I will describe just a few of them here, and propose my own theory about etiquette in general. Then, in chapter 4, I will use this theory as a starting point for a more specific analysis of Buddhist conceptions of the body.

3.5: Dining Etiquette

The *sekhiya* injunctions concerned with eating food are perhaps the most comprehensible to us today as examples of (*im*)polite behaviour. These rules appear to be aimed at limiting actions that could invoke feelings of disgust in observers. Making objectionable noises while eating, for example, is a minor prohibition for Buddhist monks and nuns, and the *sekhiya* rules contain two specific injunctions in this regard:³⁷¹

50. *na capucapukārakaṃ bhuñjissāmī ti sikkhā karaṇīyā.*

³⁷¹ The *prātimokṣas* of other Indian Buddhist lineages sometimes have more than these two rules, dealing with other specific sounds.

I shall not eat making a chomping noise [=smacking my lips]; [this is] a training to be done.³⁷²

51. *na surusurukāraṇaṃ bhuñjissāmī ti sikkhā karaṇīyā.*

I shall not eat making a sucking sound; [this is] a training to be done.³⁷³

The terms *capucapu* and *surusuru* (“chomping” and “sucking”) occur only a few other times in the entire Pāli canon, and usually in connection with the above two rules. They seem to be onomatopoeic, each suggesting a particular type of sound made with the mouth. In fact, the commentary on this section describes their associated actions as, respectively, “making a *capucapu* sound again and again” and “making a *surusuru* sound again and again.”³⁷⁴ If we interpret these rules in a completely literal way, it is something of a puzzle that these two specific sounds would be singled out as offensive. However, there are culturally-dependent data lurking beneath the seeming mundanity of these rules. In the case of *capucapu*, the term appears to indicate something like the smacking of the lips. The brief frame narrative for this rule, found in the *suttavibhaṅga*, tells us that at one

³⁷² Norman and Pruitt 2001, 100. There are also two rules here dealing with loud laughter and two rules dealing with loud sounds, but they are presented in the context of going for alms, not eating.

³⁷³ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 100.

³⁷⁴ *capucapukāraṇanti “‘capucapū’ ti evaṃ saddaṃ katvā katvā / surusurukāraṇanti “‘surusurū’ ti evaṃmsaddaṃ katvā katvā.* See Vipassana Research Institute, *Tīkā Vinayapiṭaka (tīkā) Khuddasikkhā-mūlasikkhā Mūlasikkhā* at <http://tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/vin08t.nrf27.xml>. The word *saddaṃ* indicates a sound, frequently connected with other words relating to expectoration. See Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, 75, “*khupita* fr. *kṣu* to sneeze [...] sneezing, expectoration.”

time when the Buddha was staying in Sāvattthi (Sanskrit: Śrāvastī), the monks of the group of six ate in a manner that was *piṇḍukkhepakam* (lit: “throwing pieces in”), which we might colloquially describe as “shoveling in the food.”³⁷⁵ The sound they make while doing this, *capucapu*, annoys the local people, who complain, “How can these monks be called ‘sons of the Sakya’ and eat making *capucapu* noises?” In other words, persons not associated with the Buddhist order have become offended by the inappropriate behaviour of monks. A second story in which *capucapu* noises are perceived as insulting occurs in *Cullavagga* VIII, when the members of the “group of six” enter the monastic lavatory very noisily and do a number of other things improperly.³⁷⁶ In this context, making *capucapu* noises is associated with the cleansing rituals performed after defecating. The backstory for the *surusuru* rule is similar, though slightly longer. Horner translates it as follows:

At one time the enlightened one, the lord, was staying at Kosambī in Ghosita’s monastery. Now at that time a milk drink had been prepared for the Order by a certain Brahmin. The monks drank the milk making a hissing sound. A certain monk who had formerly been an actor spoke thus: “It seems that this whole Order

³⁷⁵ The relationship of this frame story to the other rules appears to be slightly different in the version available at www.tipitaka.org. The term *piṇḍukkhepakam* also occurs in the PTS version by Oldenberg (see Oldenberg 1879–1883 [1969–1982], vol. 4, 195, 197) and in the translation by Horner (see Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 35; 137), but in connection with 44, *piṇḍukkhepakasikkhāpadaṃ* (see Norman and Pruitt 2001, 98; 99).

³⁷⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 310. More information on lavatory etiquette will appear in chapter 4.

is cooled.” Those who were modest monks ... spread it about, saying: “How can this monk make a joke about the Order?”

[...]

‘I will not eat making a hissing sound,’ is a training to be observed.³⁷⁷

The “hissing sound” is of course *surusuru*. But this story contains a number of enigmatic elements. First there is the odd bit of trivia that the offending monk had “formerly been an actor” (*naṭapubbako*),³⁷⁸ and then his joke, “*Sabbāyaṃ maññe saṅgho sītikato*,” or “The entire Order seems cold/tranquil.” This leads the Buddha, after his usual interrogation of the offender, to create a ban not on distasteful jokes, but instead on the instigating sound.³⁷⁹ Despite the unusual backstory, these two rules appear to be concerned with preventing feelings of disgust in others.

There are many other *sekhiya* rules concerned with eating. They are in some sense quite straightforward, and they point to many of the same types of behaviours that characterize proper eating in Western cultures. For example, monks are instructed not to take large mouthfuls of food (*sekhiya* 39),³⁸⁰ not to insert the entire hand into the mouth (*sekhiya* 42),³⁸¹ not to speak with the mouth full of food (*sekhiya* 43),³⁸² not to stuff the

³⁷⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 137–138.

³⁷⁸ I am not sure if this piece of information has any significance at all for the rule.

³⁷⁹ A collection of the phenomena associated with specific Indian onomatopoetic utterances can be found in Emeneau 1969.

³⁸⁰ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 96–97.

³⁸¹ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 98–99.

³⁸² Norman and Pruitt 2001, 98–99.

cheeks with food (*sekhiya* 46),³⁸³ not to stick out the tongue (*sekhiya* 49),³⁸⁴ not to lick one's hands (*sekhiya* 52)³⁸⁵ or bowl (*sekhiya* 53),³⁸⁶ and not to eat licking one's lips (*sekhiya* 54).³⁸⁷ Many of these rules do not have lengthy backstories in the *suttavibhaṅga*, which implies that they were considered by their authors to be self explanatory. However, these rules were nevertheless not considered to be self evident, otherwise they would not need to appear in the *pātimokkha* at all. Thus, while the reason behind the rules may seem obvious to their authors, the assumption is that not all monks would be tactful by default.

The *sekhiya* injunctions concerning proper eating appear very similar to what we might find in a contemporary book on European or American etiquette. They do not seem overtly religious, or even uniquely Indian. Although some of the other *sekhiya* rules are culturally specific and take into account matters of Buddhist doctrine, these particular rules have a certain universality to them, which leads me to two important questions about their role in the *pātimokkha*.

First, as these rules do not seem to be especially concerned with religious doctrine, I have trouble conceiving of them as examples of Buddhist ethical conduct. They do not really seem to have anything at all do with ethics, unless we take the position that etiquette is always an extension of ethics. As we have seen in the previous sections, however, that position is often problematic. If we do not accept that these rules are overtly concerned with ethics, then what is their actual role in the *pātimokkha*?

³⁸³ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 98–99.

³⁸⁴ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 100–101.

³⁸⁵ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 100–101.

³⁸⁶ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 100–101.

³⁸⁷ Norman and Pruitt 2001, 102–103.

The second question concerns the universality of these rules. Since similar rules exist in the dietary practices of cultures throughout the world, it would seem that there is something biological at work in their construction. So, what is it about having a human body that leads to the perceived need for such rules?

3.6: Disgust

I mentioned in chapter 1 the connection between etiquette and disgust. Now, I will briefly examine just one rule from the *sekhiya* injunctions, as an example of how we might bring ideology³⁸⁸ into the discussion. If we consider these rules of proper behaviour in their cultural context, it is clear that they are heavily influenced by Brahmanical and general

³⁸⁸The term *ideology* has been used by scholars in different contexts to mean many different things. As I use it, the word describes a special kind of language we employ for constructing our world. In other words, it is the framework around which we observe the experience of what we call reality. What I call my reality, you call my ideology. It is something unknown to me, because I only know it for the experiences it delivers to me. Because my ideology is like a medium within which I experience my world, it is just “the world” from my perspective. In that way, it is closely connected with *etiquette*, which in lay usage is often a synonym for “common sense.” What is common sense in one culture is not necessarily common sense in another, and yet seems obvious to us from within our respective frameworks. We experience our world indirectly through our senses and describe it incompletely due to the limitations of language. However, to participants within any particular culture, there are certain ideas and practices that are considered to be “common sense.” That is *ideology*, the unconscious notion that what makes sense to me in my observed world is nondifferent from my conception of reality itself.

Indian notions about purity, cleanliness and disgust. The connection between etiquette and disgust will become even more clear in the next chapter, as we examine the complex assortment of rules concerning the use of the Buddhist lavatory.

Sekhiya injunction number 73 in the Theravāda *pātimokkha*³⁸⁹ is an interesting example of the shared social world of Buddhists and Brahmins. This brief, curious rule reads simply, “I will not urinate while standing.” The same rule is found in the *Manusmṛiti* or “Laws of Manu,” a *dharmaśāstra* text dating to around 100 CE,³⁹⁰ and is also referenced as a Sanskrit grammatical example in Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* (2.2.6), the famous commentary on Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The mocking example given in that commentary, “Non-Brahmins urinate while standing,”³⁹¹ suggests that this custom has much more to do with class identity than ethics. Sitting down to urinate is a way for male Brahmins to distinguish themselves from the uncivilized lower classes. Indian Buddhists seem to have imported this cultural standard from Brahmins as a way of showing that they were equally as civilized as Brahmins.

The very brief narrative for the above rule does not really tell us any additional information about the rule, and merely points out that monks at one time urinated while standing and were rebuked for doing so.³⁹² The only other *sekhiya* rules that have

³⁸⁹ This rule appears in all extant *prātimokṣas*: Sarvāstivāda *śaikṣa* 112, Dharmaguptaka *śaikṣa* 51, Mahīśasaka *śaikṣa* 81, Kāśyapīya *śaikṣa* 93, Mahāsāṃghika *śaikṣa* 66, Mūlasarvāstivāda *śaikṣa* 95 (Sanskrit version), Mūlasarvāstivāda *śaikṣa* 105 (Tibetan version), and also in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, *śaikṣa* rule 102. Pachow 1955, 210.

³⁹⁰ See Olivelle 2004, 68.

³⁹¹ Kielhorn 1892, 410–412.

³⁹² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 150. The narrative simply mentions that

anything at all to say about lavatory protocol are rules 74 and 75, which prohibit defecating on green grass and defecating in water, respectively. Many other issues concerning bodily hygiene are also mentioned in the Theravāda *Cullavagga*. Because notions of the body are of particular importance in the study of rituals, and have such a complex relationship with cultural and ideological concerns, I have reserved all of chapter 4 for a discussion of Buddhist conceptions of the body and associated bodily rituals. The issue of disgust and how it relates to these rituals will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Still, we can say a few things here as a way of introducing this topic. Mainly what I hope to illustrate is that the texts containing these rules imply that their reasoning is self-explanatory, and yet their creation appears to have come about as a response to cultural standards about proper behaviour that are not shared universally. There is not much of anything in their extremely short backstories to give an indication about what exactly is considered transgressive about the behaviour sanctioned by the rules. Since most of the *pātimokkha* rules do provide some explanatory backstory, this lack of justification suggests that the rationale for such rules is obvious. From a modern, western perspective, however, the rules may appear unusual. *Sekhiya* 73 is especially odd to European sensibilities, as it would be considered atypical for a male to sit down to urinate, and perhaps provoke the same sense of ridicule as the opposite behaviour in early India.

If we consider etiquette in terms of a social, aesthetic performance concerned with the maintenance of *face*, lavatory rituals may appear at first glance to be outside the boundaries of this phenomenon. One feature that these rituals in the early Indian context do share with practices in the modern West is that they tend to be considered as very

the members of the group of six urinated while standing.

private, and a source of potential embarrassment. They are rituals in which it is preferable not to be observed at all. Still, we can imagine that the idea of *social face* could become important here if we consider the consequences of doing such rituals badly. In the case of rules 74 and 75, that means inappropriately leaving physical evidence of one's actions. The implication is that human waste is disgusting, and not suitable to be left out in the open. That idea among humans does appear to be universal, and linked closely with the avoidance of disease vectors. All human societies appear to have reserved some type of space (e.g., the lavatory) dedicated to the isolation of human waste.

The rule against urinating while standing may be an extension of this basic idea that human waste products are defiling, and an attempt to avoid contamination through the possibility of splattered urine on one's clothing, or the increased chance of having one's genitals seen by others. While it is difficult to know the original intentions of the rule, either of these explanations would make sense in the context of etiquette as a social performance. In this case, the audience of the performance would be anyone unfortunate enough to glimpse the urinator, and the social face of both the observer and observed could be threatened by that glimpse.

3.7: Conclusion

This chapter was intended as an exploration of Buddhist law from a nontraditional perspective, taking a cue from contemporary theories on aesthetics and *linguistic politeness* as a way of revealing different aspects of etiquette in the *pātimokkha*. I do not wish to be misunderstood as claiming that ethics play no role in ancient Indian etiquette. However, it is important to avoid simply taking these texts at face value, accepting the categories assigned by their authors. In many cases, Buddhist authors seem to have neglected to examine the origins of their own rules. This lack of historical analysis is to

be expected, as the *pātimokkha* is traditionally meant to serve as a template for proper behaviour, not as a survey of the chronological development of Buddhist culture. As a social theorist, my interest in the texts is of course different from those of the tradition. Borrowing from theoretical models of politeness and disgust from linguistics and social psychology can provide a better sense of how Indian Buddhist etiquette standards relate to the majority Brahmin culture from which Buddhism emerged.

There are many more instances of etiquette throughout Buddhist literature, but generally speaking, scholarship on Buddhism has not focused on these, as they are not directly pointed out as examples of etiquette within the texts themselves. For example, Buddhist afterlife stories frequently feature laypeople who verbally insulted Buddhist monks during their lives, transformed into grotesque monsters in hell as the karmic result of their poor behaviour. I will examine some of these stories in the following chapter as I analyze the relationship between disgust and etiquette in Indian culture.

Chapter 4: Liminality of the Lavatory

4.1: Introduction

As an illustration of the ubiquity and transparency of ideology³⁹³ in our daily lives, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek has frequently presented a tongue-in-cheek analysis of the differences between German, French, and Anglo-American toilets. For Žižek, the German tendency toward contemplation, the French appetite for revolution, and the Anglo-American predisposition for pragmatism are all hidden in plain sight, in the technology of each culture's toilets. Žižek further connects these cultural tendencies with corresponding sociopolitical worldviews, as a demonstration that ideology can be inferred from literally any aspect of culture:

In a traditional German toilet, the hole into which shit disappears after we flush is right at the front, so that shit is first laid out for us to sniff and inspect for traces of illness. In the typical French toilet, on the contrary, the hole is at the back, i.e. the shit is supposed to disappear as quickly as possible. Finally, the American (Anglo-Saxon) toilet presents a synthesis, a mediation between these opposites: the toilet basin is full of water, so that the shit floats in it, visible, but not to be inspected. No wonder that in the famous discussion of European toilets at the beginning of her half-forgotten *Fear of Flying*, Erica Jong mockingly claims that 'German toilets are really the key to the horrors of the Third Reich. People who can build toilets like this are capable of anything.' It is clear that none of these versions can be accounted for in purely utilitarian terms: each involves a certain ideological perception of how the subject should relate to the excrement.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ See p. 134.

³⁹⁴ Žižek 2004, 12. Jong 1973, 29–31. Jong also comments on the ways that lavatory

Žižek's investigation of ideology in the lavatory, as with so much of his cultural critique, is presented in the form of a joke, but the humorous aspect of his observations only begins to make sense with the recognition of a deeper truth. There is something very serious and profound in the ideologies that lead to the structural form of toilets, and we can infer a great deal about cultural norms from lavatory architecture and the specific rituals employed in hygiene and bodily care. While it is important to avoid making hasty generalizations from the limited amount of data available to us, I contend that we can observe several interesting connections between Buddhist and Brahmin rituals concerning the body by analyzing their injunctions concerning lavatory use and bathing.

In this chapter, I address the literary employment of lavatories and bathing rooms as loci for potentially impolite behaviour. In section 2, I review previous scholarship on Buddhist hygiene. In section 3, I outline the basic terms used for lavatories and bathing rooms in Indian Buddhist texts. In section 4, I examine some issues in the *Cullavagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya* relating to propriety and the body, especially with reference to issues of seniority. In section 5, I consider some rules in this text for proper use of the monastic lavatory. In section 6, I return to the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage, which I briefly looked at in chapter 2,³⁹⁵ now focusing on the relationship in that text between good conduct and the avoidance of disgust. In section 7, I examine specific rules in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* for using the monastic lavatory, which tend to include much more detail than their corresponding rules in the Theravāda *Cullavagga*. In section 8, I continue this discussion by introducing some other rules in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* dealing with five different bodily

options (e.g., quality of toilet paper) exemplify divisions of social class (p. 30).

³⁹⁵ See chapter 2, p. 91.

phenomena (coughing, scratching, sneezing, flatulence, and yawning). In section 9, I examine rules on bathing the body in the *Cullavagga* and *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, returning again to the issues of seniority, etiquette, and disgust.

4.2: Scholarship on Buddhist Hygiene

Existing scholarship on Buddhist hygiene is rather sparse. The most comprehensive study of this topic is a recent monograph by Ann Heirman and Mathieu Torck, which focuses on the Indian and Chinese Buddhist monastic rituals involved in bathing, using the lavatory, maintaining oral hygiene,³⁹⁶ and trimming of the hair and nails. Heirman and Torck concentrate the bulk of their study on *vinaya* texts of the Indian Dharmaguptaka lineage, which are now extant only in classical Chinese translations from Sanskrit. Cataloguing many of the hygiene practices for Buddhist monks in the Indic and Chinese traditions, Heirman and Torck supplement material from these Indic *vinaya* texts with various Buddhist and non-Buddhist Chinese works. Their project is, unfortunately, mainly descriptive, and does not explore very far into the meaning behind these practices. The thematic nature of the study also has a tendency to blend ideas found in indigenous Chinese Buddhist texts with classical Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts, resulting in an amalgamation of practices that do not represent any single tradition. In addition, Heirman and Torck in many instances conflate the hygiene practices of Buddhist monastics with those of the laity.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ See Clarke 2004, 337–338.

³⁹⁷ Heirman and Torck 2012, 6–7; 12; 16–19; 28–29; 33; 34; 46–49; 62 note 86; 67–69; 88–93; 120–122. A repeated theme in Heirman and Torck 2012 is the idea that the hygiene rituals expressed in Buddhist monastic legal codes eventually found their way

Heirman and Torck also contradict themselves with several of their claims about Buddhist views on the purpose of cleaning the body. At the beginning of their section on bathing, Heirman and Torck claim that ancient Buddhists considered cleanliness to be representative of “good manners, rather than health”³⁹⁸; but then they immediately argue for a “clear relation between bathing and health” in Indian Buddhist texts:

In France, as described by Vigarello, cleanliness was linked primarily to decency, rather than hygiene, and to good manners, rather than health. This is echoed in the Buddhist monastic context. Although some documents, particularly Indian texts, describe a clear relation between bathing and health, bathing was not considered to be healthy for the skin, but rather because it was thought to alleviate some bodily ailments. The issue was not unhygienic dirt, but decency and respect. In France, the focus on decency prompted people to emphasize the visible parts of body (and clothing), always with the minimum of water. Buddhist monastics, on the other hand, did not limit the concept of cleanliness to those body parts that

into the wider lay community. That is probably true. However, many of these rules also emphasize the strict separation of monastic and lay spaces for performing these practices, such that it would make no sense to claim that the lay rituals were entirely the same as those of the monastics. In other words, a large part of the ritualistic aspect of monastic hygiene practices involves being monastics and not being part of the lay community.

³⁹⁸ This phrase appears several times in Heirman and Torck’s book, but I am not entirely sure I understand what they mean by it. It seems to me that good manners and health are not mutually exclusive categories, regardless of any link between bathing and decency.

were visible to others; instead, they washed the whole body and advocated quite frequent bathing.³⁹⁹

I do agree that there is a relationship between notions of decency (which includes ethics) and proper upbringing in Buddhist texts on hygiene,⁴⁰⁰ but I do not see any evidence of these views negating the concept that dirt is unhealthy. On the contrary, Heirman and Torck's own examples appear to support the idea that bathing for Buddhists was perceived as both a practical method for maintaining good health as well as an indicator of one's civility.⁴⁰¹

Even more strangely, Heirman and Torck claim that "objects and practices related to bodily care are generally not designed to have any religious significance," and that "they evoke similar attitudes and ideas in both secular and monastic environments, since treatment and care of the body is a concern for all human beings."⁴⁰² This assertion is completely untrue, and presumes both a distinction between monastic and secular institutions as well as the conscious creation of cultural forms. One major problem with making such claims is that the Buddhist social environment(s) of ancient India did not

³⁹⁹ Heirman and Torck 2012, 27.

⁴⁰⁰ We will examine specific examples within the Buddhist context later in this chapter. Outside of the Buddhist context, other Indian sources also link cleanliness with good conduct. The *Dharmasūtras*, which I discussed in chapter 2, feature many examples of this equation. See Olivelle [2000] 2003, 51; 123; 211; 213; 215; 217.

⁴⁰¹ Heirman and Torck 2012, 30: "When summarizing the reasons for the above *prātimokṣa* rules, it becomes clear that they are motivated by a deep respect for cleanliness, hygiene, health and decorum."

⁴⁰² Heirman and Torck 2012, 6.

conceive of the concept of “secularity” as we use it today. Although Indian Buddhist texts make a clear distinction between monastics and the laity as unique social groups, non-monastic communities were equally as “religious” as monastics.⁴⁰³ Indeed, as material supporters of the monastic lifestyle, the laity form an indispensable part of the Buddhist community.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, many rituals of hygiene described in the *vinayas* are specific to monks, and do not necessarily apply to the laity.⁴⁰⁵ It is therefore not useful to discuss “secularity” at all in relation to these texts, as the term is both anachronistic and thematically irrelevant to the subject matter of *vinaya* materials.

Another term that is used frequently in Heirman and Torck’s analysis of hygiene is “decorum.” They note, for example, that “bathing is recommended because dirt and filth can lead to a loss of decorum”⁴⁰⁶ for a monastic, and reiterate, “Any sign of filth had to be carefully avoided, and failure to do so automatically caused a loss of decorum.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Consider, for example, the numerous practices undertaken by the laity in support of monastics, including the ownership of monasteries, and donations of materials. The distinction between these two categories also overlaps more than we often imagine. See Schopen 1985, 31–32. In some ways, the hygiene habits of the lay community described in Buddhist texts actually sound *more* religious than those of Buddhist monastics, as they inherit from the purity rituals of Vedic Brahmanism in which sacrality is a primary concern. See Olivelle [2000] 2003, 211.

⁴⁰⁴ Even speaking of an early Buddhist lay community can be problematic, as many of the Buddhist laity would have also supported monastics of other traditions.

⁴⁰⁵ However, Heirman and Torck 2012 is not limited only to *vinaya* materials.

⁴⁰⁶ Heirman and Torck 2012, 29.

⁴⁰⁷ Heirman and Torck 2012, 29.

Heirman and Torck continue with this claim by noting that the *prātimokṣa* rules “are motivated by a deep respect for cleanliness, hygiene, health and decorum,”⁴⁰⁸ that “Indian monastic texts promote bathing for reasons of cleanliness, hygiene, health and decorum,”⁴⁰⁹ and that “proper behaviour, defined in all of its detail, assures the community of a virtuous decorum while confronted with the inescapable physical aspects of daily life.”⁴¹⁰ This term, decorum, is described in one section of their book as a gloss of the Chinese *yízhé* (儀廁),⁴¹¹ but it is not clear to me that this is the same term being rendered as decorum throughout the study, or what, if anything, is the corresponding term

⁴⁰⁸ Heirman and Torck 2012, 30.

⁴⁰⁹ Heirman and Torck 2012, 33.

⁴¹⁰ Heirman and Torck 2012, 74.

⁴¹¹ Heirman and Torck 2012, 76. The term “decorum” is used here as a gloss for *yízhé* (儀廁), which according to Heirman and Torck appears in Daoxuan’s *Jiaojie xin xue biqu xing hu lü yi* 教誡新學比丘行護律儀, “Instructions for Young Monks on How to Protect the Vinaya Rules” (T.1897). The literal meaning of these characters seems to be something like “lavatory customs.” I was not able to find these characters in the CBETA electronic version of this text (T.1897), but I did find a similar term, 儀則 (*yízhé*), which seems a more likely candidate for “decorum” in general.

in Sanskrit.⁴¹² The ambiguity surrounding this Chinese term and its English gloss leads to some confusion about Indic and Chinese concepts of proper behaviour.

Despite these problems, Heirman and Torck's monograph broaches a major theme that is worth further investigation. While not specific to Buddhist cultural standards, the relationship between ideology and the conception of the physical body is apparent in the specific rituals described in Buddhist texts. The materials used, the terminology employed in describing cleanliness, and the reasons given in Buddhist texts for maintaining a clean body are all part of a larger and more general framework for interacting with the world, perhaps considered so obvious by *vinaya* authors as to merit no further investigation. Yet these glimpses of the mundane world and its everyday rituals can provide us with great insight into more nebulous ideas found in *abhidharma* texts and elsewhere. Heirman and Torck mention, for example, the difference between the traditional Indian practice of using only water to clean after defecation,⁴¹³ compared with the Chinese use of toilet paper and silk.⁴¹⁴ They also note an ontological relationship in Brahmanism between a clean body and a purified "soul," as distinguished from the Buddhist view that physical cleanliness by itself cannot lead to liberation.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² Sanskrit does not necessarily have primacy in all of the texts that form a part of Heirman and Torck's study, as they draw mainly on Chinese materials, some of which import from earlier Indian texts and some of which do not. The conflation of Indian and Chinese traditions throughout Heirman and Torck's study also makes it difficult to follow as a cohesive study of "Buddhist" hygiene practices.

⁴¹³ The Sanskrit sources on these matters also refer to other materials for cleansing, including clay balls, pieces of wood, and leaves.

⁴¹⁴ Heirman and Torck 2012, 78–80.

These themes surely caused embarrassment in the ancient world just as they do today, and we can observe in old Sanskrit texts the same deflection of taboo through humour that we ourselves use in modern times. It is this ideological theme⁴¹⁶ that I would like to take up in more detail, utilizing some of the sources referenced in Heirman and Torck's work, but also focusing on some other Indic materials that they neglect to mention. The most important of these is the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, a *vinaya* text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage I introduced in chapter 1.⁴¹⁷ Some of the material in this text also has parallels in the *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda Buddhists. Before I discuss the specific content of these texts, I would like to say a bit more about a few technical terms surrounding hygiene in Buddhist narratives.

4.3: Different Kinds of Bathrooms

Since at least two distinct types of Buddhist architectural structures have been referred to in English scholarship as “bathroom,” it is important to clarify which Sanskrit terms our English translations represent. In contrast with contemporary North American and European bathrooms, which commonly include a toilet, sink, and bathtub, ancient Indians always performed activities related to the excretion of waste in entirely separate spaces from those used for washing the body. As Tulasi Srinivas has pointed out, locating body-cleansing equipment (e.g., bathtubs) in the vicinity of spaces used for the elimination of bodily waste (e.g., lavatories) would have been unthinkable by most Indians until relatively recent times, and the situation is different now only because of the practical

⁴¹⁵ Heirman and Torck 2012, 72.

⁴¹⁶ See pp. 134, 139.

⁴¹⁷ See p. 91.

requirements of modern plumbing.⁴¹⁸ We must therefore use distinct terms for spaces in the monastery reserved for the elimination of bodily waste, in contrast with those spaces used for cleaning the body.

What Horner calls a “bathroom” in her translation of the *Theravāda Vinaya* is the Pāli *jantāghara* (Sanskrit *jentāka*), which seems to be a fire-heated room used in part for sweating out diseases.⁴¹⁹ This room may be similar to the modern sauna, and “sauna” is probably a more suitable term than “bathroom,” especially when we consider the fact that Buddhist monks are frequently portrayed bathing in rivers and lakes.⁴²⁰ The *jantāghara* is, however, also a place for washing, especially to relieve health problems.⁴²¹ Horner, following Dutt, differentiates between *jantāghara* as “common bath” and *jantāgharasālā* as “bath-rooms.”⁴²² Another term used for a sauna-like room is *aggisālā*, which Horner

⁴¹⁸ Srinivas 2002, 373. Europeans also performed these activities in separate areas until indoor toilets started becoming commonplace in the late 19th century.

⁴¹⁹ According to Rhys Davids and Stede 1921 (p. 278, s.v. *jantāghara*), this word is probably a distorted form originating in the Sanskrit root *jhā* = “to burn,” and implies a dry room heated by a fire. Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, suggests that the *jantāghara* was a room heated by steam (and therefore wet): “The bathroom must have been full of hot steam, as juniors as well as seniors had to be careful to protect their faces with a smearing of wet clay” (p. 62, note 4). Also see Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 164. See also Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 351, note 7, which discusses the creation of a special wet bathing room in addition to the heated room.

⁴²⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 142.

⁴²¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 62.

⁴²² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 62, note 1.

translates as “fire-room”⁴²³ and seems to think of as being different from the *jantāghara*—according to Horner, the *aggisālā* is a dry sauna, and the *jantāghara* is a steam room (and therefore wet).⁴²⁴ Rhys Davids and Stede, however, consider these words synonymous.⁴²⁵ I am not convinced that the terms were not used interchangeably, and it is possible that the rooms themselves served multiple functions depending on which type of activity was desired at any given time.⁴²⁶

In his translation of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, Burlingame uses the term “bath-house” for a room called *nhānakotṭhakam* in Pāli, literally the room (*koṭṭhakam*) for bathing (*nhāna*, probably related to Sanskrit *snāna*). This room appears to be similar to the *jantāghara*, but *nhānakotṭhakam* appears only in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, and not in the main text of the *Dhammapada* or elsewhere in the Theravāda canon.⁴²⁷ The word *jantāghara* occurs only once in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, in the compound

⁴²³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 33.

⁴²⁴ See also Gnanarama 1998 (p. 54, note 30), and Bandaranayake 1974 (p. 29), where it is pointed out that the term *aggisālā* is sometimes interpreted to mean a kitchen.

⁴²⁵ Rhys Davids and Stede 1921, 278, s.v. *jantāghara*. Their conclusion is based on an entry in the 12th-century Pāli lexicon *Abhidhānappadīpikā*.

⁴²⁶ It is also reasonable to assume that the economic and geographic conditions of any particular monastery would have forced deviations from the standard forms described in Buddhist texts. The rooms described in the texts are therefore not likely to correspond exactly to the historical layout of any particular monastery, and certainly not to every one of them.

⁴²⁷ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 112; vol. 2, 340–342; vol. 2, 318; 321.

jantāgharavatta. This word seems to refer to a type of ascetic vow, and occurs in a list of other types of ascetic vows. Burlingame does not appear to translate *jantāgharavatta*.⁴²⁸

What Burlingame calls a “bathroom” is the Pāli *vaccakuṭi* (Sanskrit *varcakuṭi* / *varcaskuṭi* / *varccakuṭi*⁴²⁹), literally the “excrement house.”⁴³⁰ This term is rendered by Horner as “privy,”⁴³¹ and in E. B. Cowell’s edition of the *Jātaka* stories as “jakes.”⁴³² I call this structure a “lavatory” to avoid confusion with the *jantāghara*.

A related term is the Pāli *passāvadonikā* or “urine jar,” which Horner calls a “urinal.” This would probably have been a jar, gourd or trough found near or inside the *vaccakuṭi* or often placed by itself. Another Pāli term is *vaccadonikā*, which we might call a toilet or commode, and which would be located in the *vaccakuṭi* mentioned above (sometimes the related terms *uśvāsakāraka*⁴³³ and *varcaḥkumbhikā*⁴³⁴ are used instead). There are also two terms in Sanskrit (found in Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda *vinaya* texts and other Buddhist Sanskrit literature), *praśrāvakuṭi* or *praśvāsakuṭi*, which also seem to be used to denote a jar, or in some cases a separate architectural structure, for urination.

⁴²⁸ Burlingame 1921, vol. 2, 56.

⁴²⁹ Karashima, in his translation of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, renders *varccakuṭi* into German as *der Abort*, “lavatory.” See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 379; 430–432.

⁴³⁰ Burlingame 1921, vol. 1, 176.

⁴³¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 1, 275; vol. 2, 195; vol. 4, 65; 186–187; 254; vol. 5, 100; 196–197; 202; 295; 307; 310–311; 315; 322; 325–328; 387; 392; vol. 6, 194; 352 note 5.

⁴³² Cowell 1895–1907, vol. 1, 48; vol. 6, 186.

⁴³³ See Karashima 2012, vol. 2, p. 379 (44.1).

⁴³⁴ Edgerton [1953] 1993, vol. 2, s.vv. *varcaḥkuṭi*, *varcakumbhikā*, 471.

The English “cesspool” is Horner’s rendering of Pāli *karīsavāca* or *vaccakupa* / *vaccakūpa* (or *vaccadoṇikā*, “commode”), synonymous with *gūthakūpa* (“excrement pit”). In many cases this term probably represented the same structure as the *vaccakuṭi* / *varcakuṭi* / *varccakuṭi* (“lavatory”), a separate space and/or structure for the activity of excreting waste. As we will see later in this chapter, there are many references to cesspools in Buddhist legal literature as the proper locations of excrement and urine, and in a metaphoric usage, as descriptors for disgusting places and substances (e.g., the womb and its contents; the body in general; the hells).

In addition to the above terms, there are some references in Buddhist *vinaya* texts to monks and nuns defecating and urinating in what are described as unsuitable locations. For example, the previously mentioned *sekhiya* rules 74 and 75 prohibit urinating and defecating on green plants and in water.⁴³⁵ Similar rules for Brahmins appear in the *Manusmṛti*.⁴³⁶ The fact that such rules exist in both traditions suggests that it was not uncommon for people in ancient India to use any convenient location for waste elimination, and that the existence of specific architectural structures for these practices was no guarantee of their widespread use. Since these rules appear to predate Buddhism, they also seem to be informed primarily by commonly-shared Indian aesthetic and cultural values, rather than constructed to conform with a specific religious doctrine.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ See pp. 134–136.

⁴³⁶ Olivelle 2004, 68: “He must never eat food wearing just a single garment; bathe naked; or urinate on a road, on ashes, in a cow pen, on ploughed land, into water, onto a mound or a hill, in a dilapidated temple, onto an anthill, into occupied animal holes, while walking or standing, by a river bank, or at the top of a hill.”

⁴³⁷ The sharing of cultural values does not negate the possibility, of course, that such

Saunas and lavatories in Buddhist literature are often sites for improper conduct of all kinds, and tend to be associated with disgust, sexual depravity, impoliteness, and other modes of impropriety. These spaces tend to function as a literary nexus for the bizarre. For example, in book 11 of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, the “bath-house” (*nhānakoṭṭhakam*) is blamed for distorting reality itself, as an explanation for perceived sexual misconduct:

The story goes that one day Queen Mallikā entered the bath-house, and having bathed her face, bent over and began to bathe her leg. Now her pet dog entered the bath-house with her, and when he saw her standing there with body thus bent over, he began to misbehave with her and she let him continue. The king looked out of a window on the upper floor of the palace and saw her. On her return he said to her, “Perish, vile woman; why did you do such a thing as that?” “Why, your majesty, what have I done?” “You have behaved most wrongly with a dog.” “It is not true, your majesty.” “I saw you with my own eyes. I will not believe anything you say. Perish, vile woman.” “Great king, it is a remarkable fact that whoever enters that bath-house appears double to whoever looks out of that window.” “You utter falsehood.” “If you will not believe me, enter that bath-house yourself, and I will look out of that window.”⁴³⁸

The king complies, and when the queen subsequently (and falsely) accuses him of having sexual relations with a female goat in the same room, he is convinced that something very tricky is happening with the windows. In this way a space reserved for cleaning the body is portrayed not only as a site for perverse conduct, but also a space in which the laws of

practices were imbued with deep religious significance.

⁴³⁸ Burlingame 1921, vol. 2, 340. The full story runs from pp. 340–342.

physics are somehow open to modification. Of course, in the above story, Queen Mallikā is actually lying about the window illusion in order to cover up for her own improper act, but the fact that she is believed by her husband serves to illustrate the liminality of this space. Even ordinary use of the bathing room requires getting undressed, and in that way becoming more vulnerable to conducting oneself in a transgressive manner.

Lavatories are also used in Buddhist literature as locations for impropriety. In one episode in the *Theravāda Vinaya*, the Buddha finds his son Rāhula asleep in the monastic lavatory, after Rāhula is unable to find a suitable place for sleeping elsewhere in the monastery.⁴³⁹ The reason for this problem is that Rāhula has not yet been ordained, and the monks do not want to break *suddhapācittiyā* rule 5, which sanctions ordained monks for lying down in a sleeping place with one who is not ordained.⁴⁴⁰ However, Rāhula's attempt to solve his dilemma by permanently occupying the lavatory is apparently worse than transgressing the original rule, which the Buddha then amends as: "Whatever monk should lie down in a sleeping-place with one who is not ordained for more than two or three nights, there is an offence of expiation."⁴⁴¹ This small modification to the original

⁴³⁹ A longer version of this story appears in the *Tipallatha-Miga-Jātaka* (No. 16). See Cowell 1895–1907, vol. 1, p. 48.

⁴⁴⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 194.

⁴⁴¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 195–196. This curious story is not found with the other toilet etiquette rules (which in the Theravāda canon generally appear in the *Khandhaka*), but rather in the *suttavibhaṅga* ("rule analysis" of the *pātimokkha*), among other explanations of the *suddhapācittiyā* rules. See also the story in the immediately preceding rule, *suddhapācittiyā* 5 (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, 194). The description of the "careless" sleeping monks in that passage evokes an image of disgust

rule allows Rāhula to sleep in the main area of the monastery, thus preventing the more serious problem of sleeping in the lavatory.

The above two examples are meant to illustrate a particular literary depiction of rooms used for hygiene practices in Buddhist narratives, as liminal spaces that draw attention to their heightened potential for transgression. Although not every mention of a lavatory or sauna in Buddhist literature features this same kind of liminal danger, we can infer from these two cases a certain trepidation about spaces reserved for care of the body; this trepidation does not appear to be present in relation to any other architectural forms. In the following sections, I argue that a large part of the anxiety concerning these rooms appears to stem from the practical limits to imposing restrictive controls on bodily functions, and the opposition between answering the calls of nature and simultaneously maintaining the numerous rules of the monastic code. For most other aspects of monastic life, the actions of individual monks and nuns can be regulated to a high degree. I have already discussed, for example, specific injunctions concerning speech, the consumption of food, and other conscious activities. In contrast, the processes of becoming dirty and requiring a bath, and the digestion of food and subsequent need to eliminate waste, are largely passive phenomena beyond our conscious control. Attempting to regulate hygiene

similar to that of the sleeping harem women in the *Buddhacāritam*. Compare, for example, “...the monks who were novices lay down in a sleeping-place just there in the attendance hall together with the lay-followers, careless, thoughtless, naked, mumbling, snoring...” (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 2, p. 194) with this passage from Johnston [1936] 1998: “But others, helplessly lost to shame despite their natural decorum and endowment of excellent beauty, lay in immodest attitudes, snoring, and stretched their limbs, all distorted and tossing their arms about” (p. 72).

too much could therefore be counterproductive, and so the rules concerning hygiene are open to many variations and loopholes.

The connection to etiquette in rituals of hygiene practice is sometimes very clear, and at other times rather tenuous. My only purpose in discussing hygiene in this chapter is to illustrate the overlap between hygiene and the larger phenomenon of etiquette. To that end, I focus mainly on Buddhist narratives dealing with hygiene rituals in which these rituals clearly concern issues relating to insulting and disrespectful behaviour. There is still a good deal more that can be said about hygiene that I have not included, simply because it is outside the immediate scope of etiquette.

4.4: Propriety and the Body

The *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda canon contains a great variety of information about how not to behave in a monastery, with a particular emphasis on bodily misbehaviour. As Thanissaro Bhikkhu has mentioned in his translation of the Theravāda *Khandhaka* (which comprises the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*), many of these rules are nearly identical to the *sekhiya* rules of the *pātimokkha*.⁴⁴² However, there are a few differences between these sets of rules, one of which involves the focus on individuality and community. As Oskar von Hinüber has pointed out, the *pātimokkha* and *suttavibhaṅga* are concerned generally with the obligations of individual monks, and the *Khandhaka* injunctions with the *saṅgha* at large.⁴⁴³

Compared with the *pātimokkha* and its corresponding backstories in the *suttavibhaṅga*, the *Cullavagga* rules give a much more detailed explanation of how to

⁴⁴² Thanissaro [1994, 2001] 2013, vol. 2, 90.

⁴⁴³ von Hinüber 1995, 20.

behave properly in the monastery. The information in this text is, however, less codified than the *pātimokkha*, with a wider range of topics and a less linear narrative. The topics covered include: properly arriving at a monastery, asking about lodgings, requesting water for drinking, wiping down one's sandals, properly greeting elders, asking about the lavatories, cleaning and preparing one's dwelling, giving thanks for received food, wearing appropriate attire, proper deportment while going for alms, lavatory protocol, behaviour while sharing cells, and correct bathing protocol. Within these larger categories, there is a great deal of jumping back to previously-covered items, which suggests an ad hoc formulation of these rules. The *sekhiya* rules of the *pātimokkha*, in contrast, appear to have a more logical and discrete structure, and are probably more recent.

As with the *pātimokkha* / *prātimokṣa* regulations, the *Cullavagga* generally gives directions on proper behaviour through narratives about misbehaving monks, which are followed immediately by the creation of related injunctions by the Buddha. Consider, for example, the following passage:

At one time the awakened one, the Lord, was staying at Sāvathhī in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time incoming monks entered the monastery with their sandals on, and they entered the monastery with sunshades up, and they entered the monastery with their heads muffled up, and they entered the monastery having put their robes on their heads, and they washed their feet in the drinking water, and they did not greet the resident monks who were senior nor ask about lodgings. And a certain incoming monk, having unfastened the bolt of

an unoccupied dwelling-place, having opened the door, entered hastily. A snake fell on to his shoulder from a lintel above; terrified, he uttered a cry of distress.⁴⁴⁴

The snake in this story appears to be something of a red herring, for its only real function is to draw the attention of senior monks, who by questioning the distressed monk come to learn about the aforementioned improprieties. This episode, which is not likely to be historical, leads to the establishment of a corresponding rule for every transgression listed above. Monks are told that they should knock on the door before entering a monastery, and must wipe down their sandals upon entering. They should greet the resident monks in an appropriate way, and inquire about lodgings.⁴⁴⁵

The above rules appear to be concerned primarily with showing respect to figures of authority and to the authority of the Buddhist order. This respect is shown in part by maintaining the perceived cleanliness of the monastery (removing one's sandals, avoiding the contamination of drinking water), but also by behaving in a way that does not make light of the monastic profession. Entering a monastery without greeting its resident monks would not seem to affect the degree of material dirtiness in any way, but is inappropriate because it is a type of face-threatening act.⁴⁴⁶ The heart of the problem in this case is arguably a lack of concern for the feelings of other people, not material dirt, and so the relationship between the perceived dirtiness of the sandals and the offence of not greeting can also be considered as a "moral disgust" issue.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 291. Similar rules about headgear appear in the *sekhiya* rules of the *pātimokkha* (see Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, pp. 145–146).

⁴⁴⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 292–295.

⁴⁴⁶ See chapter 1, p. 32.

However, bringing morality into juxtaposition with the face-threatening act can be misleading. The sense of inappropriateness behind the actions described above is in many ways ungrounded in any absolute sense of right and wrong, and only illustrated by way of example. While many injunctions in the *prātimokṣas* do imply an absolute sense of ethics (e.g., intentionally ending a life is always unethical), the disrespect implicit in performing the above actions in the *Cullavagga* appears to come first from a lack of awareness and carefulness⁴⁴⁸ from those committing the actions, and in addition, the interpretation on the part of observers that these actions are offensive. Ending the life of a being is against Buddhist doctrine absolutely, even if the being desires death.⁴⁴⁹ Entering a dwelling with muddy sandals is merely bad form, inappropriate mainly because it is considered by others to be a slight to authority. Many of the rules surrounding etiquette are in that sense circular in definition—in other words, they are offensive because they are considered offensive.

Here I must clarify my reasons for framing this issue around the emotion of disgust, and particularly the idea of moral disgust, because in some ways it would seem reasonable to ascribe the agitation surrounding these transgressions to some other cause, such as annoyance or indignation. At first glance, these other emotional responses may appear to be entirely separate from disgust, even to those scholars who specialize in the study of disgust itself. Martha Nussbaum, for example, in her investigation of disgust and its relationship to law, claims that disgust “is distinct not only from fear of danger, but

⁴⁴⁷ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 62–71.

⁴⁴⁸ This lack of awareness is twofold: lack of awareness of the appropriate rituals of conduct, and a lack of awareness of one’s own behaviour.

⁴⁴⁹ Ratanakul 2000, 175.

also from anger and indignation,”⁴⁵⁰ and that “indignation concerns harm or damage” where disgust does not. She further explains,

Indignation, again, is typically based on ordinary causal thinking about who caused the harm that occurred, and ordinary evaluation, about how serious this harm is. Disgust, by contrast, is usually based on magical thinking rather than real danger.⁴⁵¹

One problem with classifying the above examples from the *Cullavagga* simply as indignation is that in most cases no serious harm can be proven to have occurred at all. This point is even more apparent when we realize that no reason is provided for the above rules, and no link to any kind of ethical standard. Instead, each positive misdeed of the monks (e.g., “they entered the monastery with sunshades up”) is transformed in the text into a corresponding negative injunction (e.g., “do not enter the monastery with sunshades up”), with no explanation as to the reasoning behind the rule. If there is no identifiable victim of an action, and the action is not considered a specifically ethical transgression, and yet is still prohibited in a general sense, there is something of a puzzle about why the action was disallowed at all.

We cannot permit ourselves the luxury of “common sense” interpretations of these rules, lest we insert our own preconceptions about proper etiquette into ancient Buddhist narratives. It may seem obvious that entering a house with muddy shoes is impolite—in fact, the idea that visitors should not make a house dirty is found in the etiquette standards of many cultures throughout time and geographical location—but we are still obliged to explain exactly what the reason is for the ubiquity of this rule. At one level, we could

⁴⁵⁰ Nussbaum 2004, 99.

⁴⁵¹ Nussbaum 2004, 102.

argue that a clean dwelling is considered a default position, and anything that threatens that default position is a kind of face attack against the dwelling itself, or against the person tasked with keeping it clean. Even if we accept that idea to be true, it is not self-evident why clean should be the default state of a dwelling; when left unchecked, a house will naturally proceed to become increasingly dirty. In fact, cleaning a house goes against the natural state of things, because it requires work. It may be, however, that this constant fight against nature is itself the origin of what is now called civility, with rules of etiquette serving as a sort of grammar to avoid perceived biological threats.

I should mention that I disagree with Nussbaum's assertion that disgust and danger are entirely distinct emotions, and I would argue that recent empirical studies of disgust reactions definitively demonstrate a causal connection between subconscious fear of contamination and the emotional reaction of disgust.⁴⁵² Even though it is not possible to measure anything empirically about the emotional responses of monks in early India, we can safely assume that their bodies were functionally the same as human bodies in our own time. So, if we can describe disgust as a fundamental aspect of human biological evolution now, it seems reasonable to find examples of the same reaction in early Indian Buddhist literature.

There are still two problems that remain to be addressed when we examine etiquette standards from the perspective of disgust, namely, how actions that are unrelated to materially disgusting events can induce an emotion called disgust, and how we can distinguish the "morality" in "moral disgust" from what we might call "ethics proper." Aurel Kolnai, in his classic essay on disgust, explains his own use of the term "moral" as

⁴⁵² Ahn et al. 2014; Smith et al. 2011; Rozin, Haidt and McCauley 2008; Haidt et al. 1997; Rozin 1996.

“not ‘ethical’ in a strict and narrow sense, but rather: mental or spiritual, albeit more or less with reference to ethical matters, in contrast to physical, as when one speaks of moral factors or of the morally relevant aspect of an issue.”⁴⁵³ This type of morality strikes me as similar to the “dramaturgical loyalty” of Goffman’s characterization of social interaction as a kind of aesthetic performance. This sense of morality is what is often referred to as “poor taste,” a disgust that comes about from an acknowledgment that conventional social rules have been pointlessly violated.

There is certainly an overlap here with ethical doctrines, but the primary concern is cultural, aesthetic and dynamic, not strictly connected to notions of absolute good and evil actions. Kolnai distinguishes five types of moral disgust: 1) disgust of satiation, as when an enjoyable joke has been told too many times;⁴⁵⁴ 2) excessive vitality, for example, when a person “is a pronouncedly muscular type with a spiritual life that is entirely neglected;”⁴⁵⁵ 3) untruthfulness;⁴⁵⁶ 4) any kind of falsehood, including infidelity and betrayal;⁴⁵⁷ and 5) “moral softness” or weakness of character.⁴⁵⁸ These five types of moral disgust are all very different, but share in their lack of qualities relating to the more basic idea of physically disgusting objects (e.g., excrement, corpses). However, for Kolnai there is a commonality between the physically repulsive and the morally distasteful with respect to the idea of corruption. While the objects of moral disgust are

⁴⁵³ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 62.

⁴⁵⁴ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 63.

⁴⁵⁵ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 65.

⁴⁵⁶ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 68.

⁴⁵⁷ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 69.

⁴⁵⁸ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 71.

focused primarily on social action, they are nevertheless reminders, as with physically-disgusting objects, of our limited, organic, corporeal nature.⁴⁵⁹ Both types of stimulus evoke an instinctive fear of death through their association with things that are death-like. In the case of the biologically-disgusting, this means excrement, rotting corpses and so forth. In the case of moral disgust, it is the dead taste of low values. In other words, low-class people are disgusting in their lack of refinement. Here again we see a connection between disgust, urbanity, and etiquette. I shall return to these types of moral disgust as I examine specific instances of impropriety in Buddhist literature.

Daniel Kelly, whose work on disgust is much more recent than that of Kolnai, has the benefit of drawing on a great deal of recent empirical data and scientific models of emotion. Kelly considers disgust to be a “sentimental signaling system” for transmitting cultural information.⁴⁶⁰ In his explanation of the “tribal instincts” hypothesis and the co-opt thesis of cultural transmission,⁴⁶¹ Kelly describes what is called a “core

⁴⁵⁹ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 72. From this perspective, it is quite interesting to consider that Buddhist monks would have a need for rules of etiquette, especially in light of the production of a large body of literature on disgust-focused meditation and the recurrent theme of cultivating a distaste for worldly life in Buddhist philosophical treatises. See, for example, in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* of Vasubandhu, where the Buddhist monk is advised to cultivate “disgust” (*vidūṣaṇa*) for the world of sense objects (de La Vallée Poussin, [1923–1931] 1988–1990, vol. 3, 855). The solution to this apparent paradox is, however, rather mundane. Etiquette was considered necessary in the *saṅgha* simply because Buddhist monastics, as social beings, found a need for regulating social behaviours.

⁴⁶⁰ Kelly 2011, 61.

coevolutionary feedback loop”⁴⁶² in which biological precursors to the emotion of disgust initiate a cycle that becomes increasingly divergent from biological concerns and helps to establish a unique cultural identity for a particular group of people.

The emotion of disgust appears to be something universal among human beings, and something that originates partially as an evolutionary adaptation for avoiding dangerous substances. However, the specific manifestations of disgust are also culturally distinct, and so biology cannot be the only factor involved. Theorists of gene-culture coevolution (GCC) propose “culture in general as a repository of information that can be passed from one generation to the next.”⁴⁶³ Kelly suggests that “what is sometimes called human *ultrasociality* is greatly facilitated by the fact that human social interactions are regulated by complex systems of norms, and that humans are able to recognize and selectively interact with members of their own tribe or ethnic group, who abide by the same set of norms.”⁴⁶⁴ What this means for the issue of etiquette is that the specific rules for proper behaviour are largely arbitrary, but extremely important in maintaining group identity.

If we consider Buddhist etiquette to be inspired by and primarily derived from Brahmanical etiquette standards, it is easy to see how concerns about particular aspects of conduct would be important in attracting Brahmins to the Buddhist order, with the idea that Buddhism is a cultural extension of Brahmanism. Group identity for Buddhist monks is also defined by the ways in which it is unique from lay society and from Brahmin

⁴⁶¹ Kelly 2011, 103; 116.

⁴⁶² Kelly 2011, 105.

⁴⁶³ Kelly 2011, 104.

⁴⁶⁴ Kelly 2011, 107.

society, as I have touched on briefly in chapter 3.⁴⁶⁵ There are also subdivisions within the monastic community, between senior monastics and junior monastics, and between male and female monastics.⁴⁶⁶ These divisions are reinforced by specific rules of behaviour to be practiced by each group. For example, the *Cullavagga* emphasizes the importance of resident monks preparing water for washing incoming senior monks' feet and sandals, preparing water for drinking,⁴⁶⁷ and greeting incoming senior monks.⁴⁶⁸

The purpose of this section has been to introduce some of the fundamental questions surrounding etiquette rituals of the body, and a few of the general approaches to these problems in contemporary scholarship. In the following sections, we will examine in further detail some examples of bodily etiquette rituals from Buddhist texts, applying the above theories where appropriate. One of the major points I wish to make in this chapter as a whole is the connection between etiquette and disgust. I have mentioned here the idea that the emotion of disgust could well be an advantageous instinctive reaction against substances that tend to be vectors for disease. I also mentioned the concept of moral disgust, which seems in many ways to be an extension of this natural reaction applied to social transgressions that are not directly concerned with danger.

One task that is typically not associated with danger, at least not consciously, is the ordinary use of a lavatory. However, lavatories are almost universally considered to

⁴⁶⁵ See p. 122.

⁴⁶⁶ The theme of femininity as inherently disgusting will be taken up in chapter 5.

⁴⁶⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 295–296.

⁴⁶⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 296. This demonstration of deference to authority through attention to the bodily needs of senior monks is a repeated theme, which appears again in the rules for bathing.

be disgusting in some way. The very fact that human cultures tend to demarcate particular spaces as suitable for defecation and urination (with the assumption that other spaces are not) is an indication that these practices and their associated substances are considered potentially defiling. When we consider these very ordinary practices in the context of a religious community fixated on purity and ethical goodness, we can see a number of occasions in which the treatment of the mundane body and the goals of the monastic community overlap, and others in which these sets of rules are contradictory. To illustrate this point, I will now examine some narratives from *vinaya* texts concerning the Buddhist monastic lavatory.

4.5: Proper Use of the Monastic Lavatory

The *Cullavagga* features a series of episodes involving mealtime protocol. In one narrative, the text explains that monks initially did not give thanks at the end of a meal (*na anumodanti*),⁴⁶⁹ and employs once again the literary trope of grumbling townspeople that we observed in chapter 3. Lay donors who provide meals to the monks subsequently complain that monks are not expressing gratitude in exchange for this service from their donors. When the issue is brought to the attention of the Buddha, he simply allows monks to give thanks. Once again, monastic conceptions of etiquette are seemingly at odds with lay etiquette. From the wording of the rule, apparently it was not unusual for gratitude to be unexpressed by monks prior to this complaint from the laity.⁴⁷⁰ Yet the laity do expect

⁴⁶⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 297. The full line in Pāli is “*Tena kho pana samayena bhikkhū bhattacha na anumodanti.*” See Oldenberg 1879–1883 [1969–1982], vol. 2, 222.

⁴⁷⁰ Compare with lay attitudes toward sneezing, and with the perceived impoliteness of

gratitude to be expressed, and the monks presumably expect to continue to be fed by the lay community. Thus, the monks maintain an outward appearance that is pleasing to their lay donors by preserving social face.

However, the new rule about giving thanks leads to a series of other problems. First, the monks need to establish exactly who should give thanks. The Buddha decides that a senior monk should thank the providers of food on behalf of all the monks. When this idea is tested, it is deemed unsuitable, because the rest of the monks simply exit the refectory, leaving one senior monk by himself. The Buddha then declares that a group of “four or five monks who are elders” should be appointed to stay behind and show their appreciation to patrons.⁴⁷¹ The problem of giving thanks would appear to be solved, but then, a related but rather unexpected problem arises when a monk appointed to stay behind at the refectory to give thanks has an urgent need to use the lavatory. The narrative here is extremely brief, but nevertheless raises some interesting questions about the balance between monastic decorum and taking care of natural bodily functions:

Now at that time a certain elder waited in a refectory although he wanted to relieve himself, and through restraining himself he fell down fainting. They told this matter to the Lord. He said: “I allow you, monks, if there is a reason, to go away, having asked (permission from) the monk immediately next to you.”⁴⁷²

We see here that conduct for monastics is so highly regulated as to interfere with ordinary processes of the body. Nor is this short episode an outlier in the monastic code, as there

the “supercilious” monk at Kiṭāgiri. See pp. 34, 121.

⁴⁷¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 298.

⁴⁷² Horner, [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 298.

are a great number of other examples of this interference between seemingly behaviour for monks and the mundanity of bodily expulsions.

Lavatory etiquette commonly supersedes standard monastic seniority rules, because it would be impractical to give seniority rules priority over the demands of the body. Although there are various formal benefits that accompany monastic seniority, rules concerning the lavatory and sauna often displace the custom of privileging higher ranking monastics in the interest of giving precedence to the urgency of physical needs. In the *Cullavagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya*, the Buddha allows monks to use the monastic lavatory in the order in which they arrive, instead of according to seniority.⁴⁷³ The text explains that prior to the creation of this rule, junior monks were forced to wait so long to use the facilities that “they fell down fainting.”⁴⁷⁴

The same text contains an episode in which the group of six monks behave poorly in the lavatory, which leads to the creation of the following rules (spoken here by the Buddha):

“Whoever goes to a privy, standing outside should cough, and the one sitting inside should cough too. Having laid aside the robe on a bamboo for robes or a

⁴⁷³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 310.

⁴⁷⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 310. Note that the previous reference to fainting in the last section concerned a senior monk who intentionally refrained from using the lavatory in order to remain at his post for giving thanks. This episode appears in a section of the *Cullavagga* concerning rules for eating. This second episode of fainting appears in a section devoted to proper lavatory etiquette, and concerns the fainting of multiple junior monks due to their unintentional waiting for the lavatory to become available to them.

cord for robes, one should enter the privy carefully and unhurriedly. One should not enter too hastily, one should not enter forcibly, one should stand firmly on the privy shoes. One should not relieve oneself while groaning ... you should not drop a piece of wood for scraping into a cesspool. You should get rid of it while standing on the privy shoes. You should not depart too quickly, nor forcibly. You should stand firmly on the rinsing shoes. You should not rinse smacking your lips, you should not leave water in the saucer for rinsing (-water). You should get rid of it while standing on the rinsing shoes. If the privy is dirty it should be washed. If the receptacle for (wood for) scraping is full, the pieces of wood for scraping should be thrown away. If the privy is soiled, it should be swept. If the plaster flooring ... if the cell ... if the porch is soiled the floor should be swept. If there is no water in the vessel for rinsing-water, water should be tipped into it. This, monks, is the observance for monks in respect of privies and which should be observed by monks in respect of privies.”⁴⁷⁵

We see in this section a number of particular rituals concerning hygiene. The declaratory cough (*ukkāsita*) is used in other contexts in the Theravāda canon as a way of announcing arrival at a residence, similar to the modern practice of knocking on a door. The “privy shoes” (*vaccapādukā*) and “rinsing shoes” (*ācamanapādukā*) mentioned here are special sandals or slippers meant to remain in the lavatory, in order to avoid contaminating the space outside the lavatory. There are also “urinal shoes” (*passāvapādukā*) mentioned in other sections of this text.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 310–311.

⁴⁷⁶ The practice of reserving special shoes for the lavatory is still common today in India and in other Asian cultures.

The practices listed above concern the perception of dirt and uncleanness, but also non-material issues. Making groaning noises while defecating (*nitthunantena vacco*) and rinsing while smacking the lips (*capucapukārakena ācametabbam*)⁴⁷⁷ are prohibited actions, but these leave behind no physical evidence of impropriety. For this reason, I do not think it is entirely satisfactory to classify the transgression problem here in terms of, for example, the oft-cited “matter out of place” paradigm proposed by Mary Douglas.⁴⁷⁸ As Douglas herself emphasizes, the reason for matter being considered out of place at all is not that matter is necessarily empirically “dirty,” but that it symbolizes defilement.⁴⁷⁹ Yet despite this socially-constructed language defining what is and is not appropriate, which is what etiquette really comes down to, I think that Douglas also misses something very important in focusing so strongly on defilement as symbolic. The emotional responses to normatively inappropriate behaviours are in the end extremely visceral, and so they do not *feel* symbolic.

In other words, while standards of etiquette do form a kind of symbolic language, they are not consciously conceived as symbolic most of the time. Dirt is perceived as dirt, not as representative of the concept of defilement. Whatever is culturally considered to be dirt is experienced by a member of that culture at an emotional level, and this is where an analysis of etiquette through the lens of disgust is helpful in trying to reconstruct the ideological framework behind the perception of contamination. This point has been made many times by Slavoj Žižek, who stresses that ideology is not a code of conduct by which

⁴⁷⁷ This “smacking” is the same *capucapu* we encountered in chapter 2 in the *sekhiya* rules concerning eating.

⁴⁷⁸ Douglas [1966] 1984, 36; 41.

⁴⁷⁹ Douglas [1966] 1984, 36.

we live, but the very language by which we present reality to ourselves. The framework appears to us as simply “reality,” and we cannot see through it to realize any symbolism at all. Douglas and Nussbaum emphasize the notion of contamination as “magical,”⁴⁸⁰ and focus on the symbolism that allows that magic to be perceived as real, but hardly at all on the emotional content of those symbols. We might say that the real problem is not in dirt or uncleanness itself, but in the production and acceptance of what are considered to be unsuitable environments. The Buddhist *vinaya* rules focus not so much on material dirt as they do on behaviours that lead to atmospheres perceived as disgusting.

In the case of Buddhist lavatory protocol, it would appear that some behaviours have no proper place at all, which is to say, there is simply no proper way to perform certain actions in conformity with the Indian Buddhist worldview. In chapter 3, I briefly discussed *sekhiya* rules 73, 74 and 75, which prohibit urinating while standing, defecating on green grass,⁴⁸¹ and defecating in water, respectively. I then suggested that these rules are considered transgressive not primarily for ethical reasons, but because they trigger an emotional response of disgust. In the *bhikṣuṇīvibhaṅga* of the Mahāsāṃghika lineage, for example, a group of nuns are admonished for defecating on green grass after some ladies from King Prasenajit’s harem accidentally dirty their hands on the nuns’ excrement while playing in the king’s garden.⁴⁸² The prohibition on urinating while standing does not have an equally disgusting backstory, but as I have noted previously,⁴⁸³ it does seem to be

⁴⁸⁰ Douglas [1966] 1984, 106.

⁴⁸¹ Schmithausen 1991, 31–36 speculates that this rule may also be connected with the notion of plant sentience.

⁴⁸² Hirakawa 1982, 366–368.

⁴⁸³ See p. 135.

rooted in Indian conceptions of civility (with numerous texts making a comparison between Brahmins, who sit to urinate, and “Ionians,” who stand).

Such transgressions appear to be violations of Buddhist and/or Indian aesthetic values rather than violations of Buddhist ethical values. However, the line between aesthetics and ethics is also a fuzzy one. Ideas concerning aesthetics and ethics influence each other, and the choices we make with regard to these overlapping sets of values are often primarily emotional rather than intellectual. Although Buddhist texts tend to portray the assessment of proper behaviours as an intellectual endeavor, normative standards of conduct in many cases appear to originate in cultural notions of aesthetics that predate Buddhism itself. In the following sections, I will examine specific rules concerning bodily functions, and then discuss some theoretical models of how to approach ideas concerning disgust and behaviour.

The repeated theme in all of these rules, whether they focus on appropriate lavatory rituals, social greetings, or other standards of conduct, is that acting in a manner that fits the public image of a monk is a practical method for bringing outsiders to a positive view of the Buddhist institution. These rules tell us a great deal about the relationship between Buddhist monks and the non-Buddhist community. Rather than existing in isolation, it is clear that the Indian Buddhist monastic community had frequent social interactions with non-Buddhists, and that Buddhist monks were keenly aware of the possibility of causing offence. As a new religion in a culture dictated primarily by the ideology of Brahmanism, Buddhists consciously imported those standards of behaviour into their own texts.

4.6: Etiquette and Disgust in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*

In chapter 1, I introduced some rules concerning proper speech in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, a *vinaya* text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda lineage.⁴⁸⁴ This text also contains rules concerning correct greetings, behaviour for visiting a monastery, directions on using the lavatory, and other topics we saw already in the Theravāda *Cullavagga*, but often with much greater detail. For example, the second chapter of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* mentions the types of materials to be used for cleaning the anus after defecating (e.g., soft materials including clay balls or cloth, not hard materials such as bamboo sticks).⁴⁸⁵ There is also information on what to do when nature calls during the blessing of a *cetiya* (it is okay to leave).⁴⁸⁶ Likewise, if a monk cannot make it to the lavatory room in time, it is acceptable to defecate in a chamberpot in a corner of the monastery, and then clean the surrounding floor with a mixture of cowdung and scented oil.⁴⁸⁷ The text frequently alludes to threats to face and the importance of maintaining politeness in such situations. It is considered inappropriate, for example, to point at a defecating monk and say, “Who is that?” or “What’s he doing?”⁴⁸⁸ There is also a repeated connection between proper behaviour and the emotion of disgust throughout the entire text.

The first chapter of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, concerning appropriate protocol between students and their teachers, refers to the animalistic behaviour (like

⁴⁸⁴ See p. 91.

⁴⁸⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 142–145 (18.14–18.18).

⁴⁸⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 150 (18.32).

⁴⁸⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 150 (18.30). Here we see the sharp distinction between human excrement as defiling versus cow excrement as purifying.

⁴⁸⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 151 (18.34).

“Indra’s cattle” or “Śiva’s goats”) of some ignorant monks, and implores senior monks to teach their students “good manners” (*ācāragocara*). Much of the material in this section matches what we have already seen in the Theravāda *Mahāvagga*.⁴⁸⁹

They did not know the rules for behaving toward teachers, their preceptor, or a senior monk. They did not know the rules for going to the village, behaving in public, coming before the community of monks, how they should dress, how they should carry the begging bowl.⁴⁹⁰

A significant amount of material in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* does not appear in any other extant texts, and is much more detailed than what we find in the *Theravāda Vinaya*. In addition to prescribing that junior monks be instructed in the *prātimokṣa* and other formal Buddhist regulations, there is a repeated emphasis on teaching “good manners” (*ācāragocara*) and warding off “bad behaviour” (*anācāra*).⁴⁹¹

Again we see a tenuous link between ethics and etiquette. Being respectful to figures of authority is presented as ethically good, but often the emphasis is on the practicality of good behaviour rather than on virtue. There is also always the refrain that presenting outwardly good manners indicates internal transcendence of worldly passions. Consider Śāriputra, the exemplary monk, whose external conduct in one story is explicitly described as an indication of his inner tranquility.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ See pp. 87–89; 114–117.

⁴⁹⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 61 (7.1).

⁴⁹¹ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 64 (7.6). Also see p. 79 (9.6).

⁴⁹² Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 325 (41.4). Translations are from Sanskrit unless otherwise noted.

At one time, monks, Śāriputra was dwelling at the Kuṭagāra Hall in the great wood near Vaiśālī. Now, Śāriputra went to Vaiśālī in order to collect alms, after dressing himself early in the morning, and taking his almsbowl and robes. It was pleasing to look at him as he went here and there, bending and stretching his arm, and the way he carried his upper robe, his almsbowl and his robe. He reined in his sense organs; his mind was not confused by the sensations of the external world. The radiance of his appearance indicated that he was in possession of the good law.

In the next part of the Śāriputra story, a Brahmin who witnesses the actions of Śāriputra suspects that his proper behaviour is only meant as a public performance. The Brahmin decides to follow Śāriputra and catch him behaving badly when Śāriputra thinks no one is watching.⁴⁹³ Calling him a “monklet son of a bitch,”⁴⁹⁴ the Brahmin promises, “if this monklet gives up his (carefully preserved posture), I’ll put him in his place with a punch.”⁴⁹⁵

Of course, Śāriputra does not act badly, and the Brahmin observes him washing his hands and garments carefully and wiping down his sandals with water. The text explains in great detail the meticulous nature of the sandal cleansing:

Then he took the sandals again, placing them with the soles together, held them together and cleaned them with a cloth. Then he soaked the cloth in the water,

⁴⁹³ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 326 (41.5).

⁴⁹⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 326 (41.5). Karashima translates the Sanskrit *śramaṇaka* as *die Mönchlein*, “monklet,” and Sanskrit *itikitikāya-putrāḥ* as German *Hürensohne*, “son of a whore.”

⁴⁹⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 326 (41.5).

wiped the front end and the strap of the sandal, then from the rear end of [the sandal]. In the same way, he wiped the other [sandal]. Then [he took] the first [sandal] again, and wiped the part on which he had set his toes, then wiped the part on which his heel had rested. In the same way, he wiped the other [sandal].⁴⁹⁶

Witnessing all of this, the Brahmin revises his opinion of Buddhist monks, exclaiming, “How careful Śāriputra is with the water bucket! Even a Brahmin’s jug for warm water is not so pure. Indeed, one could even drink this water!” Śāriputra then teaches the *dharma* to the Brahmin.⁴⁹⁷

The Brahmin in the story is impressed by Śāriputra’s display of *ācāragocara*, “good manners,” which is connected with the concept of material purity. In the frame story presented in the text, Buddhist monks hear this narrative about Śāriputra told by the Buddha, and are impressed; the Buddha reveals that Śāriputra also displayed *ācāragocara* in a previous life. The text then segues into a story about Śāriputra’s previous life, as a boy in Vārāṇasī whose father leaves him to guard the family riches while the father goes away on business. Thieves break into the house, and begin stealing all of the gold:

The leader of the gang of thieves was sitting in the central building of the house. Then the leader of the gang of thieves became thirsty [and] said to the boy, “Hey boy, I’m thirsty—I want to drink water!” Then the boy of impeccable manners grabbed a vessel, polished it, washed his hands thoroughly, thoroughly washed the vessel, filled [it] with water and then went to where the lamps glowed. Then he tested [the water in the vessel] carefully and went to the leader of the gang of thieves: “Drink up, boss!”⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 329 (41.8).

⁴⁹⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 330 (41.10).

It is no trickery; the boy simply behaves well and respects his elders, no matter the situation. Yet the gang leader is suspicious of the boy's actions:

The leader of the gang of thieves was now watching everything, as the boy gave him the water. Then he asked: "Hey, my boy! Why did you go there under the lamp?" The boy replied, "In order to test the water, boss! I was afraid that a blade of grass or an insect could be in this water and thereby (the water) would be disgusting⁴⁹⁹ to the leader." The leader was satisfied by his behaviour and manners.⁵⁰⁰

Once again, we see the element of disgust connected with good manners. Here, it is not the karmic result of improper etiquette, but rather that the good manners are indicated by the boy's care in avoiding causing disgust to his "guest." Even so, the leader's response to this propriety reveals a preoccupation with karmic effects:

⁴⁹⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 334 (41.15).

⁴⁹⁹ I am using the English word "disgusting" here for the Sanskrit *aphāsu*, which literally means something more like "discomfort." Karashima translates this word into German as *widerwärtig*, which conveys the sense of "repulsive" or "unpalatable."

⁵⁰⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 334 (41.16).

The leader thought, “Not for you, not for you.”⁵⁰¹ He wants our salvation, even though we are murderers, enemies and opponents! How much less could he have an unkind thought for his parents or relatives! If we rob the gold and gold coins of this virtuous boy, we will either be robbed by enemy thieves, captured or killed in the royal court.”⁵⁰²

The thieves then give back all of the gold bullion that they stole earlier in the story, and leave. Finally, a group of deities who observed the entire episode speak a closing verse, to summarize the importance of good manners:

“Through purity and good behaviour one gets a big win, like a mirror image appears when the water is clear. To learn good behaviour is most beneficial. When [the robbers] came, they wore an evil intention on their hearts. However, they were happy, since they saw [the boy’s impeccable behaviour]. [If he] would not have learned impeccable manners,⁵⁰³ he would surely have been killed by the robbers.”⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ This phrase in the Sanskrit is “*mā tava mā tava*.” Karashima translates it into German as “Nicht doch! Was soll das!” (“Stop it! What’s the meaning of this!?”). I am taking the *tava* as a second person singular genitive pronoun (“of you” or “from you”) and the *mā* as a negating particle (“let it not be”). I am not convinced that my rendering is correct or particularly meaningful, but I do not see how Karashima’s translation follows from the Sanskrit, as the phrase is clearly repeated. See Monier-Williams 1899, s.v. *mā*, 804. See also in Monier-Williams, s.v. *tāvat* (long ā), where *mā tāvat* is translated as “God forbid.”

⁵⁰² Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 334 (41.17).

⁵⁰³ “impeccable manners” = *ācāraguṇaḥ*.

We see from these two stories the multiple practical functions of good manners. In the Śāriputra story, good manners are outward evidence of inward purity, and therefore useful for convincing skeptical Brahmins of the efficacy of the Buddhist path. The connected story, which tells us about Śāriputra's previous birth as a well-mannered boy, emphasizes the value of good manners as a social device for avoiding negative worldly consequences.

The karmic connection we see in these stories between proper behaviour and positive consequences, either within the same life or carried into the next life, is not unlike the karmic stories found in the *āgamas* and *jātaka* tales. In one sense, all of these stories are examples of Buddhist morality. However, the focus in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* is specifically on external conduct and appearance, and the karmic reward is pragmatic and worldly. The story of the boy and the robbers emphasizes that the well-mannered boy was able to avoid being killed, whereas in many Buddhist morality tales there is little to no regard for personal safety. Even in the story of Śāriputra, while his good manners are indicative of a tranquil inner state, the observation of this behaviour leads to the practical benefit of an opportunity to teach the *dharma*. Although etiquette and ethics certainly overlap in these stories here, proper conduct is depicted in both as a means to boost the public perception of Buddhists.

4.7: Lavatorial Contentions

In addition to the ongoing theme concerning etiquette in general, the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* has many things to say about the proper way to construct and use a monastic lavatory. The second chapter of the text includes a number of rules concerning defecation,

⁵⁰⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 336 (41.19).

urination, and spitting. Prior to the creation of these formal rules, according to the text, Buddhist monks urinated and defecated anywhere that was convenient for them. In keeping with the typical formula of *vinaya* rules, the laity are described in the text as becoming upset with what they perceive as unseemly monastic behaviour, and complain:

“Look at these ascetics! Like camels, cattle, donkeys, or goats, these ascetics relieve themselves everywhere. Their ascetic discipline has disappeared, it’s gone. Where is their ascetic discipline?”⁵⁰⁵

The comparison with animals is a common refrain in *vinaya* texts, used as a way of representing uncivilized behaviour. Here we might recall Kolnai’s five types of moral disgust, the last of which is called “moral softness” or “weakness of character.”⁵⁰⁶ It is telling that the complaint by the laity here references the ascetic discipline of the monks.⁵⁰⁷ The issue at hand appears to be not simply behaving like an animal, but behaving like an animal when one is officially a *śramaṇa*. This complaint serves to introduce a lengthy series of rules for constructing and using lavatories, as well as rules on how to behave if there is no monastic lavatory available:

If there is no lavatory, one must relieve himself under the cell or at the foot of a wall. While doing this, one must not chew tooth-cleaning wood, nor cover the right shoulder. Rather, one should bare the right shoulder.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 134 (18.2).

⁵⁰⁶ Kolnai [1929] 2004, 71.

⁵⁰⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 134 (18.2): “Where is their ascetic discipline?” = “*kuto eṣāṃ śramaṇyam?*”

⁵⁰⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 112 (18.14).

We can infer from such advice that the authors of the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* were concerned with maintaining an atmosphere of civility in the monastery, an idea that may have been somewhat novel to incoming monks and nuns. The fact that the structures and utensils used in cleaning the body are carefully delineated in this text suggests that use of the lavatory and bathing areas was not considered common knowledge. We cannot know the extent to which individual structures were dedicated specifically to body cleansing rituals throughout India at the time of this text's creation, but we can surmise that the idea of a separate room for lavatory procedures was considered unfamiliar enough to warrant explanation.

The *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda canon includes a condensed version of the above story, which nevertheless shows a progression from no lavatory at all (“monks relieved themselves here, there and everywhere in a monastery”)⁵⁰⁹ through the various allowances of specialized accessories and delineated spaces for comfortable urination and defecation. Each stage notes a problem, and then introduces a new item to solve that problem. For example, the monastery is first said to be “soiled” (*dussati*) because there is no fixed location for urinating, so the Buddha allows monks to “urinate at one side” (*ekam antaṃ passāvaṃ kātuntī*). When this leads to the monastery becoming “nasty smelling” (*duggandha*), the Buddha allows the use of a urine pot (*passāvakumhi*). It is painful to sit on the pot, and so “urinal shoes” (*passāvapādukā*) are permitted. When monks are ashamed to urinate in public, the Buddha allows the use of walls (*pākāra*) for privacy. Finally, he allows the urine pot to be covered with a lid (*apidhānaṃ*) when it too begins to smell.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 196.

⁵¹⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 196.

The rules for defecation spaces (lavatories) follow immediately after these rules for urination spaces (urinals) in the *Cullavagga*, and are arranged in much the same way. Again, as with the rules for urination, we are told that monks at first defecated “here, there and everywhere.”⁵¹¹ This observation prompts the construction of a “cesspool” (*vaccakūpa*), and then piles (*caya*) of bricks, stones and wood to create a raised toilet, a staircase (*sopāṇa*) to reach the top of the piles, a “balustrade” for support (*ālambana*), a seat with a hole,⁵¹² and “privy shoes” (*vaccapādukā*).⁵¹³ Other additions to the lavatory structure include a “urination trough” (*passāvaḍḍhika*), “wood for scraping” (*avalekhanakatṭha*),⁵¹⁴ and a container for the wood scraper (*avalekhanapiṭhara*). Finally, a lid for the cesspool is allowed for keeping out the smell, plus a door, a curtain, a bamboo peg for hanging robes, a chair for support, and a fence to enclose the entire lavatory.⁵¹⁵

The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* includes even more details concerning the lavatory structure. The building itself should be located in the south or west part of the monastic compound.⁵¹⁶ It may be constructed as a pit on the edge of a steep slope, which may

⁵¹¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 196.

⁵¹² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 197. The Pāli here is ambiguous about what the monks are meant to sit on, and simply reads, “*Anujānāmi bhikkhave santharitvā majjhe chiddaṃ katvā vaccaṃ kātunti.*” Horner translates this line as, “ ‘I allow you, monks, to evacuate having spread (something) with a hole in the middle.’ ”

⁵¹³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 197.

⁵¹⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 197. This wood seems to have been used either for cleaning the anus or for scraping the cesspool itself.

⁵¹⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 197.

include running water. If this is the case, a board should be constructed in such a way that excrement falls first onto the board and then into the water. A cesspool, however, must not use any water.⁵¹⁷ The structure may be made round or square, and features “two or three holes” for the seats, each approximately 44–46 cm by 25 cm.⁵¹⁸ There should be a partition between the separate stalls, made from bamboo or reeds, to avoid having to see other monks while defecating.⁵¹⁹

We can see in these and the above rules from the *Cullavagga* some indication of the anxiety that accompanies use of the toilet. Smell is frequently described as a problem to be overcome by various technologies (the urination jar, the lid, the positioning of the lavatory structure in a special area of the monastic compound). The use of special shoes for the urinals and lavatories is explained in terms of comfort, but their function seems to be related more to the avoidance of contact with a floor perceived to be dirty. Nudity, and

⁵¹⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 134 (18.3). The location of the lavatory seems to be simply a practical way of maintaining good air circulation to reduce odors, and the proper location for this building is different in other *vinaya* texts. See Yifa 2002, 300, note 1.

⁵¹⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 137 (18.7).

⁵¹⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 135 (18.4). The measurements given in the Sanskrit text read “*tac ca mukhāni karrtavyāni hastām vā āyāmena nimuṣṭakam vā hastam vistarena*” (“the opening ought to be made a *hasta* (hand) wide and *nimuṣṭakam* (*nimuṣṭikam*) *hasta* (partial hand) long.” The Chinese version uses the terms 廣一不舒手，長一肘半， explaining that the “hole width is one elbow less than one opening of a palm, length is one and a half elbows.” The numbers in centimeters above are Karashima’s conversions of these classical units.

⁵¹⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 136 (18.5).

the shame of being seen by others while using the toilet, also seem to be a concern.

However, as we shall see in the upcoming section on bathing, being naked around other monks is also considered to be a normal and necessary part of ordinary hygiene rituals.

The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* emphasizes the importance of refilling the toilet water jar (*varccakumbhikā*) when it is empty.⁵²⁰ This jar is simply a container of water used for cleaning the anus after defecating, what Gregory Schopen has called “the equivalent of toilet paper.”⁵²¹ Monks are instructed to take turns refilling the water jar, beginning with the youngest by ordination age. It is important to keep the jar clean and free of insects, and dry it on occasion in the sun.⁵²² Monks are also instructed not to announce if the jar becomes full of insects, but rather to indicate this fact silently by placing grass on top of the jar.⁵²³ The water should be used in moderation, not poured out excessively.⁵²⁴ A monk who uses the last of the water should refill the jar himself.⁵²⁵

Numerous rules for proper behaviour in the lavatory appear to be formulated as a way of preventing disgusting or embarrassing situations. Snot, excrement, and other

⁵²⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 141 (18.13). The *Cullavagga* alludes to an episode at Kosambī in which two monks get into a fight about the filling of this jar (Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, p. 183). This story also appears in *Jātaka* 9.428 (Cowell 1895–1907, vol. 3, pp. 289–291), and in the *Kosambakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, where the water jar is called a *varcaskumbhikā*.

⁵²¹ Schopen 1998, 275–276, note 5. See also Schopen 2002, 360.

⁵²² Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 138 (18.8).

⁵²³ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 145 (18.18).

⁵²⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 141 (18.12).

⁵²⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 141 (18.13).

substances should be carefully disposed of in the toilet or cesspool, and not accidentally left out on the seat where others might see them.⁵²⁶ Seatcushions and bedding should not be used after going to the toilet, if the monk has not washed his hands.⁵²⁷ Monks should use the lavatory when they feel the urge, and not wait until the last minute.⁵²⁸ They should snap their fingers as a way of announcing their presence outside the lavatory, to prevent walking in on someone else. Other monks should turn their faces away from a person snapping his fingers in this way.⁵²⁹ To prevent the lavatory from being occupied longer than necessary, a monk should not recite *sūtras* or meditate in the lavatory.⁵³⁰

The overarching theme in these rules is that using the lavatory is a natural requirement for monks, just as it is for any person, but that taking care of these needs should not be disruptive to the other aspects of daily life. Silently indicating that the water jar is filled with insects by placing grass over the top is a ritual in some ways similar to the acknowledgment of a sneeze we saw in chapter 1,⁵³¹ a way of indicating awareness of a social disruption without explicitly stating that disruption. In this way, the disgusting is transformed through ritual back into the mundane. Likewise, the snapping of fingers when needing to use the toilet facilities is a way of drawing another monk's attention without directly calling him out. This type of indirect communication preserves social face by making both the instigator and receiver of a face attack ambiguous. A snap of the

⁵²⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 145 (18.18).

⁵²⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 146 (18.19).

⁵²⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 146 (18.20, 18.21).

⁵²⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 147 (18.22, 18.23).

⁵³⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 148 (18.25).

⁵³¹ See p. 34.

fingers is less unique than a voice, and so the identity of the snapper is concealed. It also draws the attention without explicitly stating its intention, allowing the monk who received the message to preserve his dignity.

This same kind of indirectness and protection against shame appears in rules for monastics outside the monastery grounds. There are many injunctions concerning proper lavatory conduct when walking for alms. If a monk is in a village with no toilet and needs to defecate, he should ask an old person where to go. He should not ask a young lady, “because she will laugh.”⁵³² It is acceptable to enter an empty house to take care of lavatory needs, but not to tarry in the doorway, lest an observer think the monk is a robber.⁵³³ If traveling with a companion, he should be asked to turn his back to the one defecating.⁵³⁴ If traveling in a caravan, the monk should do his business off the main path, to avoid people complaining about excrement in the road.⁵³⁵ He should not defecate against the wind, to prevent the smell from reaching others.⁵³⁶

Again, we see that the way to maintain decorum while taking care of bodily needs is to remove the possibility of being perceived. When knowledge of the act is concealed, threats to face are reduced for both parties.

The rules for urination in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* are listed immediately after the ones for defecation, and in many cases mirror those rules exactly. Both of these actions should be done out of sight if possible, but it is also acceptable to go into a corner

⁵³² Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 153 (18.42).

⁵³³ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 154 (18.43).

⁵³⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 154 (18.44).

⁵³⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 154 (18.45).

⁵³⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 155 (18.46).

of the monastery if there is no other option.⁵³⁷ Similar to the rule for defecation, if a monk is compelled by urgency to urinate directly on the floor of the monastery, the dirt of that section of the floor should be cut out and removed,⁵³⁸ and the surrounding area cleaned with cow dung or oil.⁵³⁹ It is made very clear in the text that human urine and excrement are considered disgusting substances, but cow excrement is always considered to be cleansing and purifying.

The disgusting nature of human excrement and urine is emphasized again in two rules appearing at the end of these guidelines for defecation and urination. The text says that if a monk is ill, and a doctor advises him to ingest “excrement juice”⁵⁴⁰ or “stinking urine”⁵⁴¹ as a medical treatment, he should do so, remembering that these substances are recommended by the Buddha as the best possible remedy for disease.⁵⁴² The inclusion of these medical uses for urine and excrement seems a bit out of place in the text, as the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* does not appear to contain anything else in the way of advice about health.

⁵³⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 168 (19.31).

⁵³⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 168 (19.33).

⁵³⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 168 (19.29).

⁵⁴⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 157 (18.53).

⁵⁴¹ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 171 (19.42).

⁵⁴² These substances are also mentioned several times in the Pāli canon, in connection with the terms *mahāvikatāṇi* (“great filthy” [substances]) and *pūtimuttabhessaja* (“stinking urine medicine”). The idea of disgusting substances as potential curatives seems to be inherited from earlier Vedic conceptions of healing.

The major focus of the rules for defecation and urination in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* is on the prevention of embarrassing situations that may occur when encountering bodily waste. In these sections of the text, and in related sections concerning oral hygiene⁵⁴³ and spitting,⁵⁴⁴ bodily fluids are presented as disgusting and impure. That is perhaps not very surprising, but when we consider the ways that these substances are considered to interfere with the monastic occupation, there are certain unique problems. Some of these problems can be seen in a related but separate section of the text, which focuses not on disgusting substances, but on involuntary bodily actions. The arrangement of these rules in a separate section of the text suggests that they are not perceived as disgusting in the same way as excrement and urine, but that they are unwelcome because they disturb the sanctity of the meditation hall. It is these bodily functions that we will analyze next.

4.8: Other bodily functions

The *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* contains detailed information concerning five specific bodily functions: coughing, sneezing, scratching, yawning, and flatulence.⁵⁴⁵ I do not know of any other Buddhist text that contains this information, and it is especially revealing of how ancient Indian Buddhists felt about the proper social conventions for unwelcome bodily phenomena.

In the section on flatulence, the text suggests that passing gas in the meditation hall is in poor taste, but if unavoidable, the best method is to manually raise up one

⁵⁴³ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 172–183 (rules 20.1–20.20).

⁵⁴⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 1, 201–206 (rules 24.1–24.13).

⁵⁴⁵ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 450–468 (sections 58, 59, 60, 61, 62).

buttock to lessen the sound, and attempt to aim the flatulence away from senior monks.⁵⁴⁶ Failing to do this action is not presented as a moral failing, but merely a disgusting annoyance. It is acceptable for a monk to release flatulence in the meditation hall if there is no other option; however, if possible, it should be released in the direction of a monk who is younger (by ordination age), not toward a monk who is older (by ordination age).⁵⁴⁷ As with the section on defecation, the section on flatulence gives specific rules for what to do while sitting inside a house⁵⁴⁸ and while traveling with a caravan.⁵⁴⁹ In each instance it is appropriate to leave the room or at the very least attempt to aim the gas away from others, so as not to offend them with the smell.

The humour in this section is anything but subtle. The introductory backstory concerns the group of six monks, who eat large amounts of flour, beans and milk before proceeding to the four corners of the meditation room. Releasing an excessive amount of flatus, they exclaim to the meditating monks, “It’s so beautiful, elders! Is it the yearly celebration or the 108 celebration? Indeed, is it not the blowing wind? What a charming and auspicious sound it makes!” Then the group of six contain the gas in their hands, and hold it under the noses of the other monks, asking, “Doesn’t that smell nice?”⁵⁵⁰

This story about flatulence appears to be intentionally disgusting, as a way of indicating the inappropriateness of disgusting actions. The members of the group of six have clearly put a great deal of thought into how to act inappropriately, even modifying

⁵⁴⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 466 (62.6).

⁵⁴⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 466 (62.6).

⁵⁴⁸ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 467 (62.10).

⁵⁴⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 468 (62.12).

⁵⁵⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 464 (62.2).

their diet to be as offensive as possible to the other monks. Once again we see that intention figures largely into the transgression. The rules themselves make it clear that flatulence is a normal occurrence, sometimes unavoidable, and that there are various ways of dealing with it appropriately.

Coughing, sneezing, scratching and yawning are dealt with in much the same way as flatulence in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*. These actions are all considered quite natural, but at the same time, a potential annoyance that can interfere with concentration in the meditation hall. It is important to avoid making too much noise while others are meditating, and especially to avoid intentionally causing irritation. In general, the body and its basic needs are acknowledged as unavoidable, and there is no sense of ethical transgression in any of these rules. The common theme throughout is that concealing what is disgusting to others is a way to maintain social harmony. Social harmony is especially important in situations where group activities are unavoidable. While the lavatory is a very private space, bathing areas and saunas were used by multiple monastics at one time. The lack of privacy in these spaces lends to them a special susceptibility to threats of face.

4.9: Bathing With Dignity

The sauna (*jentāka*) is primarily utilized by monastics for bathing, especially in connection with sweating out diseases.⁵⁵¹ Buddhist *vinaya* texts describe the sauna as a round or square building with a door, one or two windows, a brick floor, and a flue to let out smoke.⁵⁵² It is heated by means of a wood-burning stove attached to one wall.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵¹ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 345 (42.1).

⁵⁵² Karashima 2012, vol 2, 350 (42.7).

As with the lavatory, the sauna is featured in various Buddhist narratives as a location in which insulting and disrespectful behaviour is likely to be a problem. In a story found in both the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*⁵⁵⁴ and the Theravāda *Cullavagga*,⁵⁵⁵ for example, the group of six monks play a prank on some senior monks, intentionally making the sauna extremely hot and then trapping the senior monks inside.

This episode, which is very similar to the introductory narrative in the rules on defecation, leads to a series of injunctions for correct behaviour in a sauna. Many of these injunctions involve respecting the personal space and material possessions of other monks, by entering the sauna slowly and carefully,⁵⁵⁶ waiting one's turn, and taking care not to drop robes and other items on the floor. If a teacher is in the sauna when a junior monk wants to bathe, it is inappropriate for the junior monk to call out, "I want to bathe, teacher!" Instead, he should prepare for his own bath, enter the bathroom, and assist the teacher in drying his body as an indication that he wants to bathe.⁵⁵⁷

There are many rules for bathing that focus on proper relations between a junior monk and his preceptor. The junior monk should fetch water for the preceptor's bath, and prepare the bathing clay for his preceptor.⁵⁵⁸ The senior monk should also help the junior

⁵⁵³ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 352–353 (42.8–42.9).

⁵⁵⁴ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 346–349 (42.2–42.5).

⁵⁵⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 308–309.

⁵⁵⁶ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 357 (42.15).

⁵⁵⁷ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 358 (42.16).

⁵⁵⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 313.

monk bathe, and must not laugh during the bath.⁵⁵⁹ Everyone should be quiet in the *jentāka*, either refraining from talking at all or speaking softly about Buddhist doctrine.⁵⁶⁰

One should not encroach on others' personal space in the sauna. It is important to give space equally to senior as well as junior monks.⁵⁶¹ Senior monks, however, have priority, and junior monks should not bathe before they do.⁵⁶²

Nudity is considered to be both natural in the sauna but potentially problematic. There is no rule against being naked around others while bathing, but a naked monk must not greet another monk or cause another to greet, and should not eat or drink, or perform any kind of service for another monk.⁵⁶³ While not stated explicitly, these rules appear to be concerned in some ways with the possibility of homosexual relations between monastics. They also seem concerned more generally, as with the rules about lavatories, with the preservation of face and avoidance of shame.

While the hierarchy between senior and junior monks is explicitly maintained even in the bathing area, this space is also one in which authority is in danger of disruption. Thus we see that solemnity is especially important here. However, too much authority can also be a disruption to the goals of the monastic community. In the next section, we will investigate the relationship between the doctrinal goals of the monastery and the practical administration of monastics.

⁵⁵⁹ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 366 (42.29).

⁵⁶⁰ Karashima 2012, vol. 2, 367 (42.30).

⁵⁶¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 309.

⁵⁶² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 309.

⁵⁶³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 167.

4.10: Conclusion

I began this chapter with the claim that lavatories and saunas have a particular function in Indian Buddhist narratives, as locations that are particularly susceptible to behavioural transgressions. We can infer a few points from the *vinaya* rules concerning treatment of the body and its relationship to the notion of etiquette. It is not surprising to find that human bodily waste is considered to be potentially defiling, and that the Buddhist monastic code places an emphasis on performing actions related to waste only in designated areas of the monastery. We have also seen that certain Buddhist cleansing rituals are uniquely Indian, including the idea that cow dung is a purifying agent.

My point in discussing these particular rules, focusing mainly on lavatory rituals, is to observe a link between the disgust associated with the body and a more general kind of disgust associated with impolite behaviour in general. I shall explore this relationship further in the next chapter, where I focus on the treatment of nuns in monastic legal texts. We will see in those rules that women's bodies are considered even more contaminating than bodies in general, especially because of menstruation and pregnancy, and that the texts use this idea to justify the subordination of women, for their own good and for the well being of the monastic institution as a whole. In this way, a shared notion of disgust serves to give legitimacy to normative standards of conduct.

Chapter 5: The Disgusting Threat of Femininity

5.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focused on the concept of disgust in relation to Indian Buddhist monastic lavatory etiquette. In this chapter, I extend my analysis of disgust to explain some rules specifically for female Buddhist monastics in the *pātimokkha* and *prātimokṣas* of *vinaya* texts. These rules contain a number of assumptions concerning appropriate behaviour for women, and serve to inform our understanding of what it was like to be a female Buddhist monastic in early India. To a lesser extent, the rules also give some clues about how north Indian society during the time of the composition of these texts treated women in general.

Females are often characterized in *vinaya* texts as less rational than men, and incapable of constraining their desires. Additionally, women's bodies are portrayed as disgusting, impure, and a threat to the nonsexual ideal of the male Buddhist monastic. As I will demonstrate, the idea that females are non-rational and the idea that females are disgusting are connected in the Buddhist concept of desire as the primary cause of suffering. In brief, the fact that females give birth and males do not is central to the ideals for the behaviour of female monastics as expressed in *vinaya* texts. The Buddhist eschatological framework is partially rooted in an action oriented away from worldmaking: *nirvāṇa* is opposed in some way to the idea of existing as material form. Therefore, females by their very nature are in opposition to the Buddhist goal of escape from existence.

To better understand the specific treatment of *bhikṣuṇīs* (“nuns”)⁵⁶⁴ in Buddhist texts, we must determine how this category takes shape and what it represents. As I have shown in earlier chapters,⁵⁶⁵ the cultural traditions of Vedic Brahmanism were extremely influential on the Indian Buddhist worldview. The Buddhist cultural framework inherits from the Hindu *dharmaśāstra* tradition many of the category distinctions that serve to define gender roles. At the most basic level, the two discrete categories of “male” and “female” are rooted in the biological sex differences reducible to “baby producer” or “not a baby producer.” One reason this ability or lack of ability to produce children becomes important in a Buddhist monastic context is that Buddhist doctrine idealizes non-participation in the world. A certain tension appears, therefore, when the practical implications of childcare interfere with the ideal. This tension further influences the concept of femininity as a social danger.

Female monastics in the Buddhist literary tradition are portrayed as especially vulnerable both to external threats to their feminine purity (e.g., rape), and internal threats to their ethical submission (e.g., the choice of fulfilling sexual desires vs. sexual continence). It is the perceived weakness of women that paradoxically threatens the male celibate social institution, because the carelessness of females can lead to a drain on monastery resources and a poor reputation for the monastic organization. As portrayed in these texts, women tempt men recklessly and cause men to transgress their vows. The *vinaya* texts therefore present as necessary, for women’s own benefit, the exercise of a

⁵⁶⁴ On the use of the words “monk”/ “nun” for *bhikṣu* / *bhikṣuṇī*, see Schopen 1995, 170.

⁵⁶⁵ See chapter 1, pp. 43, 55; chapter 2, p. 121; chapter 4, p. 151.

greater degree of regulation of behaviour over female monastics compared with male monastics.

The presentation of femininity as a problem to be avoided or controlled can be observed within the larger corpus of Sanskrit literature. Brahmanical and Buddhist texts feature countless examples of women's bodies being compared to sewers and hells, with frequent emphasis on the noxious stench of their internal organs and bodily fluids, and on the pain this induces in a developing fetus.⁵⁶⁶ While male bodies in Brahmanical and Buddhist texts are also portrayed as disgusting and a hindrance to spiritual progress, the unique reproductive processes of female bodies (e.g., menstruation and pregnancy) lend themselves to a special kind of impurity. One logical result of the Indic cultural theme of *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and rebirth, is that we are all doomed to be born countless times in a womb. This womb may belong to a human or other type of creature, but is always necessarily contained in a female body. Women's bodies thereby represent in Sanskrit texts the antithesis of total liberation from worldly experience achieved in *mokṣa* and *nirvāṇa*.

Metaphysical explanations in this way become convenient excuses for the social subordination of women. However, it seems likely that many customs of subordination possess a history that predates their doctrinal justifications. In other words, the idea of women as ritually impure in Buddhist and Brahmanical texts is probably a consequence of an older tradition of Indic cultural segregation against women, and not the other way around.⁵⁶⁷ The historical origins of the subordination of females in any text are always

⁵⁶⁶ Dhand 2008, 155; Brown 1990, 51; Wood and Subrahmanyam 1911, 46. See also Kritzer 2004, 1086–1090; Garrett 2008, 9; 32, 76–77; Langenberg 2013, 212.

⁵⁶⁷ However, see Altekar [1938] 1973, who argues that Vedic women up to the 3rd

obscured by the limits of our knowledge concerning ancient cultural history, but the root idea of females as dependent on males for protection and support appears ultimately to trace back to a primordial set of biological categories concerned with sexual reproduction.

This hypothetical category of avoidance rituals based around emotional responses to our environment could be part of a root set of all relationships in human culture. Many of our social relationships, while complex, appear to have developed from the cumulative aggregation of smaller reflexive responses to external stimuli (e.g., scratching an itch) which were later stylized with rhetoric and ritual form, as with the sneezing ritual I mentioned in chapter 1.⁵⁶⁸ Human etiquette rituals are in some ways the result of complex amalgamations of the simple avoidance mechanisms also found in bacteria, fruit flies, and other organisms.⁵⁶⁹ These most basic cultural forms are further refined within a unique social environment over time, from which we see particular rituals within a specific culture, but still identifiable as human.⁵⁷⁰ The common thread among all human societies is the underlying corporeality of the human condition. While Buddhist etiquette has its

century BCE and later retained a great deal of autonomy (pp. 9–10, 15, 21), especially in wealthy families. Schopen 2008b and Schopen 2014b also point out that despite the formal inferiority of female monastics in the *gurudharma* rules, female monastics and Indian women in general seem to have had a certain amount of economic authority on par with males.

⁵⁶⁸ See pp. 34–35.

⁵⁶⁹ LeDoux 2012.

⁵⁷⁰ For example, all humans defecate, but lavatory technologies and their associated rituals of hygiene are framed by unique cultural contexts.

own unique attributes, the aesthetics of disgust avoidance have proven to be evolutionarily pragmatic for all humans, regardless of culture.⁵⁷¹

Literary details about the interpretation of these categories lead to sets of normative behavioural ideals, and injunctions follow as a means of maintaining and adjusting those ideals. While it is impossible to know the origin of any specific instance of gender discrimination in the Indian Buddhist tradition, we can be sure that a definite hierarchy exists in Indian Buddhist *vinaya* texts, with women clearly defined as subordinate to men. Female behaviour is also much more regulated than male behaviour in these texts; all of the extant *prātimokṣas* contain approximately 250 rules for male monastics and 350 for female monastics.⁵⁷² Indian Buddhist traditions therefore constrain female monastic behaviour in the *prātimokṣas* more specifically than male monastic behaviour, and these injunctions are explained in detail by their imagined backstories in the *sūtravibhaṅgas*.⁵⁷³

As with narratives about male monastics, the explanations of rules for female monastics often conceal more than they reveal. Various cultural assumptions on the part of the authors of these texts require us to reconstruct their ancient context in order to make sense of the injunctions themselves. In many cases, stories about female monastics read like abridged versions of the rules for their male counterparts, and it is no easy task to find differences between the two sets of rules when the data are so lacking. Still, there are enough examples of the special requirements for female monastics that we can get a reasonable idea of how the early Buddhist institution treated issues of gender.

⁵⁷¹ Curtis 2011.

⁵⁷² Pachow 1955, 11. Kabilsingh 1984, 47.

⁵⁷³ On the question of historicity, see Wynne 2006.

My focus in this chapter is on those rules related specifically to the concept of female monastic etiquette in Buddhist *vinaya* texts. I present six different aspects of this special etiquette, and demonstrate how the extra rules for female monastics help to create a buffer against perceived threats of female sexuality and impurity of the female body. In section 1, I discuss authority and subordination. This section focuses specifically on the *gurudharma* rules for female monastics. In section 2, I discuss insulting speech, continuing my analysis of the theme of females' lack of emotional composure. In section 3, I discuss menstruation, pregnancy, and other uniquely female biological processes, which tend to be coded as disgusting in Buddhist literature. In section 4, I discuss sexuality and desire, arguing that females are presented in Buddhist literature as less capable than males at controlling their sexual urges. In section 5, I discuss female agency and the property issues of the early Buddhist institution. This last section differs from the others in its focus on the ways that rules for males and females are very much the same.

We cannot know the true motivations behind any of the monastic rules, since it is not possible to know exactly what was going through the minds of their authors. While the same can be said for any texts from the ancient world, the Buddhist monastic injunctions concerning female behaviour constitute a special case, because the differences between these and the injunctions concerning male behaviour suggest a preoccupation with gender roles and the formal observance of male authority over females.

It is probably safe to assume that most or all of the authors of these *vinaya* rules were male Buddhist monastics.⁵⁷⁴ Some feminist scholars have taken the position that male monastics consciously attempted to keep their female counterparts in a state of submission to males.⁵⁷⁵ Certainly it is true that many of the *vinaya* rules require female

⁵⁷⁴ Jyväsjärvi 2011, 134.

deference to male authority. However, we must consider the likelihood that the authors of *vinaya* rules simply lacked the capability to imagine other options. The delusion of ideology always prevents anyone from seeing reality directly, and it is therefore necessary to reflect on the ways that the ancient Indian worldview prevented these authors from considering alternative modes of living. Our own postmodern understandings of women's rights and agency likewise distort our impressions of the ancient world and its texts.

My chief goal in this chapter is to examine the cultural motivations behind what was considered appropriate behaviour for female Buddhist monastics. As with the previous chapter, I argue here that etiquette rituals are a kind of aesthetic performance, whose function is to counteract the emotion of disgust. The creation of these rituals is likely to have been a largely unconscious enterprise, in which case we would give too much credit to their monastic authors if we view the oppression of female monastics as an entirely calculated decision. So, while many of these rules do subtract from women's agency, it is debatable what purpose that was meant to serve at an institutional level.

We will also see in these special rules for female monastics that the connection between Buddhist law and ethical doctrine is often tenuous at best. The rules about proper female behaviour do imply that social harmony is ethically good, but the punishments for breaking the rules are extremely minimal.

5.2: Ordination and Subordination

Women initially were disallowed from joining the *saṅgha*. The *Theravāda Vinaya* claims that the Buddha reluctantly permitted female monastics only after the monk Ānanda interceded on behalf of the Buddha's stepmother, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.⁵⁷⁶ The Buddha

⁵⁷⁵ See, for example, Peach 2002; Wilson 1996.

then ordains her as the first Buddhist *bhikṣuṇī*. The granting of permission for Gotamī to become ordained, however, requires the acceptance of complete submission to male authority. This submission to male authority is readily apparent in the eight *gurudharmas* (Pāli *garudhammas*) to which Gotamī (and after her, all female monastics) must agree as part of the ordination ceremony. The *gurudharmas* are special rules meant only for female monastics, and have no equivalent within the ordination procedure for males.⁵⁷⁷ The order and formulation of these rules vary within the *vinayas* of different Indian Buddhist lineages,⁵⁷⁸ but each presentation concerns the same basic theme of respectful behaviour by female monastics toward their male counterparts. The first *garudhamma* in the *Theravāda Vinaya*, for example, reads as follows:

A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day. And this rule is to be honoured, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed during her life.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 352–363; vol. 2, 265–272. Horner 1930, 118–161. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is the Pāli form of the Sanskrit name Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī.

⁵⁷⁷ There are no *garudhamma* principles for men. However, the *saṅghādisesa* offences are sometimes referred to as *garudhamma* offences. Because both monks and nuns have *saṅghādisesa* offences, both groups therefore have *garudhamma* offences (but not *garudhamma* “principles”). See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 66, note 1; Payutto and Seeger 2014, vol. 1, 25; vol. 2, 4; Hüsken 1997, 205; 211.

⁵⁷⁸ Tsedroen and Anālayo 2013, 744.

⁵⁷⁹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 354; Hirakawa 1982, 49–50

In other words, the status of female monastics is always lower than that of male monastics, regardless of the biological age or ordination age of individual monastics. The other seven *garudhammas* of the Theravāda lineage also emphasize this gender disparity:

- 2) “A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk.”⁵⁸⁰
- 3) “Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of the Observance day, and the coming for the exhortation.”⁵⁸¹
- 4) “After the rains a nun must ‘invite’ before both Orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.”⁵⁸²
- 5) “A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo *mānatta* (discipline) for half a month before both Orders.”⁵⁸³

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 1); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 1).

⁵⁸⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 354. Hirakawa 1982, 93–95

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 7); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 7).

⁵⁸¹ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 354; Hirakawa 1982, 86–93.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 6); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 6).

⁵⁸² Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 354. Hirakawa 1982, 95–97.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 8); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 65 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 8).

⁵⁸³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 355. Hirakawa 1982, 85–86.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 5); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 5).

6) “When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both Orders.”⁵⁸⁴

7) “A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.”⁵⁸⁵

8) “From to-day admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden.”⁵⁸⁶

The Mahāsāṃghika version of these last two rules clarifies that a monk may scold a nun, but must not do so loudly or in an overly insulting way:

If a bhikṣuṇī accuses a bhikṣu of faults, and says that he is a quack bhikṣu, a bhikṣu who has broken the precepts, or a mahalla bhikṣu, her act transgresses the gurudharma. A bhikṣu can admonish a bhikṣuṇī for real faults, but cannot scold her loudly by saying that she is an old and shaven-headed woman, a licentious old woman, or a mahallikā old woman. If she is a close relative of his, and does something against the Dharma, he can say to her: ‘Do not do such a thing.’⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 355. Hirakawa 1982, 50–81.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 2); Heirman 2002 vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 4).

⁵⁸⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 355; Hirakawa 1982, 82–83.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 3); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 2): “A *bhikṣuṇī* may not revile a *bhikṣu* saying that he has disregarded the morality (*śīla*), the right views (*dṛṣṭi*), or the right behaviour (*ācāra*).”

⁵⁸⁶ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 355; Hirakawa 1982, 82–83.

(Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharma* 3); Heirman 2002, vol. 1, 64 (Dharmaguptaka *gurudharma* 3): “A *bhikṣuṇī* may not punish a *bhikṣu*, nor prevent him from joining the ceremonies of the order (such as the *poṣadha* or the *pravāraṇā*). A *bhikṣuṇī* may not admonish a *bhikṣu*, whereas a *bhikṣu* may admonish a *bhikṣuṇī*).”

The rule in this way reinforces two themes that recur regularly throughout Buddhist *vinaya* texts. First, it is never acceptable for a monastic, male or female, to insult anyone intentionally. Second, male monastics always have authority over female monastics. We can also observe here that there is a distinction made between gently admonishing, which is considered acceptable for male monastics to do, and the hurling of insults, which is not.

The specific wording of the eight *gurudharma* rules varies within the *vinayas* of different Buddhist lineages.⁵⁸⁸ Ute Hüsken has pointed out, for instance, that the Theravāda *garudhammas* emphasize not only that female monastics must defer to male authority, but also that it is considered an offence for male monastics to express the same level of respect for women.⁵⁸⁹ The relevant episode in the Theravāda *Cullavagga* recounts Mahāpajāpati Gotamī's request to the Buddha to "allow greeting, standing up for, salutation and the proper duties between monks and nuns according to seniority."⁵⁹⁰ The Buddha rejects her request. According to Hüsken, this episode does not appear in the *Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda Vinaya*, but the commentary on the first *gurudharma* of that lineage also states explicitly that "a nun has to show respect even where a monk

⁵⁸⁷ Hirakawa 1982, 83. The Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharmas* treat the content of Theravāda *garudhammas* 7 and 8 as a single rule.

⁵⁸⁸ Kabilsingh 1984, 47. The Mahāsāṃghika lineage also has exactly 8 *gurudharmas*; the Theravāda *garudhammas* 7 and 8 occupy only one rule in the Mahāsāṃghika *gurudharmas*. See Hirakawa 1982, pp. 82–85.

⁵⁸⁹ Hüsken 1997, 205.

⁵⁹⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 357–358.

exhibits bad behavior.”⁵⁹¹ Thus, while the wording of the rules varies among lineages, the end result is largely the same. There are other inconsistencies as well.⁵⁹² Hüsken explains,

The most important difference between BhīVin(Mā-L) and Theravāda Vinaya regarding the *gurudharmas/garudhammas* is the fact that some of these “important rules” of the Theravāda tradition have parallels in the Pācittiyā chapter of the Bhikkunīvibhaṅga. This is a contradiction, since as a consequence of transgressing a *garudhamma* a nun has to spend 14 days under *mānatta* which otherwise is only provided in the case of a Saṃghādisesa, but not in the case of a Pācittiya offence which requires a simple confession. In the BhīVin (Mā-L) a rule is listed **either** as *gurudharma* **or** as Pācattika. This does not look at all like being a matter of chance, but like purposely avoiding an evident contradiction, caused by interpreting “*gurudharma*” in *gurudharma* 5 not as “Saṃghātiśeṣa” which also requires *mānatva*, but literally as one of the eight “*gurudharmas*”.⁵⁹³

This discrepancy between the above two lineages seems to indicate that the *gurudharmas* were a later invention within the Indian Buddhist tradition, the story of their origin being created long after the *saṅgha* had been established for some time.

All of the *gurudharma* rules of all Buddhist lineages are focused entirely around the concept that women’s behaviour requires a special kind of regulation. Mari Jyväsjarvi has analyzed the various ways that *vinaya* rules for female monastics are couched in the language of protecting women from harm,⁵⁹⁴ and argues that for their monastic authors,

⁵⁹¹ Hüsken 1997, 206.

⁵⁹² Hüsken 1997, 207.

⁵⁹³ Hüsken 1997, 211. The emphasis is Hüsken’s.

⁵⁹⁴ Jyväsjarvi 2011, 165.

“the need to ensure the nuns’ physical inviolability and celibacy overrides all others concerns.”⁵⁹⁵ This point becomes even more clear when we examine the *prātimokṣa* rules for female monastics. These rules are technically separate from the *gurudharmas*, but also repeat many of the *gurudharmas*, especially within the *saṅghāvaśesa* category of rules.⁵⁹⁶

I. B. Horner has, in what is perhaps an overly romantic interpretation of the *vinaya*, defended the *garudhamma* rules as unique formalities that are distinct from the *pātimokkha*. She follows the tradition’s own declaration that the *garudhamma* rules (which she refers to as the Eight Chief Rules) of the *Theravāda Vinaya* preceded the *pātimokkha* rules historically, and did not come about as a response to a particular offensive action. Instead, these rules were present from the very beginning of the female monastic order:

Many other rules, incorporated in the Vinaya and, in particular, in that section of it known as the Bhikkhunī-Vibhaṅga, came to be formulated as time went on and as occasion arose. These differ from the Eight Chief Rules in having originated in some particular offence, or in some breach of etiquette which had actually been committed, and complained of, for the Eight Chief Rules are not the outcome of particular offences, but embody a large part of the ceremonial and disciplinary aspects of Gotama’s monastic system. As such they were framed to meet some of the essential factors of a conventional life. The fact was never lost sight of that this was to be allowed to expand only under the *aegis* of a monastic rule, it might work in close connection with it, but was always to remain its subordinate.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Jyväsjarvi 2011, 231.

⁵⁹⁶ Hüskén 2010, 134; Payutto and Seeger 2014, part 1, 25 (also see part 2, 4).

⁵⁹⁷ Horner 1930, 119.

This interpretation is somewhat surprising, given that Horner translated the entire *Theravāda Vinaya*, and was thus familiar with the *garudhamma* context. We cannot ever be sure about the historical origins of these rules, but we can demonstrate very easily a correspondence between some of the *garudhamma* rules and certain *pātimokkha* rules. However, female subordination to males in general is not a uniquely Buddhist concept and not the simple consequence of particular events described in the *suttavibhaṅga*. It is unlikely that any of the *garudhammas* or *pātimokkha* rules came about in the way they are described in the Buddhist *vinayas*, and the *garudhammas* in particular are not particularly Buddhist. They are almost certain to be reformulations of rules for women in general that were common in north Indian society prior to the creation of the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

Horner does say as much, however, and it is worth quoting her again to give a better sense of her own thoughts concerning the relation of these rules to etiquette in general:

The alleged innate superiority of the male is paramount, but the humiliation of the women would have been more bitter, had they not also been imbued with the conventional conception of the relation of the sexes. The rule is the outcome of an age-old and widespread tradition rather than a prudent provision to keep women in their places. It amounted to this, as did the later rules prohibiting almswomen from sitting in the presence of almsmen without asking leave, unless they were ill, because the old tradition, impregnated with the superiority of men, amounted to this. Deference to be shown by women to men cannot therefore be regarded as a special *vis a tergo* in the formulation of this rule, it is but a particularisation of the current views on the relation of the sexes. But it is highly significant, for

salutation in the Orient bears the stamp of a scrupulous etiquette, and is as symbolical as it is expressive of the intricacies of the social structure.⁵⁹⁸

I insert this quotation as a way of introducing once again the complex relationship between etiquette, culture, and ethics. Horner rightly points out that these Buddhist rules concerning gender hierarchy are inherited from their surrounding culture, and connects these with something called “etiquette.” It is there that her analysis stops, and where I would like to begin, as my own concern is discerning what we actually mean by etiquette, if and how this concept is distinguishable from the *vinaya* as a whole, and the underlying reasons for the distinction between proper male and proper female behaviour. It is not enough to trace the *garudhamma* / *gurudharma* rules to a pre-Buddhist idea in India, as this history only tells us where the rules originated and not why. As with the general rules in the *vinaya* for treatment of the body in bathing and lavatory rituals, I aim to show in this chapter that the etiquette rules for female monastics originate in the perception of female bodies as uniquely disgusting.

The *gurudharmas* are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to special etiquette rules for female monastics. There are many more rules within the *prātimokṣas* that focus specifically on impoliteness. A comparative study of the *Dharmaguptaka* rules for male and female monastics by In Young Chung highlights many of these. Chung argues that the rules are not anti-woman, and that “a close and comparative examination of the Buddhist monastic rules for both *bhikṣuṇīs* and *bhikṣus* reveals a compassionate and practical regulation of the daily monastic life of both men and women, based on the realities of life at the time the rules were formulated.”⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Horner 1930, 121.

⁵⁹⁹ Chung 1999, 32.

In the next section, I will analyze some of the *prātimokṣa* rules with the above concerns in mind. We will see that the Buddhist preoccupation with good speech for male monastics, previously discussed in chapter 2, also extends to female behaviour, but that the tone of the rules expects even more of females than males with regard to regulation and refinement. Females are expected to regulate their behaviour more than males, and to submit entirely to the authority of males, because they are assumed to be less capable than males of acting properly in the absence of formal supervision.

5.3: Bad Words and Bad Gestures

We have already observed many examples of the importance of proper speech in Buddhist law.⁶⁰⁰ Male and female monastics are both expected to avoid insulting speech, lies, or any kind of utterance that could potentially cause others to suffer.⁶⁰¹ The rules for female monastics add to these general guidelines some very specific rules about how nuns may (or may not) address monks, as well as rules for harmonious relations between female monastics. The implication is that women are by nature prone to impulsive and emotional outbursts, and need a constant reminder to hold back any offensive comments. Females are expected to adhere to the general rules for all monastics in addition to their own special rules. Among the extant *vinayas* of different Indian Buddhist lineages are certain core rules that always appear as additional rules for female monastics. The rule numbering, however, varies among these lineages.⁶⁰² Each lineage has its own unique

⁶⁰⁰ See chapter 2, p. 73; chapter 3, p. 99.

⁶⁰¹ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 529. Chung 1999, 51.

⁶⁰² Kabilsingh 1984, 75.

rules, which are often extensions of a single male rule to cover particular types of misbehaviour in more detail.

The *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* contains a number of rules of etiquette for female monastics that have no parallels in the rules for male monastics, or which are expanded from the male monastic rules to cover a wider variety of specific contexts. Such rules frequently allude to the excessively emotional nature of women, and the perceived tendency of women to become irrationally angry. *Śuddhapācittika* rules 13 and 145, for example, make it an offence to rebuke or revile another person, or specifically a male monastic.⁶⁰³ *Śuddhapācittika* 2, 3, 12, 13, 145 and 146 sanction insulting a person, “speak[ing] with a double tongue,” “evad[ing] in a deceitful way,” “abus[ing] and offend[ing] someone,” “revil[ing] a *bhikṣu*,” and “vexing or abusing the saṅgha.”⁶⁰⁴ Similarly, *saṃghāvaśeṣa*⁶⁰⁵ rules 2, 3 and 17 prohibit slandering a person out of anger and insulting the *saṅgha* out of anger.⁶⁰⁶ While the *prātimokṣa* for males contains a few similar rules,⁶⁰⁷ those sanctions do not focus at all on gender. The rules in the *prātimokṣa* for female monastics do not always explicitly focus on gender, either, but the interaction

⁶⁰³ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 531; 882–885. These rules correspond to a *gurudharma* rule.

⁶⁰⁴ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 529; 531; 882–885.

⁶⁰⁵ This category of rules is spelled in various ways in different texts. Heirman’s translation of the Dharmaguptaka rules for nuns uses the spelling *saṃghāvaśeṣa*, the same spelling used in Mūlasarvāstivāda sources. Hirakawa’s translation of the Mahāsāṃghika rules for nuns uses the spelling *saṃghātiseṣa*, the corresponding term in that lineage. Pāli sources use the spelling *saṃghādisesa*. See Hirakawa 1982, 135, note 2.

⁶⁰⁶ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 330–331; 380–386; Chung 1999, 58–60.

⁶⁰⁷ Pachow 1955, 9; 122; 127.

of women in the rules' explanatory narratives implies a unique problem of female disposition.

Consider, for example, *saṃghātiśeṣa* rule 4 in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*. This rule sanctions fighting with members of other religious groups. In the backstory for the rule, a Buddhist nun gets into a verbal altercation with a female monastic from another religious group, possibly a Jain. The two women are arguing about whose responsibility it is to repair a wall shared by the two communities:

The bhikṣuṇī became angry and said, “O Short-lived Ones. You donkeys who eat the dregs of liquor! How dare you say you will not do it! You are shameless and disgraceful, have false views and lack faith! Fix it at once and get out of here.”

The nun of the other religion cursed her, saying, “You big pregnant śramaṇī,⁶⁰⁸ you don't even know who your own father is! Even if you killed me, I would not do it for you.”⁶⁰⁹

Both of the female monastics in this story, one a Buddhist and the other from a different religious group, are portrayed engaging in verbally abusive behaviour. In this case, the face attacks of the Buddhist monastic are direct accusations against the moral character of the other woman. The receiver of the abuse is compared to a donkey, a trope we have seen previously as a way of indicating a lack of urbanity. A donkey is considered to be a dirty and low animal, suitable only for performing manual labour. As Patrick Olivelle has observed, literary association with a donkey is often symbolic of an over-sexed person.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Should be *śramaṇī*.

⁶⁰⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 138–139.

⁶¹⁰ Olivelle 1997, xxii.

The non-Buddhist monastic is also accused of consuming not simply liquor, but its dregs, another way of saying that she is of low character. She is then called shameless and disgraceful, accused of holding false views and lacking faith.

The response of the non-Buddhist monastic is equally unpleasant. She accuses the Buddhist monastic of being pregnant, an indication of sexual promiscuity and of breaking the *prātimokṣa* rules, and of herself being an illegitimate child (by not knowing her own father). She then adds the rhetorical embellishment, “even if you killed me,” an over-the-top claim about her unwillingness to comply.

While we have also seen numerous examples of male monastics engaged in verbal disputes, the rules for females tend to stress not only the inappropriateness of foul language, but also the connection between foul language and sexual repulsiveness. In the above example the women are not simply abusive (as with our previous examples featuring the monk Upananda),⁶¹¹ but attack the appearance and morality of the accused in addition to the action at hand. This disjunction is significant, as there is absolutely no indication in the backstory that any of the allegations made in the women’s insults are true, or even that they are intended to be perceived that way. In contrast, stories of improper male behaviour tend to focus on the inappropriate action in that moment, and not on the physical features of a monk or even his general moral character.

Another story portrays the stock troublemaker *bhikṣuṇī* Sthūlanandā wearing dirty clothing that emphasizes her sexually unappealing body while acting in a way that is both unrefined and unfeminine. As a result, a lay patron refuses to provide her with supplies:

But the *bhikṣuṇī* Sthūlanandā did not have good manners, and used to put on ragged, dirty clothes, exposing her big belly, breasts, and sides. Also she behaved

⁶¹¹ See pp. 107, 120.

herself roughly and was too talkative. (Therefore) he did not respect her, and did not give her a bowl, robes, food, and some medicines for illnesses.

Sthūlanandā said, “The bhikṣuṇī Jetā got cordial treatment because I spoke highly of her at the house of a layman. But I didn’t get it because she remarked on my bad [manners].”⁶¹²

While it is impossible to know exactly how a premodern Indian audience would react to such language, it does seem reasonably clear that the central theme of a lack of good manners, wearing dirty clothing, and exposing the skin are placed together for the purpose of emphasizing a general lack of propriety. Sthūlananda does not simply show her belly, but her big belly. Her disheveled appearance is then made even more unappealing by her “rough” behaviour, again indicating a lack of urbanity, and the stereotypically feminine trait of being “too talkative.” She seems to be the very archetype of what could happen to any female whose behaviour is left unregulated, thus underscoring the importance of the rules for female monastics.

As with the rules for male monastics, the way that female monastics are perceived by the laity is crucial for the success of the Buddhist institution. The stories about the need to train female monastics are in many ways very similar to those for males. However, a key difference is that female monastics require two years of training prior to being ordained. Males also train prior to receiving full ordination, but the rules are less strict.⁶¹³ A story in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* explains the need for this special training requirement for females:

⁶¹² Hirakawa 1982, 281–283.

⁶¹³ Hirakawa 1982, 313–314; 321–322.

The Buddha was staying at Śrāvastī. At that time, there was a bhikṣuṇī who took on many disciples without giving them any training. As she didn't admonish them (about their misconduct), they behaved as if they were heavenly sheep or heavenly cows. None of them was pure in the precepts, had good manners, knew how to greet their Preceptor, Ācārya, or Elder bhikṣuṇīs, nor how to enter a village, live in an āraṇya (forest), carry a bowl, or put on a robe. The other bhikṣuṇīs reported this to Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, who thereupon went to inform the Blessed One of this matter.⁶¹⁴

The rule in this case, *pācattika* 104,⁶¹⁵ requires that disciples of a female monastic must be given two years of training prior to ordination.⁶¹⁶ This story is almost identical to the “Śiva's goats” explanation for the requirement for male monastic training that we saw previously in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*.⁶¹⁷ One curious difference between the above story for females and its parallel for males is that the female version is utilized as justification of the requirement of training for two years prior to ordination, where no such requirement exists for males. Male monastics are only required to train for one year or until they reach the age of 20. In some cases, males do not require this training period at all. The first male monastics, ordained by the Buddha himself, simply began following him as disciples without any intermediary period.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁴ Hirakawa 1982, 313; 345–347; 361–363.

⁶¹⁵ The term *pācattika* is the Mahāsāṃghika equivalent of *pācittika* in the Dharmaguptaka tradition, and *pāyantika* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition.

⁶¹⁶ Hirakawa 1982, 313.

⁶¹⁷ See chapter 4, pp. 172, 179.

⁶¹⁸ See details on ordination procedure in Schopen 2004b.

What we see repeatedly in the backstories for the rules for female monastics is that very similar narratives are used as justification for rules that are in fact different from the rules for males. This difference is not down to a simple lack of creativity on the part of the texts' authors, but represents an intentional shift toward more restrictive behaviour for female monastics based on the same frame stories used for males. This fact is an indication that the subjugation of females was not considered unusual in the place and time of these texts' composition.

In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, there are a number of *pāyantika* rules concerning bad speech or actions for females that do not appear in the rules of other Buddhist lineages.⁶¹⁹ The following transgressions for female monastics have no parallels in the rules for males: “Speaking to the ear of a man,” “Allowing a man to speak at her ear,” “Speaking to the ear of a monk,” “Criticising others at the local god’s shrine,” “Advising a woman to do away with her property, promising her an ordination but [not keeping] her word,” “Being jealous of others who received praise,” “Being jealous of a temple,” “Being jealous in food and benefits belonging to a temple,” “Being jealous in *dhamma*,” “Raising other children.”⁶²⁰ Some of the above rules speak to the idea that women are vehicles of increased desire, although not in all cases, and not always in explicit terms. Shayne Clarke has observed that the rule against raising another woman’s children, for example, appears to be a protection against nuns being treated as maids.⁶²¹ Even so, a significant number of rules respond to perceived emotional transgressions.

⁶¹⁹ Kabilsingh 1984, 95–96.

⁶²⁰ Kabilsingh 1984, 86; 87; 88; 105; 123; 132; 134; 135; 136; 137. The rule about raising another’s children is discussed in Clarke 2014, 144–146.

⁶²¹ Clarke 2014, 145.

Female monastics are consistently presented as unable to control their emotions. A *pācattika* rule in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, for example, makes it an offence for women to hit themselves while crying. The justification for this rule is that the *bhikṣuṇī* Sthūlanandā, “after having fought with the other *bhikṣuṇīs*, struck and pinched herself in anger.”⁶²² While there are some exceptions to the trend, in general we see that women are portrayed as being like men who lack certain positive qualities, and who have additional negative qualities. In other words, the standard Buddhist monastic is a male monastic, and a female monastic is some distortion of that standard. *Bhikṣuṇīs* follow all of the rules for *bhikṣus* except a limited few that cannot conceivably apply,⁶²³ and also must agree to obey a number of extra rules specifically suited to females. These extra rules simultaneously define and restrict the female category by regulating behaviour around the potential for sexual misconduct.

Even worse than being a female in the monastic institution is not fitting entirely within a single category of female or male. Hermaphrodites are more threatening to the monastic institution than are women, as they call into question the reality of the sexual categories themselves. The practical consequences of not fitting a gender category could potentially lead to embarrassment in the lavatory, pregnancy, funding problems, or other issues of social and economic utility. In the ordination procedures of the *vinayas*, the sexual organs of potential *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs* are examined discreetly to determine assignment as male or female.⁶²⁴ An applicant for ordination as a *bhikṣuṇī* should ideally

⁶²² Hirakawa 1982, 278–280.

⁶²³ The male rules that do not apply to females are specific to male genitalia or male gender roles.

⁶²⁴ See Schopen 2004b, 236–237.

be healthy, human and entirely female. The *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda lineage, for example, emphasizes 24 qualities that are considered hindrances to ordination, including a lack of sexual characteristics or the presence of leprosy, boils, eczema, tuberculosis, and epilepsy. A potential *bhikṣuṇī* must be a human being, a female, a free citizen (not a slave), have no debts, not be in the service of a king, have the permission of her parents and husband, and be at least 20 years old.⁶²⁵ It is not possible to ordain as a *bhikṣuṇī* if one is not recognizable as a female, nor is it possible to ordain an animal or other creature (e.g., a *nāgī*, *yakṣī*, *apsaras*) as a *bhikṣuṇī*.⁶²⁶

Kabilsingh has pointed out that the Mahīśāsaka rules and Mahāsāṅghika rules for female monastics are mixed in with the rules for male monastics, whereas in the Theravāda lineage, the rules for each gender are clearly separated.⁶²⁷ The Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda rules follow certain patterns that do not appear in the rules of the other three lineages.⁶²⁸ What this means as far as historical development is open to debate, but the fact that the rules are not exactly the same in all lineages might be a clue about the relative lateness of special rules for female monastics.

⁶²⁵ Kabilsingh 1984, 101.

⁶²⁶ This rule also applies to males. There are several stories in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and in the Theravāda canon where mythological creatures do take ordination and cause problems in the monastery. See, for example, the *nāga* who attempts to ordain as a monk in Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 4, 110–111.

⁶²⁷ Kabilsingh 1984, 75.

⁶²⁸ The matching patterns of these rules may help us to determine the temporal order of the development of these different Buddhist lineages. Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūlasarvāstivāda share several clusters of rules.

A number of rules have direct parallels with the rules for male monastics. These include *śuddhapācittika* 16 (Dharmaguptaka), which prohibits spreading a bed rudely; 17, which prohibits throwing out another female monastic in anger; 31, against telling off another female monastic; and 48, deliberately upsetting a female monastic.⁶²⁹ Likewise, “bringing up previous offences,” “denigrating the precepts,” “slandering a nun,” “cursing,” “crying out remembering a dispute,” “purposefully annoying a nun,” are all female versions of the rules for male monastics.⁶³⁰ There are also a number of rules for female monastics that have parallels with the rules for males, but are slightly different in wording. For example, the Mahāsāṃghika *pācittika* rule 67 for male monastics, against tickling with the fingers,⁶³¹ becomes rule number 51 in the *pācittikas* for female monastics, a prohibition against pointing with a finger.⁶³²

The *prātimokṣa* rules for females, as I mentioned in the previous section, repeat and elaborate on many of the themes found in the *gurudharmas*. According to the *prātimokṣa*, it is against the rules to avoid greeting a male monastic,⁶³³ and the specific

⁶²⁹ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 532; 536; 582. Hirakawa 1982, 232–233; 237–238; 241; 243. The *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* and *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* have different numbers for these rules. The male versions of the rules sanction doing these actions to other male monastics.

⁶³⁰ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 582 (*pācittika* 50); 585 (*pācittika* 56); 587 (*pācittika* 64); 677–678 (*pācittika* 88); 678–679 (*pācittika* 89); 685–687 (*pācittika* 92); 950–952. These rules also occur in the other lineages.

⁶³¹ Prebish 1975, 86.

⁶³² Hirakawa 1982, 242. This rule does not seem to be present in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*.

⁶³³ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 955–957.

ways of greeting *bhikkhus* are carefully delineated in the *sūtravibhaṅga* explanations for these rules.⁶³⁴ In addition, female monastics must take care not to offend male monastics in other ways. For example, asking a *bhikkhu* about the meaning of a doctrinal point without first requesting permission to ask could lead to embarrassment for the *bhikkhu*, and must not be done.⁶³⁵

I have already demonstrated that many of the etiquette standards for women are different from those for men. It is likewise clear that women have more rules to follow than men, a fact that is incontrovertible. The reasons for the differences are not always so clear. In all cases, the idea behind the rules (both for males and females) is that it is in the monastic's best interest to follow them. The traditional view is that observation of the *prātimokṣa* is done in parallel with cultivation of *śīla*, often translated as “ethics.” However, as we have seen in previous chapters, treating the *prātimokṣa* as a guideline for ethical behaviour only is problematic. The rules contained there are often suggestive of a response to community standards about what is considered disgusting. The regulation of disgust and the concept of ethics are not mutually exclusive, but also do not seem to be exactly the same in kind. Many of the etiquette standards for female Buddhist monastics are therefore not simply a light version of Buddhist ethics, but more properly an attempt to regulate the aesthetic sensibilities inherited from the community at large.

This distinction between ethics and etiquette is perhaps most clear in the ways that female bodies are regulated in the *prātimokṣa*. In the next section, I examine the presentation of the female body in the *prātimokṣa* rules as a vehicle of pollution and

⁶³⁴ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 869–873; 873–877.

⁶³⁵ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 948–950.

impurity. I argue that many of the *vinaya* rules about female behaviour act as a buffer to guard against this perceived impurity.

5.4: Female Bodies and Disgusting Excretions

The treatment of female monastics is not limited simply to regulating their social status within the monastic institution. Female bodies are portrayed as disgusting and polluting in *vinaya* texts, and constitute a threat to the purity of the material objects within the monastery. At the same time, female bodies are presented as sexually desirable, more so than male bodies.⁶³⁶ Female sexuality is therefore a threat to the celibacy of male monastics, while female bodies are a threat to the material purity of the monastic compound. This dual threat of femininity is the underlying reason for many of the specific injunctions for female monastics, who must regulate their bodily movements and wear special clothing in order to mitigate the potential for defiling the mental and physical world of the Buddhist institution.

Of the four extra *pārājika* rules (eight total) for female monastics, three deal with sexual behaviour. This point is easy to miss, because it is not explicit in all of the rules.⁶³⁷ The first *pārājika* for women in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* prohibits sexual intercourse, just as with male monastics. There is, however, a difference in the rules for males and females in how the transgressions occur in the backstories. The *vinaya* backstories concerned with male monastic impropriety typically portray males as unable to control their sexual desires, leading to their advances on women, men, and in some cases animals and inanimate objects. In the case of female transgression, a common theme is that

⁶³⁶ The authors of and intended audience for the texts were probably also male.

⁶³⁷ Chung 1999, 35–37. Hirakawa 1982, 41.

women incite others to lose control of their desires. For example, *pārājika* 5 says that a female monastic must “not touch and rub a man who is filled with sexual desire.”

Pārājika 6 sanctions performing the “special eight actions with a man who is filled with desire.” The wording of the rules does not refer to the desire of the female monastic, but to the desire of the male.

Some other rules for female monastics do not appear at first to concern sexuality, but on closer examination are formed around a sexual context. For example, *pārājika* 7 says “not to condone or conceal another *bhikṣuṇī*’s *pārājika* offense.” As Chung points out, the backstory for this rule is really about pregnancy.⁶³⁸ However, there is no way to be sure that the frame story for this rule was historically the reason for the rule. As with all of the *prātimokṣa* rules and their explanatory narratives, the Buddhist tradition has it that the story came first and then the rule. Yet, many rules we have already examined (e.g., the rule against urinating while standing) are clearly inherited from pre-Buddhist cultural practices. We therefore cannot take the tradition’s account as the definitive authority on the historical development of these rules. Still, it is telling that three of the six other *pārājika* rules for female monastics are entirely focused on sexuality. What we can be sure of, in any case, is that female sexuality was considered problematic in the Buddhist monastic community.

All of the Indian Buddhist lineages have more rules dealing with the sexual behaviour of females than for males. In the *Bhikṣuṇī-prakīrṇaka* of the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, female monastics are prohibited from sitting on the floor in the full-lotus position. The backstory for this rule explains that a *bhikṣuṇī* was once sitting in this way when “[a]

⁶³⁸ Chung 1999, 35–37. Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 260–261. This rule is also *pārājika* 7 in the Mahāsāṃghika lineage. Hirakawa 1982, 121–125.

snake appeared, and entered her vagina.”⁶³⁹ She was given medicine, which induced the snake to leave her vagina. The Buddha then prohibited female monastics from sitting in the full-lotus position. As an alternative, females are advised to sit with one heel covering the vagina.⁶⁴⁰ The rule that follows this one prohibits females from sitting on bamboo mats. The backstory explanation is that a female monastic once sat on such a mat and injured her urinary canal on a splinter of bamboo.⁶⁴¹

This unlikely story about a snake suggests a hasty rationalization for a rule whose original purpose may have been forgotten. The bamboo mat rule is also dubious when we consider that female monastics are required to wear their robes even when bathing. These rules would appear to be guarding instead against sexually-suggestive postures, and an uneasiness about the female form in general. Even the possibility that the clothed pubic area of a female monastic’s body could excite sexual thoughts in males seems to have been a source of anxiety to the authors of *vinaya* texts. As an organ associated with sexual pleasure, menstruation and birth, the vagina is regarded in such texts as a threat to the harmony of the monastic community.

A number of rules discuss the polluting powers of the rags used by female nuns to absorb menstrual blood. The *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* prohibits female monastics from cleaning these rags in the public bathing area, in the men’s bathing area, and in the

⁶³⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 385. Similar rules occur in the Dharmaguptaka lineage. Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 471–476.

⁶⁴⁰ Hirakawa 1982, 385. Similar advice is given in the *Cullavagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya*, but without the mention of a snake. See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 387. Snakes appear throughout the Theravāda canon in connection with sexual themes.

⁶⁴¹ Hirakawa 1982, 386.

guests' bathing area.⁶⁴² A similar concern appears in the *Cullavagga* of the *Theravāda Vinaya*, which tells us that menstruating nuns once bled on the seatcushions of couches and stuffed chairs. This episode leads to the allowance of special clothing to wear during menstruation. The Buddha allows a “household robe” (*āvasathacīvara*) for female monastics, but these become “soiled with blood.”⁶⁴³ He then allows a cloth secured with a pin (*āṇicolaka*), but the cloth falls down. Finally, the Buddha allows something that Horner translates as “a loin-cloth, a hip-string” (*nippaṭṭati*),⁶⁴⁴ probably the same article of clothing that appears above as “menstrual rags” in Hirakawa's translation of the *Mahāsāṃghika* rules. The *Cullavagga* emphasizes that female monastics must wear the menstruation cloth only while they are menstruating, and not at other times.⁶⁴⁵

Along with these rules about fluid contamination are prohibitions against cleansing the vagina in any way that could lead to sexual pleasure.⁶⁴⁶ The menstrual rags must not be pushed so far into the vagina that they cause pleasure.⁶⁴⁷ Female monastics are not allowed to flush the vagina with falling water, nor clean themselves by facing into a stream.⁶⁴⁸ While male monastics are also expected to avoid situations that lead to their

⁶⁴² Hirakawa 1982, 395. The explanation seems to hinge on the idea that doing so makes the water “dirty and red” (p. 395), implying that it is disgusting.

⁶⁴³ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 374. A *pātimokkha* rule concerning improper use of this robe appears as *pācittiya* 47. See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 333–334.

⁶⁴⁴ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 374.

⁶⁴⁵ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 375.

⁶⁴⁶ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 595–596.

⁶⁴⁷ Hirakawa 1982, 394.

sexual gratification, many of the above rules are of course only applicable to the female body. There are many other rules concerning female self gratification. Female monastics must not pat their pubic area with the hand,⁶⁴⁹ construct dildos,⁶⁵⁰ or even wash the vagina beyond a depth of one knuckle.⁶⁵¹ It is prohibited to push a turnip, onion, or other vegetable into the vagina, or to do anything else that might lead to sexual gratification.⁶⁵² Female monastics are prohibited from bathing in the nude, lest they excite onlookers.⁶⁵³ The continual emphasis on sexual desire within rules of hygiene indicates that a female monastic's body was clearly considered to be dangerous, not only to others but also to the monastic herself. Women in these texts are repeatedly portrayed as sexually threatening.

The above rules about proper behaviour for female monastics are not, however, entirely concerned with etiquette and politeness, especially where they deal with the concept of masturbation. That is because etiquette and politeness as they are normally defined require more than one agent. There must be at least one person acting out of place and also at least one other person taking offence to the improper action in order for a breach of etiquette to take place.⁶⁵⁴ Even so, these private actions intrude on the public image of the monastic in a variety of ways. The fear that women could be observed by the laity performing immodest actions, even in private, is a recurring theme in the *vinaya*

⁶⁴⁸ Hirakawa 1982, 396–397.

⁶⁴⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 392; Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 599–601.

⁶⁵⁰ Hirakawa 1982, 392–393; Clarke 2009a, 324–328.

⁶⁵¹ Hirakawa 1982, 394.

⁶⁵² Hirakawa 1982, 397; Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 597–599.

⁶⁵³ Hirakawa 1982, 391; 253–254.

⁶⁵⁴ Culpeper 2011, 1–10; 31.

rules.⁶⁵⁵ While the Buddhist tradition places these rules in the category of *śīla*, often translated as “ethics,” the actual purposes of these rules as explained in the rules’ backstories tend more often to dwell on the importance of preserving the reputation of the Buddhist organization than on the virtues of sexual purity.

We could say that *bhikṣuṇīs* perform their identity to themselves even when alone, but to be *impolite* as the term is used by linguists means attacking the social face of other people. Even so, the above injunctions are part of a larger notion of femininity that portrays females as incapable of making decisions for themselves. The *vinaya* rules are most often concerned with public displays of disgust, and much less with those that occur within the monastery walls. What may be appropriate for monastics to do in private can be threatening to the community’s reputation in public. The luxury of this distinction is not always afforded to female monastics, however, who are in some sense always treated as if on public display.

The bodies of *bhikṣuṇīs* are considered to be simultaneously lust-inducing and also disgusting. In Buddhist literature, this theme appears in *vinaya* texts and many other literary genres. As Liz Wilson has noted, the *Visuddhimagga* and other texts on meditation frequently portray female bodies as disgusting as a way for male monastics to overcome their attachment to sexual gratification.⁶⁵⁶ John Strong has also pointed out this

⁶⁵⁵ There are many examples in the *prātimokṣa* backstories with this idea in mind. For example, Clarke 2009a recounts a comical episode in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* in which a female monastic ties a tree-resin dildo to her foot for the purpose of pleasuring herself, and later falls asleep. When she is awakened by a fire in the monastic compound, she rushes outside, the dildo still attached to her foot. Members of the lay community see her and “burst out in great scorn and laughter” (p. 325).

literary theme in his study of the cult of Upagupta.⁶⁵⁷ At times, however, it is the body in general that is the disgusting problem, and not specifically the sexualized body. In other words, existence itself is one of the root metaphysical crises that Buddhist philosophy attempts to address, and imagining other bodies in addition to one's own body as disgusting and predisposed to decay has been part of the Buddhist tradition since its earliest days. Some of the arguments made by Wilson appear to me to be based on a misreading of texts as anti-female when they are simply anti-world.

Even with this previous point in mind, we can still say that female bodies are portrayed in Buddhist texts as more dangerous than male bodies, if only because they are more likely to be the object of sexual desire by male monastics. Because of that problem, female monastics must wear special clothing to reduce their sexual appeal, and avoid clothing that may be considered sensuous and connected with lay life. Female monastics are prohibited from wearing ornamental belts,⁶⁵⁸ lingerie,⁶⁵⁹ and the dress of lay women.⁶⁶⁰ A separate rule prohibits ordaining a woman while she is wearing a fine dress, emphasizing that the dress must be discarded before she can become a *bhikṣuṇī*.⁶⁶¹ Female monastics must also wear an accessory item called a *saṃkakṣikā*, a girdle that seems to be similar to the modern brassiere, used for covering (perhaps in some cases compressing) the breasts.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁶ Wilson 1996, 17; 82–90; 99.

⁶⁵⁷ Strong 1992, 78.

⁶⁵⁸ Hirakawa 1982, 386–387.

⁶⁵⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 387.

⁶⁶⁰ Hirakawa 1982, 388.

⁶⁶¹ Hirakawa 1982, 389.

The *vinaya* rules for female monastics also contain many rules concerned with hygiene that are not present in the rules for male monastics. There are of course a number of *sekhiya* rules for males about proper lavatory use, bathing, and the cutting of hair and nails, which we touched on in chapter 4. However, these rules involve very general notions of cleanliness, whereas all of the extra rules for female hygiene deal specifically with the female body or with preconceptions about female behaviour. There are several examples of this distinction with regard to lavatory etiquette. For example, a special rule for female monastics concerns the throwing of human waste products over the monastery wall.⁶⁶³ In another story, female monastics are chastised for using the monastic lavatory as a place for hiding their aborted fetuses.⁶⁶⁴ In a third story, female monastics are caught hiding aborted fetuses from lay women in their begging bowls. These stories and the rules that they justify imply that their monastic authors considered there to be a connection between femininity, disgust, and the special danger of female bodies.

We can examine in more detail the backstory for the rule about throwing excrement over a wall. This episode occurs in various extant *vinayas*,⁶⁶⁵ and tells of a female monastic who carelessly throws the contents of a chamberpot over the wall of the monastic compound. Gregory Schopen has used this story as evidence for his theory that nunneries were often located in urban environments.⁶⁶⁶ The language used in the story

⁶⁶² von Hinüber 1975; Hirakawa 1982, 390–391; 253.

⁶⁶³ Schopen 2008a, 32.

⁶⁶⁴ Hirakawa 1982, 407.

⁶⁶⁵ *Mūlasarvāstivāda*: Schopen 2008a; *Mahāsāṃghika*: Hirakawa 1982, 364–365; *Dharmaguptaka*: Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 607–609; *Theravāda*: Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 257–258.

features a number of colourful phrases related to politeness and etiquette. As with our other examples, the importance of etiquette in this story is primarily due to the potential for poor behaviour harming the reputation of the monastic institution in the eyes of the lay community. The plot is as follows: A nun empties a chamberpot filled with human excrement over the wall of the female monastic compound, carelessly and without looking. The disgusting contents of her chamberpot land on the head of a government official⁶⁶⁷ walking on the other side of the wall. Furious, this official insults the entire female monastic community, calling its members “a bunch of bald-headed whores,” and threatens to burn down the nunnery. The Buddha then makes a rule against throwing items over a wall without looking.⁶⁶⁸

In the *bhikṣuṇī-prakīrṇaka* of the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, female monastics are caught throwing human fetuses into the cesspool of the monastic lavatory. This episode leads to a rule, not against the dumping of fetuses, but against building walls around the lavatory of the nunnery.⁶⁶⁹ A related story has female monastics concealing the aborted fetuses of lay women in their begging bowls.⁶⁷⁰ Female monastics are also portrayed in *vinaya* backstories carelessly defecating and urinating on plants and in water, leading to a special set of *pācittaka* rules for women. These stories always point to the disgust provoked in laypeople as justification for the prohibition of the act. These latter rules

⁶⁶⁶ Schopen 2008a, 32.

⁶⁶⁷ The Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda versions substitute a brahmin for the government official.

⁶⁶⁸ Schopen 2008a.

⁶⁶⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 407; Langenberg 2014, 177–178.

⁶⁷⁰ Hirakawa 1982, 405; Langenberg 2014, 175–177.

concerning defecation and urination also exist for male monastics, but only as *śaikṣa* rules, whose punishments are less severe.⁶⁷¹

In many of the above rules, we can observe a connection between female behaviour and the production of disgusting substances. Female bodies themselves are also portrayed as disgusting, and tend to be associated with external disgusting phenomena. This association between femininity and disgust is then used as justification for additional rules for female monastics.

5.5: The Disastrous Consequences of the Female Gaze

The previous section focused on the ways in which female bodies are portrayed as simultaneously alluring and disgusting in Buddhist *vinaya* texts. In this section we will examine the ways in which female minds are portrayed as disgusting. In addition to their impure bodies, women are portrayed as sexually threatening to male monastics because of their increased sexual desires. Therefore, the monastic authors of *vinaya* texts considered the ever-present danger of female monastics corrupting other monastics, both male and female. For these reasons, the behaviour of female monastics is regulated much more than that of male monastics, to preserve female purity and also the sexual continence of male monastics.

The image of the sultry and sensuous woman appears frequently in Buddhist *vinaya* literature. A number of rules dwell on the inappropriateness of requesting a massage from other female monastics or from lay women. For example, *pācittika* 126 in the *Mahāsāṃghika* lineage prohibits “having one’s body rubbed and massaged.”⁶⁷² The

⁶⁷¹ Hirakawa 1982, 366–368; 380–381; Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 605–607.

⁶⁷² Hirakawa 1982, 347–348.

backstory for this rule explains that a certain *bhikṣuṇī* Bhadrākāpileyī was taking a bath in the presence of laywomen when they requested permission to rub her body and annoint it with fragrant oil “that we may obtain some merit.”⁶⁷³ The text then notes, “She was beautiful and they wanted to see her body.”⁶⁷⁴ When the other female monastics learn what has happened, they chastise Bhadrākāpileyī for having worldly desires.⁶⁷⁵ The Buddha then makes it an offence to have one’s body massaged by lay women. The next *pācittika* rule, 127, features Bhadrākāpileyī again, this time requesting a massage from another *bhikṣuṇī*. The action is sanctioned with similar wording.⁶⁷⁶ It is worth noting here that in the first story it is the laywomen who suggest the massage, and yet the monastic herself is scolded for her worldliness. The story accompanying the second rule is very short, and so it is not clear exactly why the act is not permitted. We might infer, however, that as with the first rule it is the “worldliness” of the act that presents a problem. In the second the monastic herself is requesting this service from another monastic, and, to make the point unambiguously clear, *pācittika* rules 128, 129 and 130 sanction a female monastic from having her body massaged by a *śrāmaṇerikā* (“novice nun”), *śikṣamāṇā*

⁶⁷³ Hirakawa 1982, 348.

⁶⁷⁴ Hirakawa 1982, 348.

⁶⁷⁵ Hirakawa 1982, 348.

⁶⁷⁶ Hirakawa 1982, 349–350.

(“trainee”),⁶⁷⁷ or lay woman, respectively.⁶⁷⁸ The idea of a female monastic having her body rubbed and massaged is in this way redundantly sanctioned, by the general *pācittika* rule 126 and then by the four specific *pācattika* rules that follow it (numbers 127–130).

The above injunctions are ostensibly about worldly desires, but their subtext appears to be concerned with guarding against the perceived threat of lesbianism.⁶⁷⁹ Curiously, the *prātimokṣa* rules for male monastics do not contain similar rules against receiving a massage. In fact, the *Cullavaga* of the Theravāda lineage explicitly allows male monastics to give backrubs to other male monastics, albeit with some restrictions on how the procedure is to be performed.⁶⁸⁰

Some of the other *prātimokṣa* rules provide further evidence of this perceived threat of female intimacy, and about lesbianism in particular. In the Mahāsāṃghika lineage, *pācittika* rule 86 sanctions “living intimately with either a lay person or non-Buddhist,” explaining that

⁶⁷⁷ The ordination procedure for females is more complicated than that for males. A woman who wishes to become a *bhikṣuṇī* must first become a *śrāmaṇerikā*, “novice nun,” and a *śikṣamāṇā* (“trainee”), a status conferred on a woman who trains for two years before attempting full ordination as a *bhikṣuṇī*. The distinction between *śrāmaṇerikā* and *śikṣamāṇā* is not always clear, and appears to vary by tradition. See Sujato [2007] 2012, 160–163; von Hinüber 2008, 18–21; Kishino 2015.

⁶⁷⁸ Hirakawa 1982, 350–351.

⁶⁷⁹ In the *Cullavagga*, however, the reason given is that the female monastics are “like women householders who enjoy the pleasures of the senses.” See Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 368–369.

⁶⁸⁰ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 5, 143.

‘To live intimately’ means: to live together so close that they can touch each other body to body, or that they can touch each other body to body and mouth to mouth. If (a *bhikṣuṇī* lives intimately) even with such persons as field-servants (*ārāmika*) or a *Śrāmaṇera*, her act constitutes a *pācittika* offense.⁶⁸¹

The explanation for this rule also suggests the following solution: “If a *bhikṣuṇī* lives intimately with another *bhikṣuṇī* and they take pleasure in each other, their master nun or the *ācārya* nun ought to make them live in separate places.”⁶⁸²

A *prātimokṣa* rule in the Dharmaguptaka lineage conveys a similar theme. This rule explains that the group of six *bhikṣuṇīs* were at one time staying in the city of Śāketa,⁶⁸³ and sleeping two to a bed. When another female monastic entered the room, she thought that female monastics were sleeping with men, only realizing her mistake when the female monastics stood up. The same rule gives another example of impropriety. A general had to leave his home to go to war. He could not trust his sons to take care of his wife, and so entrusted her to the *bhikṣuṇī* Bhadra-Kapilānī, “an old friend”:

The *bhikṣuṇī* Kapilānī took care of the wife and in order to protect her, they spent the night on the same bed. The body of the *bhikṣuṇī* Kapilānī was delicate and tender. The wife touched her with her body and she got affected thoughts. When the general came back from the war, he welcomed his wife and he brought her home. His wife was attached to the delicacy and the tenderness of the *bhikṣuṇī*’s body. She ran away and turned back to the *bhikṣuṇī*. The general thought by

⁶⁸¹ Hirakawa 1982, 277.

⁶⁸² Hirakawa 1982, 278.

⁶⁸³ Also spelled Sāketa, the capital city of the Kosala kingdom. The area of Kosala is roughly the same as the Awadh region in contemporary Uttar Pradesh.

himself: “I wanted to do good and I obtain even worse. Why does my wife not love me? Affected by the *bhikṣuṇī*, she ran away and she turned back to her.”⁶⁸⁴

This second example is even more explicit about the lesbian threat of female monastics. The two episodes taken together are given as justification of *pācittika* rule 90, or *pācittiya* rule 34 in the Theravāda lineage.⁶⁸⁵ A variation follows this rule as *pācittika* rule 91, specifying that female monastics are not to share a blanket together.⁶⁸⁶

Female monastic bodies are considered so dangerously erotic that they can cause problems simply by being observed by onlookers. The *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* recounts an episode in which the exposed breasts of a “young and pretty” *bhikṣuṇī* are seen by some young boys, who then laugh at her. The Buddha then requires all *bhikṣuṇīs* to wear a *saṃkakṣikā*, which is described as a cloth “four hand-spans of the Sugata in length and two hand-spans in width.” Wearing a *saṃkakṣikā* larger than this is a *pācattika* offense.⁶⁸⁷ The rule following this one tells the story of the *bhikṣuṇī* Bhadrākapilā, who is seen by some young men while bathing herself in the Sarpīṇikā River at Vaiśālī:⁶⁸⁸

There were five young men [in] the Licchavī tribe who were watching the stream. When they noticed her, they became lustful. The *bhikṣuṇī* said: “O Long-lived ones (young men), go away.” They answered back: “We will not go away. For we want to gaze upon the beautiful body of the noble sister.” The *bhikṣuṇī* said:

⁶⁸⁴ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 680.

⁶⁸⁵ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 681–682; Kabilsingh 1991, 254.

⁶⁸⁶ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 682–684.

⁶⁸⁷ Hirakawa 1982, 252–253. According to Hirakawa, one hand-span is approximately 73 centimeters, and so the cloth described here is about 292 cm by 146 cm (p. 252 n. 77).

⁶⁸⁸ Contemporary Bihar.

“Why do you (want to) look at this smelly and vile body with its nine holes?”

Again they said: “It doesn’t matter at all. We want more than ever to gaze upon you.” (Saying this) they stayed for some time and would not go away. The *bhikṣuṇī* then thought, “They are really stupid and shallow men.” So she started to leave, covering both her front and back with her hands. When they saw her, they fell to the ground and rolled around in agony and vexation, blood coming forth from their mouths.⁶⁸⁹

The Buddha explains this strange turn of events by noting that the five Licchavī men were also overcome by lust in a previous life as five *devas* (gods), and that Bhadrākapilā was born exceedingly beautiful due to good deeds in her own previous life. He then makes a rule concerning the proper size of bathing skirts. Like the *saṃkakṣikā* cloth in the previous rule, these are also described as “four hand-spans of the Sugata in length, and two hand-spans in width.”⁶⁹⁰

In addition to being dangerous to look upon, a *bhikṣuṇī* is also problematic as an observer. Several rules across various Buddhist lineages consider the problem of female monastics entering rooms without invitation, or without first announcing their presence. In the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, for example, it is a *pācattika* offense (number 85) to enter a layperson’s house without notifying its occupants. The backstory indicates the reason for this rule:

The Buddha was staying at Śrāvastī. At that time, there was a couple, a man and wife. They desired to have sexual intercourse in their house where they thought no one would be. At that time the *bhikṣuṇī* Sthūlanandā happened to enter it

⁶⁸⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 253–254.

⁶⁹⁰ Hirakawa 1982, 257–258.

suddenly, without announcing herself in advance. When the man saw (the bhikṣuṇī), he said in indignation, “You shall pay for interrupting my sex.” His penis became stiff and didn’t go back down. So he chased her. In alarm she dashed back to her resident place and reported this to the other bhikṣuṇīs, “I was just at the risk of bringing disgrace on my religious practice.”⁶⁹¹

In this instance, we can see two problems with an uninvited female monastic. One is that she risks causing offence to householders, and the other is the potential of being raped. The explanation for this rule also provides instructions on the proper way to announce oneself:

A bhikṣuṇī must not enter the house without telling (the occupants) in advance. If she wants to enter it, she ought to tell a gate-keeper, “I want to enter the house.” She ought not to go in until she is told by him, “Enter.” If he has not come back yet, she must not enter it. If she hears sounds and voices, she should snap her fingers, walk noisily and talk loudly. If they do not make any sound, she must not go in. If they (the man and wife) come out to welcome her, she may enter.⁶⁹²

It is worth noting that this rule is also unique to female monastics. One can imagine that it would also be possible for a male monastic to interrupt a couple’s private moment, and yet male monastics are not portrayed causing such problems. Again, we see that females are always on public display in a way that males are not. Their very presence is a tool for discord whether they mean for it to be or not. Another *pācattika* rule (number 117) in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* makes it an offence for female monastics to take lodging in a

⁶⁹¹ Hirakawa 1982, 275.

⁶⁹² Hirakawa 1982, 276.

place where people are having sex, noting that they can become uncomfortable hearing the sounds of passion when they themselves are not yet free of desire.⁶⁹³

The problem of uninvited female monastics extends to the monastery as well. Another *pācattika* offence in the Mahāsāṃghika tradition (number 116) makes it an offence for female monastics to enter a monastery without permission. In the backstory for this rule, a *bhikṣuṇī* identified only as “the mother of Gartodara”⁶⁹⁴ enters the cell of a *bhikṣu*, identified only as “the father of Gartodara.” She touches his back.

He looked back at her, and said, “Ah! Keep away from me.” The *bhikṣuṇī* said, “I always used to help you wash. Why is it so painful now when I touch you (on the back)?” He told her, “You were a lay woman. But now you may not do such things, for you abandoned the world to become a mendicant.”⁶⁹⁵

As Shayne Clarke has demonstrated, it was not at all unusual for Indian Buddhist monastics to interact with their spouses and children after ordination.⁶⁹⁶ We cannot neglect here to point out as well the various services that female monastics are expected to carry out for male monastics. Horner mentions in her translation of the *Theravāda Vinaya* that one reason female monastics would have wanted to enter a monastery (thus

⁶⁹³ Hirakawa 1982, 333–335. Clarke 2014 suggests this story as evidence that female monastics may have also lived in the homes of their families prior to the formal creation of separate nunneries (p. 63).

⁶⁹⁴ Presumably Gartodara was also a *bhikṣu*.

⁶⁹⁵ Hirakawa 1982, 331–332. See also Mahīśāsaka *pacattika* 129, 164 and Theravāda *pācittiya* 117.

⁶⁹⁶ Clarke 2014.

necessitating a rule about how to go about doing so) was for the purpose of sweeping it and refreshing the washing and drinking water of the male monastics.⁶⁹⁷

While these basic services were permitted to be carried out by female monastics (and presumably expected), the actions of singling out a particular male by washing his robe for him, or acting as a personal servant, are sanctioned in the *prātimokṣas*.⁶⁹⁸ Clarke goes into great detail about both the ordinariness of becoming ordained along with members of one's own family⁶⁹⁹ and of visiting one's lay family after ordination,⁷⁰⁰ and notes that the rules concerning individual attention to male monastics appear to have been formulated only "to curb marital-like behaviour" between female and male monastics.⁷⁰¹

It is obvious, then, that male and female monastics, even those who were married to each other prior to ordination, would have encountered each other often and in various mundane circumstances. The *vinaya* rules repeatedly portray females as threatening to both males and females by their very presence, regardless of whether they are acting on their own desires or simply being viewed as desirable. We get a sense from such rules that female monastics were treated more like toxic substances or as vectors for contagious diseases than as independent agents. In some ways they probably were treated that way, but it is also important to remember that females did nevertheless enjoy an agency of their own. In the next section I will take up that point.

⁶⁹⁷ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, lvii.

⁶⁹⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, lvii.

⁶⁹⁹ Clarke 2014, 63–67; 72–74.

⁷⁰⁰ Clarke 2014, 58–62; 78–87; 96–99.

⁷⁰¹ Clarke 2014, 98.

5.6: Femininity and Agency

In the previous sections I have focused on the many ways that female monastics are treated differently from male monastics in Buddhist *vinaya* texts. In this section I shall consider the issue of femininity from a different angle, in order to introduce the question of female agency, specifically with regard to the capacity of female monastics to act of their own accord. One fact that is not frequently discussed in the context of female monastic rules is that so many of these rules are essentially identical to the rules for male monastics. Female monastics must follow the approximately 250 rules for male monastics in addition to their own 100 extra rules. However, the 250 rules that female monastics follow are their own versions of those rules for men, mostly just rewritten with female pronouns.

The lack of significant research on specific rules for female monastics is perhaps an indication that these rules are not considered different enough from the rules for male monastics to be worth pursuing. In fact, even the similarity between male and female monastic rules is incredibly important, because it tells us that female monastics are in so many ways considered to be not very different from male monastics at all. While scholars often lament that Buddhist literature portrays females exclusively as sheltered beings with no free will of their own, there is in actuality a great deal of female agency in the Buddhist monastic context, as expressed in their rules.

While the broader topic of female agency in early India has generated a great deal of interest,⁷⁰² we still do not know very much about the actual rights of women among the public at large during the time our Buddhist texts were composed. It is possible to glean some clues about how females were treated from the narratives in these texts, but such

⁷⁰² Jamison 1996. Collett 2014.

narratives are also open to various and sometimes contradictory interpretations. Gregory Schopen has recently called into question some of the basic assumptions about female agency in early India, and particularly the occupations of female Buddhist monastics. Using textual evidence, Schopen argues that many female monastics obtained a higher degree of freedom than was previously assumed.⁷⁰³ Especially in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, there is evidence that it was not uncommon for women to work as bartenders, bankers and brothel madams.⁷⁰⁴ The sanctioning of these activities for female Buddhist monastics is some indication that having female monastics in these occupations would have been considered a public relations problem. It is not entirely clear, however, that such professions were considered ethically problematic by Buddhists, and it would appear that we have again a primary concern with maintaining the public image of good monastics.

As we have seen with the rules for male monastics, the opinions of the laity were foremost on the minds of *vinaya* lawmakers, and the reason for this concern is primarily due to the *saṃgha*'s dependence on the lay community for material and economic support. It should therefore come as no surprise that many of the rules for both male and female monastics dwell on the proper distribution of acquired materials within the monastic community. As with the rules for male monastics, the rules for female monastics prohibit taking the property of others. There are many rules, for example, dealing with the problem of female monastics acquiring and using robe material and robes that have not been expressly given to them,⁷⁰⁵ requesting robes improperly,

⁷⁰³ Schopen 2008b; Schopen 2012b; Schopen 2014b.

⁷⁰⁴ Schopen 2012b, 119; 121. Schopen 2014b, 98–99.

⁷⁰⁵ Kabilsingh 1991, 28–34; 38. Hirakawa 1982, 247–249.

misallocating donations for robes, promising to ordain in exchange for a robe and then failing to do so,⁷⁰⁶ and various other issues.

Let us use this question of robes to return for a moment to our more fundamental question of *etiquette* and *politeness*. In chapter 3, I recounted an episode from the rules for male monastics about taking back a robe that was given away freely.⁷⁰⁷ A parallel version of this story occurs in the *niḥsargika-pācittaka* (Pāli: *nissaggiya-pācittiya*) rules for female monastics, with the nun Sthūlanandā (Pāli: Thullanandā) as the offender. The Theravāda version of this story (*nissaggiya-pācittiya* 3) is rather short:

Now at that time the nun Thullanandā, having exchanged a robe with a certain nun, made use of it. Then that nun, having folded up that robe, laid it aside. The nun Thullanadā spoke thus to that nun: “Lady, that robe which was exchanged by you with me, where is that robe?” Then that nun, having taken out that robe, showed it to the nun Thullanandā. The nun Thullanandā spoke thus to that nun: “Lady, take back your robe, give me this robe. That which is yours is yours, that which is mine is mine. Give this to me, take away your own,” and she tore it away.⁷⁰⁸

In the Theravāda version of the story, the robes have been exchanged willingly, but are then forcibly taken back. A variation of this episode appears in the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* (*niḥsargika-pācattika* 16), in which the robe is first discarded and later acquired by another nun at the suggestion of her monastic colleagues:

⁷⁰⁶ Kabilsingh 1991, 44.

⁷⁰⁷ See p. 108.

⁷⁰⁸ Horner [1938–1966] 1996–1997, vol. 3, 220–222.

The Buddha was staying at Śrāvastī. At that time, the bhikṣuṇī Sthūlanandā's saṃghāṭī (outer robe) was worn out. Without washing, dyeing, or mending it, she threw it away under a fence, and said: "If there is anyone who wants to take this, please take it." Now the bhikṣuṇī Jetā had a torn robe, so the rest of the bhikṣuṇīs said, "Oh Noble! You may take and keep this robe; wash, dye and mend it, and use it!" Therefore she took the robe, and after washing, dyeing and mending it, put it on. But the bhikṣuṇī Sthūlanandā said: "Please give it back!" She told the other bhikṣuṇīs: "I thought something amusing might happen, so I threw the robe down and went away for a while, without really intending to discard it." (Then, she said to Jetā:) "Have you been able to fill your room with robes yet?" With that, she forceably took back her saṃghāṭī (outer robe). The other bhikṣuṇīs reported this to Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, who went to inform the Blessed One of this matter.⁷⁰⁹

The sarcastic remark and the violent action at the end of this Sthūlanandā episode are interesting in terms of polite discourse:

labdhotkṣiptikāhi pūro saṃghārāmo tāva

"Have you been able to fill up your room with robes?"

dhr̥ṣṭā ca mukharā ca praglabhā ca sā dāni tāya saṃghāṭī ācchinā

"Disloyal, abusive and acquisitive, she grabbed back her gifted robe."

These two phrases certainly do not appear to be polite in any way. The actual rule in this case is not an explicit prohibition against rudeness, but against exchanging a robe and then demanding it back. The Dharmaguptaka version of this story, which is shorter than both the Mahāsāṃghika and Theravāda versions, notes that Sthūlanandā's demand was made in anger.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁹ Hirakawa 1982, 207–208.

The male and female versions of this robe acquisition story both feature monastics who have poor control over their emotions. It is difficult to make general statements from such a short selection of stories concerning any differences in portraying males and females. There are many other rules for female monastics that also deal with emotional outbursts. In many cases, they are almost exactly the same as the rules for males, and do not emphasize anything special concerning femininity. My reason for pointing out this lack of distinction is only to draw attention to the fact that not all rules for females are about femininity as such. An examination of each and every one of these rules is beyond the scope of the present study, but I think such an extended comparison would prove to be fruitful.

One thing that we can say clearly about the status of women in the monastery is that despite being variously objectified, oversexualized and oppressed by a male-dominated rule system, female monastics are still held accountable for their actions and are thus extended the status of having their own agency. That conclusion may not sit well with many feminist interpretations of the female *saṅgha* and its policies, but I do not think it is so easy to jump to conclusions about the reasons behind these rules. To say that male monastics were simply interested in oppressing their female colleagues in the Buddhist institution is an oversimplification of a set of rules that likely were formulated with a great variety of intentions. Some of those intentions may have stemmed from a desire to prevent the female branch of the organization from acquiring too much power, whereas others were surely a more innocuous attempt at keeping female monastics safe in what must have been at times a dangerous environment.

⁷¹⁰ Heirman 2002, vol. 2, 476–477.

5.7: Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to point out some of the *vinaya* rules specifically for female monastics, as a way of indicating the different expectations for males and females in the monastic community. As with the rules for male monastics, we can see that the rules for female monastics are primarily concerned with regulating proper behaviour, not necessarily about maintaining a sense of ethics.

While these two concepts, etiquette and ethics, certainly do overlap within the *prātimokṣas* and within *vinaya* texts generally, the specific rules I have discussed in this chapter deal primarily with the reputation of the Buddhist monastic organization. This reputation is dependent on the cultural expectations of a larger lay community, in which Buddhism itself is a minority tradition.

It is not surprising that the most prominent attribute of the gender binary distinguishing “male” and “female” is biological. Many of the extra rules for female monastics are directly related to the hygiene, sexual purity, and safety of female bodies. These rules also dwell on the distinct physiology of women. I made five points in this chapter:

- 1) female monastics are formally deferential to male monastic authority, always
- 2) females are portrayed as less capable than males at regulating their emotions
- 3) female bodies are portrayed as disgusting and defiling
- 4) female monastic sexuality is a dangerous threat to both males and females
- 5) despite the above ideas, women were recognized as possessing agency

There can be no doubt that females and males were treated differently in the early Indian monastic community, and in a majority of text narratives we can say that males receive a privileged status over females. Given the tradition’s own account of its history, it is hardly surprising that an institution that developed around the idea of leaving behind the

world and its suffering through a process of celibacy and other forms of sensory withdrawal would portray sexuality and femininity in general as a danger to be avoided or at least controlled. We can say for sure, then, that a double standard exists for men and women within this early Buddhist community, but we must be careful not to apply contemporary standards of gender equality as a way of laying blame on Buddhism as a misogynistic organization. In other words, while the tradition does often portray females as a threat to the stability of the monastic institution, this idea of a feminine threat ought not be conceived as evidence of a general hatred of women. On the contrary, it actually seems to be a practical response to the Buddhist ontological theory that the only way out of the world is by escaping all of one's worldly desires. The sexual desire for women is one of the most difficult to escape, and so it must be regulated to a high degree.

While many of the special rules for female monastics may not appear on the surface to be directly concerned with the topic of etiquette, it is necessary to mention these ideas in connection with those matters more easily categorized as linguistic politeness. We have seen that proper behaviour for female monastics is bound up in the related ideas of sexual allure and disgusting pollution. These simultaneously attractive and repulsive qualities associated with femininity may seem at first to be paradoxical, yet arguably stem from a connected fear of threats to the monastic ideal. The authors of the *prātimokṣa* appear in many ways to have been much less concerned with potential ethical transgressions than with the success of the monastic institution. The rules for female behaviour are thus a device for regulating the sexual attraction and potential defilement that women carry with them wherever they go.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter provides a summary of my entire dissertation and considerations for future research on this topic. My goal at the outset was to examine the phenomenon of monastic etiquette within early Indian Buddhism in order to understand with a greater degree of clarity the relationship between the early Buddhist institution and the social framework from which it emerged. There have been numerous other studies on Indian Buddhist social structures, but to my knowledge this dissertation is the first to focus specifically on the concept of etiquette.

Throughout this dissertation, I have mentioned that the term *etiquette* is difficult to define precisely. Among linguists there is serious contention about how to define specific terms relating to proper behaviour and speech. Even so, the subdisciplines of *linguistic politeness* and the more recent *historical politeness* are becoming increasingly popular as frameworks in which to discuss those aspects of culture that often escape mainstream explanations. My primary interest is those sometimes ineffable aspects of social discourse that emerge from the relationships between Buddhists and Brahmins in the early years of the Buddhist institution. Their type of ineffability is not rooted in a “spiritual” or “mystical” experience, but simply the everydayness of repeated actions, the daily mundane activities that go into living in the world. Those continually repeated actions we do in our lives without a conscious awareness of their meaning are, paradoxically, some of the most meaningful descriptors of how we view the world. Yet, because we are so close to mundanity, it seems too ordinary to bring up as a suitable source of information about the origins of more formalized doctrine. Regardless, the concepts that are closest to us form a kind of language through which we project a world, which is effectively what is called “ideology.” It is a language of unconscious choices and internal representations of the experienced world, not an organized institution in which a person consciously

participates. Ideology is simply the collective actions of a particular group of people. So, the boundaries of what I call “etiquette” are very hazy indeed, but the roots run deep. We could think of it as a framework for determining proper behaviour, more primordial and visceral than formal systems of ethics, and perhaps linked more directly with feelings of bodily self-preservation.

Etiquette is in fact especially revealing in the context of religion in those things it tells us about the repetition of social habits over formal doctrine. If we are trying to answer the question of what it means to be a Buddhist during the tradition’s formative years in India, we must first understand what it means to be an Indian at that time and place. By way of example, we learned in chapter 3 that the rules of propriety for Brahmins and those for Indian Buddhists both idealize the act of urination by emphasizing that it should not be done while standing.⁷¹¹ Such rules may appear to be arbitrary and devoid of meaning, but their preservation across doctrinal boundaries suggests that a meaning is present, even if difficult to explain. We could say that there is membership in a category that is not entirely Brahmanism or Buddhism, but better described as the civilized social world as imagined by the authors of our texts. As Watts and others have pointed out, it is no coincidence that the words “polite” and “civilized” are etymologically related to the Greek and Latin words for the city and the citizen (*polis* and *civis*). Watts therefore refers to polite behaviour as “politic” behaviour:⁷¹² “that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction.”⁷¹³ For urban Buddhists of premodern India,

⁷¹¹ See p. 135.

⁷¹² See Watts 2003, 32, 17–21, 27, 74.

⁷¹³ Watts 2003, 21.

politic behaviour would have been largely modeled on what we could call the Sanskritic worldview of Indian Brahmins, and on the growing value of urban centres as model nodes for public order and culture production.

6.1: The Study of Etiquette as a Social Performance

Chapter 1 introduced the problem of defining the concept of etiquette. I began by considering the ambiguity of the English word *etiquette* and related terms commonly used in a mundane sense to describe appropriate normative behaviours. The general meaning of these terms is well known in everyday usage, but they are not easy to define formally. This lack of formality makes it difficult to establish a firm footing with regard to the examination of the topic at hand, because it is not entirely clear exactly what it is that we are examining. These ambiguities, however, are not without precedent in the study of language, and so it is fitting that the study of social etiquette has mostly been done by means of a subdiscipline within linguistics called *linguistic politeness*. I have used the word *etiquette* within my own study to differentiate it from *politeness* as a technical term in that subdiscipline, as the goals of my own project overlap with but are not entirely the same as those of *linguistic politeness* scholars, who tend to focus more attention on formal linguistic utterances than on historical context.⁷¹⁴ In my own study, the historicity of the source documents is problematic, but we can help to reconstruct that early Buddhist world by also looking for information outside of Buddhist sources.

If we consider the general scope of etiquette and politeness phenomena to be located in the world of social interaction, then it is necessary to know something about

⁷¹⁴There is of course more emphasis on historical context within *historical politeness*, but the object of focus still is generally on the use of language.

how people constructed their social selves within the region and time of the authors of our texts. Whether or not each social self can be generalized and compared to other times and cultures is an ongoing question.

There are still many disagreements among linguists about how (or if) a general idea called *politeness* is universally observable in the activities of specific cultures. In other words, the very concept of a general *politeness* for humans is debatable. However, many linguists do accept a common general framework of *face* and *face-threatening acts* (FTA) as a starting point for discussing how those actions often associated with polite behaviour function and what purposes they serve. We need not become overly invested in dissecting the specific ways in which that *face* is threatened in social contexts, but we can observe here that the language of *face-threatening acts* is useful in constructing a sort of algebra or grammar for describing the complex interplay between various social actors. Assigning qualitative values to actions in terms of participants' self worth (*positive face*) and freedom to act within the normative framework (*negative face*) allows us to compare different types of behaviours within a single cultural rubric. We can use a formal system of this kind to organize activities and their participants into an aesthetic performance in which agents act and are acted upon by a set of common forces. The patterns that emerge within our case study of Buddhist monastics can perhaps then be generalized to some degree, in order to acquire a better understanding of what *etiquette* itself means. It is also possible that we find something in Indian Buddhist politeness that is not generalizable to a common model for all politeness, so that type of claim is bound to be controversial.

My dissertation is in this respect less grandiose. I've incorporated only a small portion of the ideas from *politeness theory* in order to consider linguistic aspects of Buddhist monastic interaction, as well as the Indian Buddhist injunctions concerning how to present and maintain one's body within the monastery and among the laity. Some of

these issues are incorporated into linguistic theories of *face*. We can examine ideas about inappropriate table conduct within such a framework, considering sloppy eating and other non-urbane actions of the body to be *face* attacks on other monastics and laypersons. My study does benefit from *politeness theory* in that way, but also diverges from it, by drawing on theories of disgust as a secondary method to explain the origins of these rules. These two disciplines of *politeness theory*, driven primarily by linguistics, and *disgust theory*, which tends to examine the relationship between human psychology and aesthetics, are not mutually exclusive. They rather complement each other as descriptors for different aspects of a common theme. *Politeness theory* is perhaps most useful for explaining what is considered improper behaviour, whereas *disgust theory* can help to reveal common biological underpinnings of those culturally-unique standards.

Etiquette can also be considered as a specialized form of ritual. Ritual itself shares many traits with spoken language, as it is only effective as ritual by means of repeated patterns identifiable as the correct maintenance of cultural standards. The arbitrariness of etiquette rituals is an important feature distinguishing them from pragmatic behaviours. For example, it is common to say “God bless you” in English as an acknowledgement of someone’s sneeze, but the words themselves do not seem to be considered in a literal sense. This utterance of “God bless you” is therefore not an ontological claim about the nature of a deity’s relationship to our innermost selves, but rather an appropriate script to perform when a person sneezes. That scriptedness does not make the performance devoid of meaning, but it is important to avoid falling into presumptory explanations of what etiquette rituals do mean. One popular explanation for “God bless you” in sneezing is that it is a holdover from premodern beliefs linking disease and demonic possession. It may be that there is some truth to this idea, but knowing such a fact does not in itself tell us the lasting appeal of the ritual in its social context up to the present day. In other words, we

do not generally speak of a conscious fear of demons, but we still perform this [ostensibly] demon-eradicating ritual in the present day, so there must be more to the story of its popularity than simple pragmatism.

That ambiguity of form is what led me to a consideration of etiquette rituals as a kind of performance for overcoming the emotion of disgust. The disgust reaction, as it is called by social scientists, is not always connected directly to a biological threat, but may instead be a more abstracted form of disgust arising from an interruption of normative standards of behaviour. In the case of a sneeze, the “God bless you” ritual could have its origins in disease prevention, but remain culturally important by nullifying a threat to social convention. As an evolutionary adaptation to the spread of disease, the reactions we spontaneously perform when presented with a “disgusting” stimulus are often below our level of conscious awareness, and yet they influence the decisions we make as conscious agents. It is often the case that etiquette is presented as common sense, even though the specific ideas about etiquette within any particular culture are always unique. Thus, while etiquette may have come about as a buffer against dangerous (perceived as disgusting) substances, those specific substances perceived as disgusting vary with cultural context.

Etiquette is a social stratifier, and can help to determine who is to be considered worthy of membership in a particular social class. As we have seen repeatedly in this study, appropriate behaviour in Buddhist texts is often described through frame stories that recount the numerous complaints against monastics by their lay patrons. Whatever the religious goals of the early Buddhist institution may have been, we must never forget that material support of the monastery was a basic requirement for its continued success. The authors of Buddhist monastic law codes were clearly aware of this fact, and also that their religion was a new and possibly unwelcome addition to a majority culture of Vedic

Brahmanism. By incorporating etiquette standards of that culture, Buddhists appear to have been consciously positioning themselves as a subculture equally as civilized (or even more civilized) than the status quo, and therefore worthy of material donations and new membership.

Etiquette is also used as a way to set and maintain gender roles. A general Indian notion of the differences between male and female natures is evident in the considerable disparity between rules for male and female Buddhist monastics. As with so many other standards of etiquette, the special rules for female monastics in the *vinaya* texts are framed around identifying and isolating substances and behaviours that Buddhists considered to be disgusting and polluting. A common theme in Sanskrit literature by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists is the polluting and disgusting processes of female bodies, including menstruation, the development of an embryo in the womb, and various other unique aspects of the female form. There is clearly a dual system in place in which female monastics are subservient to male monastics, and this duality is explained in various ways in *vinaya* texts as a way of protecting women from the dangers of the world, and in the naturally disgusting nature of women. Rules that enforce gender distinction would have been very practical for protecting any breaches of celibacy in the monastery, and the *vinaya* rules portray women alternately as victims of misconduct or as temptresses. In many texts, the celibate male monastic is presented as an ideal type of human being.

Regardless of the ambiguous boundaries of *etiquette*, then, we can make some reasonably safe statements about its development and function within early Buddhist monastic culture. It is an aesthetic performance with forms that may seem to be arbitrary, but which are rooted in shared cultural concerns and not lacking in meaning. The major concerns of the monastic community involved in composing the *vinaya* rules would have been the preservation of the message of the Buddha in part, but more pragmatically with

maintaining positive social alliances in their communities. The community of the earliest Buddhist monks was one in which some variety of Hinduism would have been the majority religion. The Brahmin and Kṣatriya clans of different city-states were suitable places to look for new monastics and the economic support of lay devotees. Their continued acceptance of the Buddhist monastic community was paramount to the success of the Buddhist institution, and we see that many of the *vinaya* rules are justified by the texts as a way to prevent further complaints from the laity. It would seem that, rather than the popular modern view of Buddhist monks as simple and inoffensive, the early *saṅgha* was frequently populated by monks and nuns unruly in a variety of ways. The ways that Buddhist monastics misbehave are, not surprisingly, similar to the ways that Brahmin students misbehave in Hindu literature.

6.2: The Buddhist Inheritance of Vedic Sensibilities

Chapter 2 of this dissertation introduced the cultural framework from which early Indian Buddhism emerged. I focused particular attention on the *dharmasūtra* texts of Vedic Brahmanism, as these are the earliest Indic examples now available to us of a formal code for proper behaviour. The *dharmasūtras* do not make a clear distinction between the phenomena called “ethics” and “etiquette” in contemporary English, and neither of these terms corresponds exactly with any concept in early India. However, a sense of proper respect for elders and other persons of authority is presented in the *dharmasūtras*, with a special emphasis on proper speech. These texts do distinguish at some level between severe ethical transgressions (e.g., murder) and less severe transgressions of etiquette (verbal insults) by suggesting different varieties of punishment. We can even observe evidence of the dissimilarity between ethical standards and less severe offenses to *face* in traditional Sanskrit grammar texts, which provide numerous examples of verbal insults as

a distinct category of utterances without any indication that these utterances were considered ethically improper. In some cases, as in the case of a teacher upbraiding his lazy student, insulting speech might even be ethically ideal. At the very least, we can observe that what is ethically good and what is socially appropriate in *dharmaśūtra* literature are merely related but not equivalent. It is this social-but-not-ethical category that I am calling *etiquette* as related but not identical to the *politeness* of *linguistic politeness*.

Buddhist texts on cultural standards, like those of Brahmins, emphasize the importance of proper speech, albeit with some differences on specific rules. For early Buddhists, as with Brahmins, truth and honesty were fundamental attributes of proper speech. Buddhist texts also emphasize concern for the emotional state of others, at times coming into conflict with the goal of speaking truthfully. As we saw in chapter 2, for example, the Buddha was presented as being reluctant to verbalize his prediction of the future births of an ox-duty and dog-duty ascetic out of concern for the ascetics' feelings.⁷¹⁵ The Buddha himself, in the Theravāda canon, appears to place priority on preserving the feelings of others when possible, but also does not hide the truth when it is requested sincerely.

Greetings and titles are used throughout Buddhist *sutta* and *vinaya* texts as indicators of social status, just as with Brahmins. The Buddhist characters in Buddhist narratives utilize appropriately respectful titles for greeting Brahmins, and Brahmins themselves demonstrate politeness (or in certain cases impoliteness) by selecting respectful (or disrespectful) titles for the Buddha and his disciples. Buddhist *vinaya* regulations also specify formally the ways in which monastics are intended to apologize

⁷¹⁵ See p. 80.

to each other, and to forgive. In addition, a general framework for dealing with Brahmin and Kṣatriya groups is provided in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, a handbook on proper behaviour in the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda Buddhist lineage. We can see, then, that Buddhists not only inherited certain formulas of etiquette from a broader Sanskritic culture, but also actively worked to incorporate these standards into their dealings with non-Buddhists in a show of solidarity.

The distinction between ethics and etiquette is not clear in much of Brahmin law, and the legal texts of Buddhists maintain this ambiguity. As Maria Heim has pointed out, the *dharmaśāstra* literature in general does not even have a specific category called “ethics,” and any attempt to discuss what we consider ethics in the context of these ancient legal codes risks projecting our own modern views onto the past.⁷¹⁶ I do agree with Heim that this kind of reinterpretation of the past is problematic. However, I think that there is still room for a discussion of a phenomenon we can call “etiquette” for the sake of convenience, even if it does not appear as an entirely separate category in early Indian texts. The real key to this paradox is to recognize that social *face* and the various manifestations of this concept in everyday discourse are deeply linked with culturally-determined notions of aesthetics. Every culture has its own unique ideas about what constitutes “common sense,” and transgressions of such cultural standards tend to provoke visceral reactions in social actors, even if (or especially if) they are unable to clarify consciously the reasoning behind the rules. In the case of Indian Buddhism, it is no surprise that the same actions considered to be unwelcome in social discourse are also found in earlier texts of the Brahmanical tradition. For this reason, it is useful to think of

⁷¹⁶ See p. 64.

Indian Buddhists first as simply Indians, before analyzing specific doctrinal elements of their legal codes.

6.3: The Formal Etiquette of Buddhist Law

Chapter 3 provided a broad overview of the concept of Buddhist monastic law, as found in the *vinaya* texts of the various Indian Buddhist traditions, and the location of etiquette standards within *vinaya* texts. These texts are similar in many ways to the *dharmasūtra* texts of Vedic Brahmanism.

In previous studies of Buddhist law, scholars have often equated the concept of Buddhist etiquette with the *śaikṣa* rules, the “rules of training.” It is true that these rules do have much in common with our contemporary notion of etiquette, and touch on issues relating to proper attire for monastics as well as appropriate behaviours while eating and begging for alms. These rules are generally treated either as too simple and mundane to be very important, or as signifying a deeper meaning beyond the merely mundane. In a certain way my own argument is that these mundane rituals do have a deeper meaning, but that meaning is primarily one inherited from an aesthetic sensibility shared with Indian culture in general, and not from a spiritual experience or doctrinal idea specific to Buddhism. While the *śaikṣa* rules contain many important clues about Buddhist views on propriety, and once again its relationship to the emotion of disgust, there are also many other examples of etiquette throughout the entirety of the *prātimokṣas* in all of the Indian Buddhist lineages for which we have extant texts.

As I have mentioned already, proper speech is another fundamental concern in these texts, and rules about what this concept means and how it is to be practiced are scattered throughout the *prātimokṣas*. In general, the Indian Buddhist view is that speech

should not be offensive to others or cause them undue harm, but should also be truthful.

In addition, inappropriate actions can be as insulting as inappropriate speech.

The idea that appropriate behaviour for monastics could be perceived as impolite by the laity is some indication of a disjunction between ethics and etiquette, or at least of a difference of opinions among the Buddhist *saṅgha* and its lay supporters with regard to which behaviours are acceptable.

6.4: Buddhist Injunctions Concerning the Body

Chapter 4 focused on Indian Buddhist conceptions of the body, and the ways that lavatories and bathing areas were delineated to avoid arousing disgust. The Indian Buddhist concept of hygiene requires careful consideration, as the conceptions of how to define something as “dirty” and what is signified by dirt are very much intertwined with ideological and cultural standards. The ways in which the body is cared for, the technologies employed, the arrangement of architectural space and a variety of other factors are widely variable across cultures.

For early Indian Buddhists, as with Brahmins, the contemporary western concept of a combined lavatory and bathing room would have made no sense, as the first space would have been considered ritually defiling and the second ritually purifying. The proper way to construct and use such spaces is described in some of the rules of the *Cullavagga* of the Theravāda tradition, and in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda tradition. The rules in these texts reinforce once again the notion that appropriate etiquette is very closely linked to concepts of disgust.

This chapter brought together material from several disparate sources in order to observe some common feature of the Buddhist understanding of the body. Bodies are by their nature disgusting, and a recognition of this idea is often used in conjunction with

teachings on escaping rebirth. Bodies are also, however, necessary to have while one is participating in the world, and the disgusting attributes of bodily functions are not viewed in terms of ethics, however offensive they may be. The appropriate behaviour in response to these disgusting things is to prevent others from experiencing them, which I have argued throughout this dissertation is one of the foundational keys of etiquette. The interesting corollary that seems to follow naturally in Buddhist texts is that impolite behaviour also results in disgusting consequences.

6.5: The Special Rules for Female Monastics

As an extension to this general rule about disgusting bodies, we can consider female bodies as a special case of the above. The Buddhist *vinayas* clearly require more formal discipline from female monastics compared with males. The number of rules for female monastics in the *prātimokṣas* of Indian Buddhist lineages varies, but typically there are around 100 more rules for nuns than for monks. Chapter 5 focused on these special rules for female monastics.

The perceived need for this distinction can be traced back to a broader Indian notion of females as less capable than men at controlling their own emotions. Within the frame stories that give depth to the *prātimokṣa* rules for female monastics, women are frequently portrayed as less rational than men, more impulsive and foolish, more selfish, and more prone to disregard community standards for appropriate behaviour.

Women are also portrayed as sexual objects, regardless of the situation they happen to be in, and so even rules for using the toilet and performing routine hygiene are often presented with implicit or explicit sexual overtones. The *prātimokṣas* suggest that the sexual desires of female monastics make them a threat not only to males, but also to themselves and other female monastics. At the same time, female bodies and their

associated excretions are portrayed as disgusting and polluting. Menstruation is considered particularly threatening to the monastery environment, prompting special considerations of where female monastics in their menstrual period are allowed to sit, and what clothing they are to wear. Pregnancy is likewise a topic of concern in the *vinaya* texts, as it is likely to raise objections from lay donors in addition to forcing the monastic community to decide on how to deal with children.

Many of the rules we examined in this section on female monastics may not fit very well into the contemporary idea of etiquette. Becoming pregnant is not an insult in the same way that a slap in the [literal] face could be, and yet a pregnancy could be more damaging to the social *face* of the Buddhist institution. However, such rules also do not appear to be primarily concerned with ethics. The rules for female monastics are thus a tricky thing to pin down within a contemporary category, which of course makes them that much more interesting to study. I do think it is clear that the ideas in Buddhist texts about how female monastics should act (Buddhist and otherwise) are framed by the standards of a larger Sanskritic culture that pre-dated Buddhism and grew up alongside it. To ask what etiquette is, then, is also to ask what we mean by culture.

6.6: Etiquette and the Iterative Process of Culture Construction

A culture is a dynamic and constructed set of shared beliefs and practices. Cultures do not have fixed boundaries, and have no agency of their own. The term “culture” is in many ways a simple convenience that allows us to refer to sweeping commonalities among social groups located within a particular region and time. We can speak of a culture of Vedic Brahmanism and a culture of Indian Buddhism, but these are not mutually exclusive categories. Despite the common depiction of Buddhism as an “anti-Vedic” tradition, the general worldview of the early Buddhists was undoubtedly informed by

many of the same cultural standards shared by Vedic Brahmins. This fact should come as no surprise, as the early Indian Buddhist community drew its membership from that same culture.

In general it would appear that the etiquette rituals shared by Buddhists and Brahmins are framed around a common understanding of what is and is not socially acceptable behaviour. This definition does not help us very much in distinguishing between etiquette and ethics, and the boundaries between these categories are apparently very hazy. However, if we accept that the formal ethical principles of Buddhism are in some ways different from those of Brahmanism, then these commonalities between very mundane practices do not always make sense. It is not that there are two Buddhisms, a “folk” system and a “high” system, or that one particular interpretation of Buddhism is most correct. Even the canonical texts of the tradition present a highly disparate conglomeration in which there were various beliefs and practices at any one time. The term “Buddhism” is itself a convenient term that we use for describing a category of texts, practices and people, but which does not have sharply-defined boundaries. It is important to distinguish between the social actors within the tradition and the hazy category of Buddhism itself, which has no agency.

There are at least three areas I would like to pursue further as an extension of this topic, which were unfortunately beyond the scope of the current dissertation. First, now that I have examined the cultural implications of Buddhist etiquette in its early Indian context, it would be useful to extend the analysis to other cultures in which Buddhist practices were widely adopted. China in particular would make an interesting case study, as the etiquette rituals of Confucian culture have surely influenced Chinese Buddhist ideas about etiquette in unique ways. A second area of interest, related to the concepts of disgust and aesthetics, involves the intersection of Buddhism and medicine. As I noted in

chapter 4, the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* makes a brief reference to the use of human urine and excrement as medicine, which in contrast to the urine and dung of cattle appear to have been considered disgusting. In fact, there are numerous other examples in Buddhist texts of disgusting substances being employed as healing agents, so it is worth considering these in a study of their own. Finally, the very idea of disgust itself and of disgusting objects as focal points for meditative practice is an idea that comes up repeatedly in various Buddhist traditions, from the earliest texts to the present day. The idea that entirely overcoming disgust is a part of the *nirvāṇa* process is therefore an important avenue to explore when we consider the broader notion of Buddhist aesthetics.

Rather than consider etiquette as a kind of “little ethics” (one of its various etymologies), it can be productive to think of ethics itself as an intellectual extension of everyday etiquette rituals, which appear to satisfy various ineffable psychological needs. We might from there apply some ideas of performance theory to ethics, and discover that many aspects of ethics that we frequently consider to be grounded in rational argument are more closely linked with the same visceral reactions (“gut feelings”) that tell us when social behaviour is inappropriate within particular social contexts. A study on Buddhist ethics from the perspective of aesthetic performance could be very revealing, but is likely to be controversial. Since it would then require its own book-length analysis in order to be suitably complete, I only mention it here as an idea for future research.

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